



ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Parking  
Annual  
Report

**2019**  
**2020**



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# Welcome

from the Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2019-2020 edition of Ashford Borough Council's Parking Annual review. The report provides an overview of parking management and relevant enforcement in the borough.

We remain committed to providing a high quality parking service and a fair, easy, consistent and transparent approach to parking management and traffic enforcement. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic we instigated a number of measures to ensure that our users could access our facilities in a safe manner.

Since the beginning of March 2020, we experienced a significant drop in activity, both during the initial lockdown period and into 2020/21 which had an inevitable impact on income. However, we have continued to provide dispensations for priority groups of health and social care workers to ensure they were able to travel to work safely in the periods where access to public transport was limited.

This report recognises the improvements we have made in our services, and highlights the effectiveness of both our parking policies and enforcement activity, resulting in good levels of parking and traffic compliance.

We aim to make Ashford borough a safer borough, improve motoring standards, reduce traffic congestion, and contribute to reducing

carbon emissions. Promoting sustainable modes of travel and improving air quality is of high concern to our residents. We are continually evaluating ways to reduce pollution as part of a wider effort across the borough, as well as continuing to work across the Council to tackle the climate change emergency in a concerted effort.

Thank you for taking the time to read the report. I hope you find it both interesting and informative.



**Shelia Davison**  
Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing

We welcome, as always, any suggestions to improve our parking services. If you have any suggestions or comments, please contact [parkingcustomer@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:parkingcustomer@ashford.gov.uk)





# Service Overview

## 1. Introduction

**Ashford Borough Council's Parking Service provides parking spaces to cater for all road users and vehicle types. It is responsible for providing, managing and enforcing on-street parking facilities and controls throughout the whole of Ashford Borough.**

This annual report provides information on the activities of the Parking Service during 2019-2020. It details achievements in delivering innovative and sustainable improvements as well as looking ahead to any future developments and opportunities. The report also includes parking and enforcement statistics, plus financial information with comparative data from previous years. ABC's Parking Service aims to be at the forefront of new and relevant parking initiatives. We aim to promote best practice and continual quality improvements.

### Why Manage Parking?

Well thought-out parking policies, parking management and effective enforcement can influence travel patterns, sustain the local economy, balance competing demands for road space, relieve congestion and contribute to sustainable outcomes.

Conversely, parking which is not properly regulated can exacerbate congestion on the road network, reduce the reliability of public

transport, impact adversely on the local economy and create road safety problems.

Parking Services are highly visible to all customers. In particular, enforcement is carried out in a fair, effective and consistent way in order to retain public confidence.

## 2. Fair Parking

Our commitment to our residents, businesses and visitors is to make it fair, easy and safe to park in Ashford borough. We will seek to make it as easy as possible for those who need to park in Ashford Borough to find and pay for their parking space. We will continue to be open and transparent about how much income is generated from the parking service, where we invest the surplus, and how much on-street parking services cost. We will seek to limit fraud and take appropriate action against those who use disabled badges or resident parking permits fraudulently.

## 3. Parking Initiatives

The Council is seeking to play our part in reducing pollution levels. The council is looking to agree an Air Quality Action Plan to reduce air pollution from all sources, including transport. In this context, the service is looking to put policies in place that incentivise more sustainable transport options and the use of less polluting vehicles.



A new way to pay for parking - As part of the Council's on-going programme of investment in our car parks, we are starting to introduce automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology. The Elwick Place car park in Ashford town centre is the first car park to have this introduced.

## Investment in Fleet

We have replaced old, high capacity diesel vans with new, low Co2 electric vehicles. The aim is to replace the entire ABC fleet with electric vehicles with an emphasis on continuing to reduce the carbon footprint.

This rolling improvement programme of our fleet ensures team members can enjoy a cleaner place to work from when on a mobile patrol, aiding the wellbeing, health and safety of our workforce.

## Electric Vehicle Charging Points

The promotion of ultra-low emissions transportation is in line with the council's strategy on managing air quality and working towards carbon neutrality. We currently have 14 electric vehicle charging points across the borough and in the coming year the Council will be reviewing and installing suitable charge points at the point of need. We will work with our stakeholders to ensure we deliver a successful transition to electric vehicles in the future.

## Cycle Parking

As part of Ashford's Cycling Strategy for the future, the council will aim to install cycle parking stands, bike hangers and cages and cycle hoops where there is a need. The level of current pavement provision may well allow for additional suitable locations where demand is highest. The Council continues to look at various methods of increasing provision, including space allocation in public realm projects and safe residential storage.







