

## Budget Proposals 2017/18: Highway Fees and Charges, including Parking

### Consultation Summary Report

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#### Why we consulted

Over the last five years, we've had to find savings of £41m. Since 2012/13, the government has given us less money by reducing the Revenue Support Grant by £30m, whilst over the same period we've seen increased demand for our services.

For 2017/18, we estimate that our budget will be £117m. To achieve a balanced budget we'll have to identify £8m of savings or increases in our income.

In order to inform this process, we published a list of those proposals which would likely have a direct impact on service users, and sought the views from those affected and interested:

- to understand the likely impact
- to identify any measures to reduce their impact
- to explore any possible alternatives for both savings and income generation

#### Approach

We published all the proposals on our website on 31 October 2016 with feedback requested by midnight on 11 December 2016.

Respondents were directed to a [central index page](#), which outlined the overall background to the exercise, and provided links to each of the individual proposals on our [Consultation Portal](#).

Each individual page included further details on the specifics of what the proposal contained and what we thought the impact might be, along with any other elements we'd taken into account. Feedback was then invited through an online form and through a dedicated email address. Hard copies of the proposal documents and surveys were also made available on request.

As well as publishing the consultations on our website, we also emailed members of the West Berkshire Community Panel (around 800 people), local stakeholder charities, representative groups and partner organisations notifying them of the exercise and inviting their contributions. Heads of Service also made direct contact with those organisations directly affected prior to them being made publicly available.

Finally, we issued a press release on the 31 October 2016, and further publicised our consultations through our Facebook and Twitter accounts. We also placed posters in our main offices and libraries, and made them available to WBC Councillors and Parish and Town Councils to put up in the wards/parishes.

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#### Proposal Background

Parking charges at council car parks were increased in May 2016 following extensive public consultation. Charges for season tickets, evening parking, and resident and visitor parking permits were also increased. Sunday charges were aligned with those charged on other week days.

Unfortunately due to severe financial pressures, it is necessary to consult on further increases for the financial year 2017/18. This will enable additional income generated to be used to continue to secure expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic and provide suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the public highway. It will mean that we can continue to provide a broad range of functions including traffic schemes, pedestrian crossings, speed limits and civil enforcement as well as different types of parking facilities.

We have to test that surplus revenue from parking charges does not exceed spending on these functions following the High Court ruling against the London Borough of Barnet ('the Barnet case') on 22 July 2013. Having done this, there is no reason, from a Barnet case perspective, not to proceed with the proposal to generate this additional income whilst remaining competitive with other towns in the region.

Fees are levied for a range of activities on the public highway requiring a licence. These include vehicular crossings, builder's skips, scaffolds, storing materials on the highway, placing tables and chairs on the highway and placing a crane or other structure on the highway.

#### Proposal Details

- To introduce new tariffs at our main Newbury car parks
- To introduce new tariffs at our outer subsidiary Newbury car parks e.g. Northcroft Lane West
- To introduce new tariffs at our other car parks e.g. Hungerford Church Street, Thatcham Kingsland Centre
- To introduce on-street charging near Thatcham Railway Station
- To delete a currently vacant part time Civil Enforcement Officer post
- To increase the charge for various highway licenses by an average of 10%

#### Legislation Requirements

The test against the Barnet case criteria has been considered and proven to be acceptable as set out above. The proposed changes to the tariff charges will be advertised under Section 35C of the Road Traffic (Regulation) Act 1984. Highway licences are granted under the Highways Act 1980.

#### Consultation Response

##### Number of Responses

In total, 54 responses were received.

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Summary of Main Points

Of the 54 responses received, which included comments, 29 related to the proposed price increases at car parks, with 19 concerned that it will adversely affect retail/business.

Nine comments related to the proposed on-street charging near Thatcham station and the potential displacement of parking into nearby residential roads.

There were two comments opposing the deletion of the CEO post suggesting that enforcement should be increased and one comment in relation to the proposal to increase the charge for highway licenses by 10%.

Summary of Responses by Question**1. Are you...?**

	Number	%
Or anyone you care for, a user of this service	19	35.2%
A resident of West Berkshire	45	83.3%
Employed by West Berkshire Council	6	11.1%
A Parish/Town Councillor	5	9.3%
A District Councillor	0	0%
A Service Provider	0	0%
A Partner Organisation	0	0%
Other	8	14.8%

**2. How far do you agree with the following proposals?**

To introduce new tariffs at our main Newbury car parks	Number	%
Agree	17	31.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	8	14.8%
Disagree	21	38.9%
Don't know	0	0%
Not answered	8	14.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

To introduce new tariffs at our outer subsidiary Newbury car parks e.g. Northcroft Lane West	Number	%
Agree	18	33.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	9	16.7%
Disagree	19	35.2%
Don't know	0	0%
Not answered	8	14.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

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To introduce new tariffs at our other car parks e.g. Hungerford High Street, Thatcham Kingsland Centre	Number	%
Agree	17	31.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	9	16.7%
Disagree	19	35.2%
Don't know	1	1.9%
Not answered	8	14.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

