

Motion on Notice

Proposed budget amendment

Proposed by: Councillor John Belsey

Seconded by: Councillor Jacquie Russell

In summary, this proposal is to increase car parking charges by a uniform 10% rate across the District and not to introduce differential parking charges between our towns nor to introduce charges for evenings, bank holidays or Sundays in 2024/25. Additionally given the parking strategy was to be finalised in 2024/25 and refreshed in 2025/26 we suggest all this work should be completed in 2024/25 prior to any introduction of differential parking charges. This would leave a shortfall in the budget for 2024/25 of £300k comprising a shortfall in parking income of £260k and additional costs of £40k which had been budgeted for the following year. We propose this shortfall is dealt with through a reduction in the food waste general reserve being created this year.

This Council notes the budget proposals to extend parking charges into evenings, Sundays and bank holidays as well as to introduce differential parking charges so that it costs more to park in Haywards Heath and East Grinstead than Burgess Hill whilst also deferring parking charges in the village car parks. The budget proposals arise from work undertaken largely in the period up to and including 2020 and although have been updated periodically are already due to be refreshed in 2025/26. We believe that our residents, businesses and high streets would welcome our amended proposals on the grounds that at the time the strategy was being developed it was intended that, if approved, the strategy would be implemented at the same time across Mid Sussex not on a piecemeal basis causing differentiation and division between our towns and villages.

Given the work still to be undertaken on the strategy and concerns raised by residents and businesses across the District we believe it would be sensible that the work to refresh and revalidate the strategy should be undertaken in its entirety in 2024/25 rather than spreading it over two years and this would ensure the strategy is validated before rather than after implementation of any differential parking charges and such substantial change.

It is our view that it is not acceptable to propose a 30% increase in parking tariffs in East Grinstead, a 20% increase in Haywards Heath as well as a 10% increase in Burgess Hill, whilst also introducing evening, Sunday and bank holiday charges in all three towns, until the above mentioned work has been undertaken.

People care very much about their town centres and how much it costs to park in the towns where they live and visit and should the parking strategy highlight differential parking charges being appropriate to improve the economic viability and environment of our towns then a full communications programme with appropriate lead-time needs to be undertaken to explain the need and rationale for any such changes. It needs also to be made clearer what specific investments will be made in our car parks through the parking strategy.

We recognise the importance of a Council maintaining a balanced budget and anticipate the cost of the above proposals would be in the region of £300k for 2024/25 and are currently minded to accept the outcomes of the parking strategy refresh as the basis for future budgets.

In order to balance the budget we would propose reducing the amount of the food waste reserve which is proposed to be created in the next financial year to help fund future implementation of a food waste service. We consider £600k is an appropriate contribution to the reserve for this year and there would be no effect on the current food waste trial or the welcomed proposed expansion of the food waste service.

Accordingly we call on the Council to:

1. Adopt a uniform increase of 10% in car parking tariffs across the towns for the forthcoming financial year and to defer any extension of parking charges into evenings, Sundays and Bank Holidays;
2. Complete the car parking strategy in 2024/25 in its entirety encompassing villages and towns and refreshing the conclusions of the strategy;
3. Undertake a feasibility study with a view to bringing in a formal proposal in next year's budget for implementation of a multi-level car park and additional amenities for Queensway car park in East Grinstead and to explore with WSCC potential solutions whereby local residents may also be able to utilise the car park to help solve local parking issues;
4. Establish a food waste reserve of £600k for 2024/25 such a sum representing a substantial contribution to funding a District-wide service.

Introduction

1. A Motion on Notice has been received proposing an Amendment to the Draft Corporate Plan and Budget.
2. Procedurally this is a Notice on Motion, but it proposes an Amendment to the Budget, not an Alternative Budget. Therefore, for simplicity, this is referred to as ‘the amendment’ throughout.
3. The amendment proposed achieves a balanced Budget and has therefore been accepted by the Monitoring Officer. Whilst a Notice on Motion is usually a standalone item on the agenda, with the Chairman’s permission this amendment will form part of the Budget debate.
4. It is required that I provide a Robustness Statement on any Budget (Section 2A of the published draft budget refers).
5. Therefore, this advice relates to the impact of this amendment on my Robustness advice and provides the S151 Officer’s analysis of the amendment so that the Council can carefully consider these matters.

Current Position as published

6. The following table sets out the current headline position in the published Draft Corporate Plan and Budget papers (page 13 refers).

Medium-Term Financial Plan					
	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000
Total Revenue Spending	19,820	23,079	23,966	24,677	25,521
Total Financing	(19,820)	(23,079)	(22,449)	(19,254)	(20,168)
Estimated Deficit Due to Business Rates Reform			-	(3,559)	(3,559)
Balance without Business Rates Reform [(deficit); /surplus]	-	-	(1,517)	(1,864)	(1,794)
Balance with Business Rates Reform [(deficit); /surplus]	-	-	(1,517)	(5,423)	(5,353)

Cumulatively the deficit across the lifetime of the published draft MTFP is £12,293m (£5,175m without Business Rates Reform).