#### 4. Parking Enforcement Overview

The Council enforces parking and traffic regulations using Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) who patrol the streets. CEOs also use electric bicycles and vans which enable rapid deployment to attend to urgent enforcement issues.

Illegally parked vehicles create problems for all road users. We enforce regulations by issuing Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) with the aim of improving motorists' compliance. CEOs have the power to issue PCNs to vehicles parked in contravention of restrictions.

All CEOs are fully trained in their role, including customer service and they are expected to remain professional, polite, calm, firm and assertive. All CEOs are equipped with body worn cameras.

#### What we enforce

We enforce parking restrictions anywhere in the borough. This includes:

- **School Keep Clear Enforcement**
- **School Keep Clear markings (yellow zig-zag lines outside of school entrances) are monitored by the Council using CEOs. Our aim is to maintain and improve road safety outside schools.**
- **We receive compliments when doing school patrols from parents/ teachers / residents / police, on what a difference it makes when CEOs are present. We work closely with Ashford PCSOs and KCC wardens regarding parking outside schools, and often get requests to visit certain problem areas, however we need to target our resources accordingly.**



#### Yellow Line Enforcement

The majority of yellow-line waiting restrictions in Ashford are on strategic and distributor roads, and have been introduced to promote safety, assist buses and aid effective movement of traffic.

Single yellow lines are located on parts of the highway where there would be a safety hazard if parking was permitted, especially when there is high volume of traffic. Parking is therefore prohibited at certain times of day.

Double yellow lines indicate a 24-hour parking prohibition. All double yellow lines within Ashford operate seven days a week, including bank holidays. It is no longer a requirement for signs to accompany double yellow restrictions.

#### HGV Enforcement and Clamping

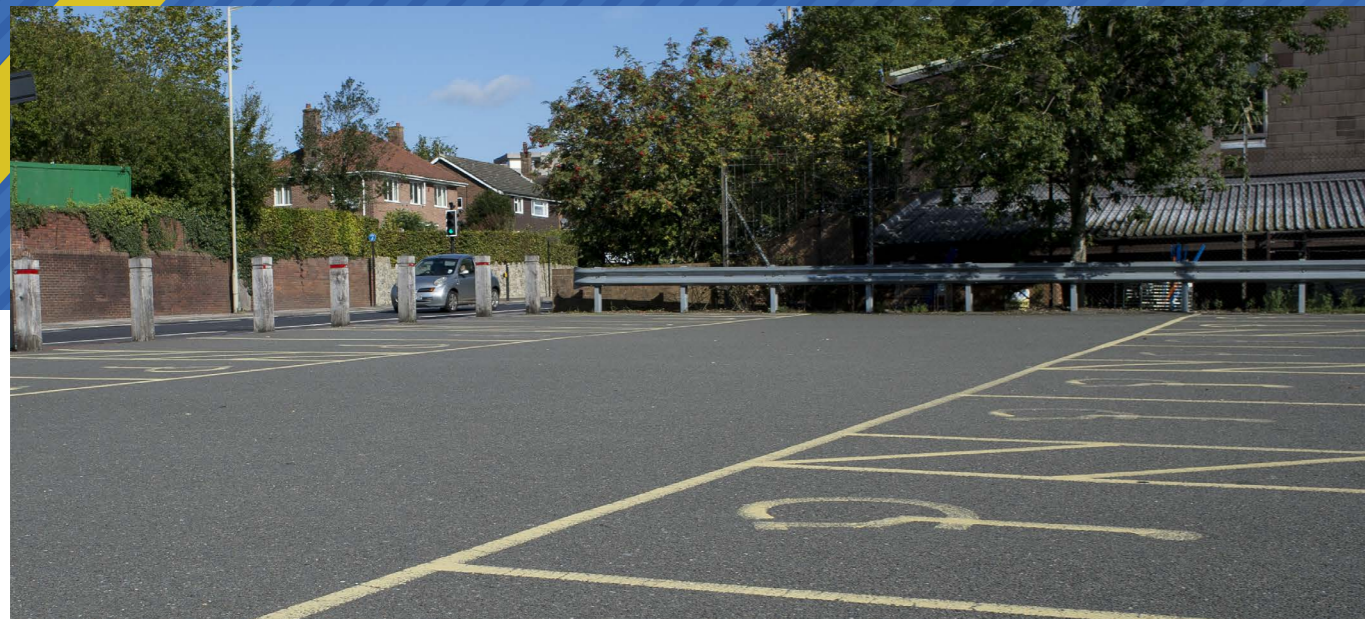
Kent suffers from major issues because of HGVs parking in unsuitable locations. This causes danger, distress to residents and results in environmental waste in many locations. In 2017 a clamping trial was set up as a joint initiative between Kent County Council (KCC), Ashford Borough Council (ABC) and the Department for Transport (DfT). The overnight clamping trial was part of a zonal parking ban which operated between 8pm and 7am and covered the A20 between Charing and Ashford and four industrial estates in the borough.