To introduce on-street charging near Thatcham Railway Station	Number	%
Agree	18	33.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	6	11.1%
Disagree	21	38.9%
Don't know	1	1.9%
Not answered	8	14.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

To delete a currently vacant part time Civil Enforcement Officer post	Number	%
Agree	27	50.0%
Neither agree nor disagree	7	13.0%
Disagree	10	18.5%
Don't know	2	3.7%
Not answered	8	14.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

To increase the charge for highway licenses by an average of 10%	Number	%
Agree	21	38.9%
Neither agree nor disagree	15	27.8%
Disagree	9	16.7%
Don't know	1	1.9%
Not answered	8	14.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

3. What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how these proposals might impact people? For example, do you think it will affect particular individuals more than others?

Respondents highlighted negative impacts on the following particular individuals:

- Shoppers (14)
- Businesses (4)
- Residents near Thatcham Station (16)
- Residents in Hungerford (1)
- Those on lower income (1)

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- The elderly/mobility impaired (2)
- Commuters (2)

**4. If the decision is taken to proceed with these proposals, do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce the impact on those affected? If so, please provide details.**

The following suggestions were identified:

- Opposition to introducing the parking charge increases or suggesting they should be lower, that on-street charging should cease or that periods of free parking should be provided (11)
- Give plenty of notice / provide information (3)
- Give cheaper parking for residents (4)
- Ensure that the inconvenience to residents of roads around Thatcham station is minimised and that additional parking restrictions are introduced to overcome existing difficulties (7)

**5. Do you have any other suggestions as to how this saving (approximately £12,000) might be delivered within this service? If so, please provide details.**

The following suggestions were identified:

- Vary parking enforcement options (7)
- Reduce or remove parking charges in Newbury to promote business (5)
- Raise revenue from lorry parking (1)

**6. Do you have any suggestions on how we might increase income, either in this service, or elsewhere in the council?**

The following suggestions were identified:

- Increase parking enforcement (2)
- Increase parking fines (2)
- Increase council tax more (3)
- Reduce the number of councillors (2)
- Government should be supporting councils (2)
- Sell the car parks to private companies (1)

**7. Is there any way that you, or your organisation, can contribute in helping to alleviate the impact of these proposals? If so, please provide details of how you can help.**

There were no suggestions received on contributing in helping to alleviate the impact of these proposals.

There was one response from someone who provided contact details and who is willing to constructively discuss ideas for parking, enforcement, traffic control and development if the council wishes to hear his thoughts.

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Another response suggested that Scottish and Southern Energy should implement a daily shuttle bus from Thatcham FC and that the football club be allowed to charge rail users to park there all day.

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## 8. Any further comments?

The following individual comments were made:

- Thatcham Town Council said that it is difficult to comment on this proposal as there is no evidence of revenue currently generated or the additional income that parking increases will produce.
- Unison said that raising parking charges can only be seen as a disincentive for local commerce, especially in the face of competition from other major retail centres within reasonable distance.
- The increases in parking charges are relatively modest and will not have a great financial impact on the majority of users.
- The rise seems fair.
- Need to achieve savings / extra revenue from somewhere, minimal impact on users.
- More efficient delivery of services is required rather than taxing existing facilities for no gain in benefit as this will only push consumers to free parking locations and away from centres that require their footfall.
- Parking charges in West Berks are currently very reasonable and small increases will easily be absorbed by most residents and visitors.
- It will encourage more public transport to be used, which is fairer for the people who do not use a car.
- In a nutshell its easy money and people accept that they have to pay to park their car - your charges currently are very reasonable.
- I own a successful growing business in Thatcham High Street employing currently nine staff and there is nowhere for my team to park on a daily basis so as they are able to attend work - there should be some concessions and facility provision from the council for local employees to park otherwise it will drive businesses like ours out of the town, instead of assisting to bring much needed revenue to the local economy.
- How efficient are officers in collecting additional charges (from parkers that over stay or people who haven't paid) and how effectively is this being enforced?
- Why doesn't the on street parking in Thatcham get raised to reflect the parking at the station?

Officer conclusion and recommendation can be found in the associated Overview of Responses and Recommendations document.

Mark Edwards  
Head of Service  
Highways and Transport  
20 December 2016

**Please note:** *In order to allow everyone who wished the opportunity to contribute, feedback was not sampled. Therefore this wasn't a quantitative, statistically valid exercise. It was neither the premise, purpose, nor within the capability of the exercise, to determine the overall community's level of support, or views on the proposals, with any degree of confidence.*

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*The feedback captured therefore should be seen in the context of ‘those who responded’, rather than reflective of the wider community.*

*All the responses have been provided verbatim as an appendix to this report. Whilst this summary seeks to distil the key, substantive points made, it should also be read in conjunction with the more detailed verbatim comments to ensure a full, rounded perspective of the views and comments are considered.*