Budget Amendment - Analysis

7. The proposed Motion on Notice has 4 recommendations. However, it should be noted that recommendation two:

Complete the car parking strategy in 2024/25 in its entirety encompassing villages and towns and refreshing the conclusions of the strategy.

8. indicates a mindedness to commit to the rollout of the Parking Strategy but this is subject to any impact of a refresh.
9. Therefore, the impact on the MTFP of both delivering and not delivering the Parking Strategy as currently modelled is considered below.

Proposed Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) with impacts of Notice on Motion: Budget Amendment

10. Scenario 1

- 10% uplift in parking fees and charges.
- **Implementation of the parking strategy in 2025/26,**
- Reduced contribution to waste mobilisation reserve* (recovered in future years).
- Note that the reduction in the 2024/25 waste mobilisation reserve* from £900k to £640k is sufficient to continue to provide and extend the food waste trial but is not sufficient to deliver the Simpler Recycling* rollout, the deadline for which is now fixed in regulation.

Medium-Term Financial Plan					
	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000
Total Revenue Spending	19,820	23,079	23,966	24,677	25,521
Total Financing	(19,820)	(23,079)	(22,449)	(19,254)	(20,168)
Estimated Deficit due to Business Rates Reform			-	(3,559)	(3,559)
Balance without Business Rates Reform [(deficit); /surplus]	-	-	(1,517)	(1,864)	(1,794)
Balance with Business Rates Reform [(deficit); /surplus]	-	-	(1,517)	(5,423)	(5,353)
Proposed amendments:					
Reduction in Fees and Charges relating to Car Parking	-	260	-	-	-
Contribution to waste mobilisation reserve*	-	(260)	-	-	-
Additional contribution to recover £260k reduction in 24/25	-	-	87	87	86
Balance with proposed amendments [(deficit); /surplus]	-	-	(1,604)	(5,510)	(5,439)

11. The impact of this approach, which delays Parking Strategy implementation by 12 months counterbalanced by a 10% uplift, is a £260k reduction in income. This is proposed to be funded by a reduction in the contribution to the waste mobilisation reserve*. Thus, ensuring this commitment to the rollout of Simpler Recycling* is rebalanced in future years requires an additional draw of £260k across the term.

12. This 260k movement into future years results in a total deficit across the lifetime of the MTFP of £12,553m (£5,435m without Business Rates Reform).

13. Scenario 2

- 10% uplift in parking fees and charges.
- **No implementation of the parking strategy in 2025/26.**
- Reduced contribution to waste mobilisation reserve* (recovered in future years).
- Note that the reduction in the 2024/25 waste mobilisation reserve* from £900k to £640k is sufficient to continue to provide and extend the food waste trial but is not sufficient to deliver the Simpler Recycling* rollout, the deadline for which is now fixed in regulation.

Medium-Term Financial Plan					
	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000
Total Revenue Spending	19,820	23,079	23,966	24,677	25,521
Total Financing	(19,820)	(23,079)	(22,449)	(19,254)	(20,168)
Estimated Deficit Due to Business Rates Reform			-	(3,559)	(3,559)
Balance without Business Rates Reform [(deficit); /surplus]	-	-	(1,517)	(1,864)	(1,794)
Balance with Business Rates Reform [(deficit); /surplus]	-	-	(1,517)	(5,423)	(5,353)
Proposed amendments:					
Reduction in Fees and Charges relating to Car Parking	-	260	260	260	260
Contribution to waste mobilisation reserve*	-	(260)	-	-	-
Additional contribution to recover £260k reduction in 24/25	-	-	87	87	86
Balance with proposed amendments [(deficit); /surplus]	-	-	(1,864)	(5,770)	(5,699)

14. The impact of scenario 2, which both delays Parking Strategy implementation by 12 months (counterbalanced by a 10% uplift in the next financial year, as above) and where the Parking Strategy is not delivered as envisaged in future years, results in a recurrent loss of £260k income.

15. In the year 2024/25 this is funded as above by a reduction in the contribution to the waste mobilisation reserve*. However, ensuring this commitment to the rollout of Simpler Recycling* is rebalanced in future years also requires an additional draw of £260k across the remaining term of the MTFP to redress this.

16. This scenario therefore results in an increased deficit of £1,040m across the term of the MTFP. Thus, the total deficit across the lifetime of the MTFP would be £13,333m (£6,215m without Business Rates Reform).

**Simpler Recycling is the term given by Central Government to the changes required via the Environment Act to the collection of Waste, including but not limited to food waste. In the Draft Corporate Plan and Budget this is referred to as the Waste Mobilisation and Management Reserve as this naming is new.*

Summary

17. The amendment proposed results in a balanced budget for the year 2024/25.

18. However, referring to my robustness statement in section 2 para 58 of the Draft Corporate Plan and Budget, the Council will note my advice as to the need to top up the General Reserve to ensure its adequacy.

19. This consideration is particularly relevant in the event that the Parking Strategy is not implemented from 2025/26.

Rachel Jarvis
Assistant Director Corporate Resources (S151 Officer)