

Brighton & Hove City Council

Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

Agenda Item 75

Subject: Car Parking in the City Parks

Date of meeting: 17th January 2023

Report of: Executive Director: Economy, Environment & Culture

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Ward(s) affected: All

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove City Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency in December 2018 alongside an ambition for the city to be carbon neutral by 2030. The council's corporate plan, "Our plan 2020 to 2023 – a fairer city, a sustainable future" sets out a series of priorities, including to take all action required to make our city carbon neutral by 2030. Therefore, to assist this programme, City Parks are encouraging residents and visitors to seek more sustainable, and often healthier, modes of transport to parks.
- 1.2 This report sets out proposals to implement parking charges in car parks located within open spaces across the city.
- 1.3 Currently only Stanmer Park, Preston Park and East Brighton Park have controlled parking. The income from parking at these sites is ringfenced for investment in those specific parks which means that the additional income is not evenly distributed across the council portfolio of parks.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee approves proposals to control parking at the weekends in East Brighton Park and Preston Park, subject to the statutory consultation process for Traffic Regulation Orders.
- 2.2 That the Committee approves the removal of the ringfence relating to income from controlled parking in East Brighton Park and Preston Park, to allow that funding to be spent across all parks in the city.
- 2.3 That the Committee approves the introduction of parking charges and controlled parking at the addition of 15 locations in 13 parks listed in paragraph 3.17 below, subject to the statutory consultation process for Traffic Regulation Orders.

2.4 That the Committee approves the advertising of the associated Traffic Regulation Orders.

3. Context and background information

3.1 City Parks car parking spaces need to be considered as part of a wider network of traffic management arrangements in the city. This has been difficult in the past, as the roads and car parks within open spaces are often not adopted highways, which the City Transport department would manage, and so do not fall under the same administrative arrangements. Therefore, City Parks are now seeking to align itself closer to City Transport's parking standards.

3.2 City Parks are seeking to assist with the council's ambitions to encourage more people to use sustainable transport modes, whilst also ensuring that vulnerable users, such as Blue Badge holders, are still catered for.

3.3 Due to the financial challenges facing local authorities across the country, the council is seeking to identify sources of income investment to help offset reductions in budgets. City Parks ability to continue the current standard of service, and to deliver the budget reductions required, is contingent upon being able to generate revenue from assets going forward. An additional £0.100m needs to be generated from income for this reason.

3.4 Controlled parking will also address the additional challenge of vehicles occupying spaces long term to take advantage of free parking. This prevents park users from being able to leave their vehicles in designated spaces when visiting a park. This is especially problematic at the weekends when large numbers of people gather for sporting activities. Controlled parking will enable the council to address this issue through parking enforcement.

3.5 The search by some members of the public to find cheap or free parking has resulted in designated spaces for vehicles in the city's parks being put under pressure by residents, visitors and van dwellers. This has been exacerbated as the city has increased parking controls, making cheaper car spaces in parks, an obvious location to avoid on-street parking charges and to leave vans for longer periods.

3.6 In some instances, such as at Vale Park, a number of complaints have occurred as residents and visitors have been prevented from visiting the park due to non-parks users occupying spaces. If these sites remain uncontrolled, they are likely to face ongoing pressure and a growing level of complaints by park users.

3.7 In addition, on-street parking charges have increased considerably in recent years whilst charges in places like Preston Park, have not increased. Unsurprisingly, these locations are now favoured by residents, visitors and park users alike to reduce their parking cost. City Parks are now seeking to redress this situation.

- 3.8 However, the majority of new sites being proposed in the city's parks are not bordered by a Controlled Parking Zone with on-street-parking. Therefore, all of the new sites being added to the programme would start at the lower tariff rate.

Car Park Charging

- 3.9 The proposed increases to existing car parking charges are contained in the Fees and Charges report, also on today's agenda.
- 3.10 For car parks with existing controls and charges, it is proposed the charges are extended to seven days a week, to address the avoidance of on-street parking charges and the utilisation of spaces by non-park users. The charge will apply from 8am to 8pm and there will be no overnight parking allowed at any site. Each of the sites will require an individual consultation which forms part of the statutory process for making a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO).
- 3.11 In addition, all car parking spaces need to pay business rates back to the council. Over £0.025 is currently paid to the council from the existing three locations, and in excess of £0.030 is anticipated in 23/24.

Removal of Ring-fenced Income for Parks

- 3.12 It is recommended that the current ring-fence for car parking income is removed from Preston Park, East Brighton Park and all new sites to allow greater flexibility with this income. Separating income from specific sites provides the opportunity to invest money into areas which have not been allocated Section 106 money.
- 3.13 Currently, income from the three existing car parks contributes towards their maintenance. Stanmer Park annual income is around £0.330m and is locked into a Heritage Lottery Fund agreement for ten years to pay for staff and the upkeep of the park and ongoing restoration.
- 3.14 Preston Park annual income is in the region of £0.060m which assist with maintenance of the wider park and contributed the refurbishment of the playground. East Brighton Park annual income is around £0.006m.
- 3.15 City Parks already has an income target from parking income of £0.050m per annum.
- 3.16 It is anticipated that the combined 13 new sites and existing two sites mentioned above which will not be ring fenced and should generate a surplus income. This can then be applied to support parks across the city in which currently have limited income. Guided by the Open Spaces Strategy, City Parks is to create park visions for each open space and will be looking to develop associated investment plans for each park over time.