The clamping trial was introduced on 30 October 2017 and expired on 30 April 2019. The experimental HGV clamping trial was successful in reducing the number of HGVs parking in inappropriate locations in the Ashford District. During the trial 2,754 HGVs were clamped, of which 1,449 were on the A20.

In 2019 ABC was given permission to make the trial permanent. The Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) went live with enforcement commencing 16 September 2019. It continued to be a success and increased the uptake of parking into the local truck stop. Up to 31 March 2020, 535 HGVs had been clamped for parking in the prohibited zones.







### Blue Badge fraud and misuse

The Council has been working effectively to tackle blue badge misuse across the borough. Fraudulent use of blue badges prevents people in genuine need from accessing parking where and when they need it most.

CEOs have been active in carrying out blue badge inspections to identify:

- Abuse of badges - this includes using a counterfeit badge, using a lost or stolen badge and using the badge of a deceased person.
- Misuse of badges - the fraudulent use of blue badges when the holder is not present.

CEOs have been using the government blue badge database to identify misuse of badges and report any suspicious usage.

Activities to tackle blue badge misuse and fraud have continued to have positive results. Please see some results below for 2019/20;-

- ABC total referrals to KCC Blue Badge (BB) Team: **116**
- Number of KCC BB Team warning letters issued: **90**
- KCC BB Team issued Simple Cautions: **1**
- KCC BB Team Prosecutions: **1** pending
- Still under investigation: **4**

If you would like to report misuse of a blue badge you can do this by email to: [bluebadgeteam@kent.gov.uk](mailto:bluebadgeteam@kent.gov.uk)

Please include the location, description of the driver, vehicle registration and badge number.

### Other Aspects of CEO work

A CEO was recently praised for helping a motorist who had broken down. The CEO helped push the vehicle off the main road and up a hill so it wasn't causing an obstruction or leaving the motorist in a dangerous situation.

CEOs have assisted and distributed leaflets for the Council's Environment and Land Management Service.

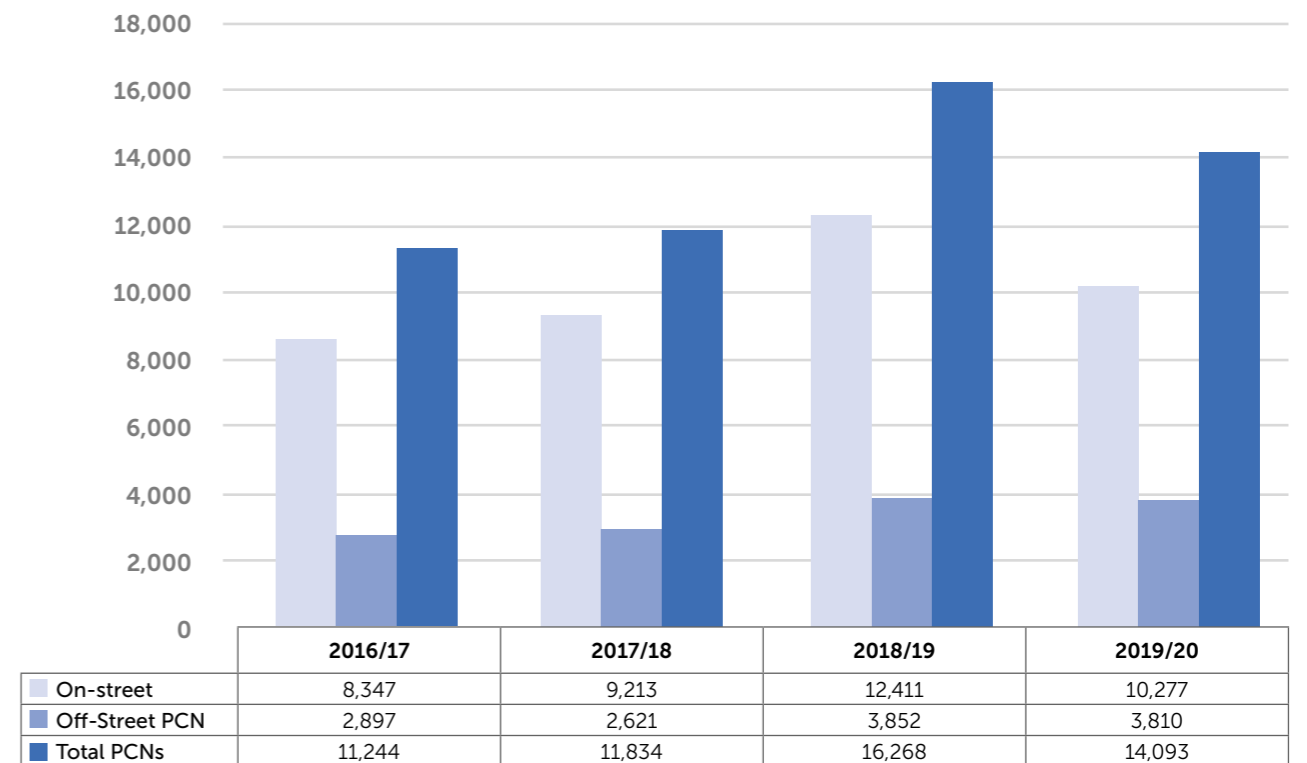
Our CEO Officers visit schools and local Beaver groups with our mascot 'Wizhog' and give road safety advice and information on parking rules/regulations. The Beaver groups have thanked the officers for a very informative presentation tailored to the relevant age group.