Additional Parks to Charge for Car Parking

- 3.17 City Parks have identified 15 new sites in 13 locations to introduce car parking charges. The new sites are: Wild Park, Happy Valley, Woodingdean; Saunders Park, Hollingdean; Waterhall Recreation Ground; Greenleas; Easthill Park; Hangleton Park; Vale Park; Victoria Recreation Ground; Dyke Railway Trail; and Rottingdean Recreation Ground. The proposed charges for these parks are listed in 3.19.
- 3.18 The 15 new sites will provide an estimated 185 controlled spaces across the city. Most of the new sites will contain between 3 and 40 car parking spaces. If approved, each site will need to be measured individually to attain an accurate number of spaces for blue badge holders and regular vehicles.
- 3.19 The charges at the new sites have been set out below. The options of one hour visits are retained. This is on the basis that a large number of park users, and in particular dog walkers, will only want to visit for up to one hour and this will help keep such visits affordable. Furthermore, a two-hour charge might reduce park users' desire to visit parks.
- Up to one hour: £1.10
 - Up to two hours: £1.70
 - Up to four hours: £2.80
 - Up to six hours: £5.50

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The option of not charging for new sites would in some cases sustain the current problems of use by non-park users at the detriment of park goers. If City Parks didn't align themselves where possible to the citywide pricing system then users would again locate themselves where the cheapest prices can be found.
- 4.2 The council will have to reduce the Cityparks budget by £0.100m leading to a reduction in the maintenance and investment in parks.
- 4.3 The council would continue to lose revenue from on-street parking as people avoid charges by using open spaces to park their car.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 City Parks has identified through the Opens Spaces Strategy consultation that the public supports the council seeking to secure new funding streams and agrees with the need to maximise assets.
- 5.2 Each car parking scheme will be subject to a statutory TRO consultation.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The expansion of the car parking programme in City Parks is a natural evolution of a process started a decade ago (2012) with Preston Park.

- 4.4 The initiative supports the ambition of ‘modal shift’ to more sustainable transport by residents and visitors thus assisting both health and Carbon neutral objectives.
- 4.5 The continued budgetary challenges and uneven spread of section 106 money across the city reflects the need to expand the programme and centralise the funding. Moreover, the council would continue to lose revenue from on-street parking as people avoid charges by using open spaces to park their car.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 City Parks have proposed £0.100m savings in the Draft General Fund Budget 2023/24 to Policy & Resources Committee on 1st December 2022. The recommendations in this report all contribute to achieving the proposed savings. Should the recommendation not be agreed, £0.100m of savings would need to be identified elsewhere within the authority in order to present a balanced budget at Budget Council in February 2023.
- 7.2 Assuming the recommendations are agreed, and savings proposals are approved at Budget Council an income target above costs will be applied to City Parks parking in order to achieve the £0.100m savings. Costs associated with implementing parking schemes and any enforcement required will be funded from City Parks Parking incomes and any significant variation to budget will be reported as part of the council’s monthly budget monitoring process.
- 7.3 City Parks already has an income target from parking income of £0.050m per annum that was agreed as part of budget setting for the 2022/23 Financial Year. This income target was to deliver savings through new sites identified for parking in City Parks. Without new sites identified, this saving that was agreed during the budget setting process will not be achieved and result in a pressure within City Parks Budgets

Name of finance officer consulted: John Lack Date consulted: 15/12/2022

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 Traffic Regulation Orders are made under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (“the Act”). The Council’s powers and duties under the Act must be exercised to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of all types of traffic and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway.
- 8.2 Before making Traffic Orders, the Council must consider all duly made, unwithdrawn objections. Under sections 32 and 35 of the Act there is power to provide off-street parking places and to regulate their use for the purpose of relieving or preventing congestion. The powers include a power to charge for use.

Name of lawyer consulted: Alice Rowland Date consulted: 16/12/22

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 Investment in car parking could improve equalities as parts of the city which currently doesn't attract section 106 investment would benefit. Parking charges should also ensure spaces are not being clogged up by people not using the park, avoiding higher on street parking fees, therefore allowing more local people spaces to access the city's parks.
- 9.2 Furthermore, the improved car parking space would ensure better facilitates for blue badge holders and provide more accessible surface for all.
- 9.3 An Equality impact Assessment to consider the impact of charging is at Appendix 2.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 Parking charges should encourage greater use of public transport and other sustainable transport such as walking and cycling.
- 10.2 Reduce car use will directly decrease the amount of fossil use combusted in the city further reduction pollution, noise and toxic particulates on the road.

11. Other Implications

Social Value and procurement implications

- 11.1 City Parks works with the Parking Team regarding car park charging.

Crime & disorder implications

- 11.2 It is anticipated that the increased regulation of car parks in open spaces will result in a reduction in antisocial behaviour. This is expected due to increased surveillance from enforcing vehicles and charges reducing casual parking.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

- 1. Proposed New Parking Sites and Charges
- 2. Equality Impact Assessment

Background documents

- 1. Open Spaces Strategy available at <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/article/inline/2017%20FINAL%20Approved.pdf>