### 5. Enforcement Stats.

The Council has the powers to enforce parking restrictions. Our own, in house, team of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) are an important part of the process.

A PCN may be issued at the scene by being fixed to the vehicle windscreen, or handed to the person appearing to be in charge of it, or issued by post if the CEO was prevented by someone from serving it at the scene.

### PCN Issuance



### PCNs Issuance

PCNs issued on-street and off-street within ABC are set at either £50 or £70 depending on the severity of the alleged contravention.

CEOs issued 14,093 PCNs for parking offences in 2019-20. Ticket issue decreased across the majority of contravention areas by 14%; this can be attributed to increased compliance which has contributed to a levelling out of PCN issue.

To encourage prompt payment all PCNs are offered at a 50% discounted rate for the first 14 days of issue, after which they will need to be paid at the full charge.

### Top 3 Reasons for PCN issuance

No waiting

No ticket

Overstay

### Top 3 Locations

High Street Tenterden

Bank Street Ashford

Tufton Street Ashford

### Off street

Stour and Civic Centre

Vicarage Lane Ashford

Recreation Ground Car park Tenterden

## Off-Street Parking

Our car parks continue to offer a safe and reliable place to park. Season tickets provide a substantial discount on the daily rate of parking to encourage customers to use the Council's off-street parking provisions, helping to alleviate the pressure for on-street parking spaces.

A new car park in Victoria Road opened in early 2020, with 99 spaces and has been set aside as a COVID-19 testing station. It is unavailable for general use at this time.

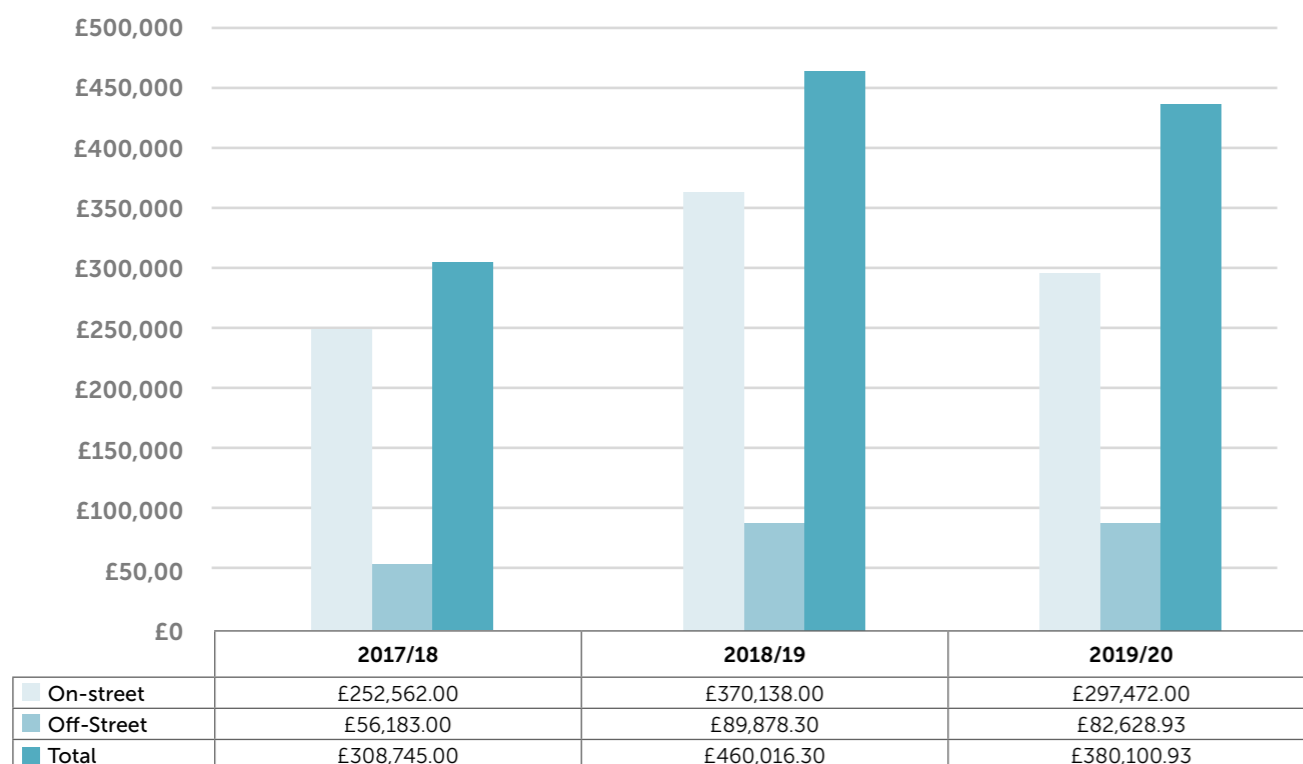
The Council operates 11 public car parks across the borough.

## Parking Spaces

On Street spaces 651

Off Street Spaces 2345

## 6. PCN Income



The quickest and most convenient way of paying for a PCN is by debit/credit card via the online parking portal on ABC's website. This is evident as it accounts for 58% of all payments received.

Of the 14,093 PCNs issued in 2019-20, we expect an overall recovery rate of 66%.

Resolution of a PCN can take anything up to three years, though the great majority are either paid or appealed within the first 12 months following the issuance of the PCN. The timing of payments will be influenced by whether motorists have confidence that the PCN has been correctly issued, and the speed and quality of the statutory appeals processes that motorists have access to.

A proportion of PCNs will never be collected: 25-30% is typical within the U.K. This includes all successful PCN appeals (some of which are not resolved until the independent tribunal stage) as well as PCNs issued to persistent non-payers or vehicles with inaccurate or non-existent DVLA vehicle ownership data - sometimes the result of deliberate evasion.

PCN revenue was at a similar level to 2018/19 as Ashford continues to make improvements in the quality of tickets issued and in the collection of outstanding debt.

Restrictions imposed on-street in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant effect on the level of parking revenue generated in the last remaining weeks of the financial year.

We continue to improve the quality of PCNs issued and in the collection of outstanding debt. This in part, is due to a better standard of evidence collected to support PCNs, improvements in PCN processing, and a closer relationship with the Council's Civil Enforcement Agents (bailiffs). Effective debt recovery enhances the credibility of deterrence and forms a vital element of the enforcement process.

## PCN Challenges

The percentage of PCNs cancelled against the total issued remained consistent at 15% for this year and the previous year. Reviewing and communicating the Council's approach to handling cases of mitigation where the motorist has made a genuine mistake has led to levelling out of PCN cancellations. The back office team also continues to take positive steps in providing officer feedback to drive the number of cancellations down.

## Appeals

The Council seeks to provide a transparent and fair parking enforcement service. Motorists who feel that they have been unfairly issued with a Penalty Charge Notice may contest the charge. All representations must be made in writing.

The Council has a dedicated and qualified specialist team who consider each case based upon its own merits. All formal correspondence is handled within the statutory time periods allowed for response.

The Council's web-based service allows customers to view PCNs they have received, submit a challenge or representation, monitor the progress of the representation, view photos of the incident, and make payments. Should a motorist remain unhappy with our final decision, they can appeal to the independent appeals service, the Traffic Penalty Tribunal, who will make an impartial decision based upon the merits of the case in question.

## Traffic Parking Tribunal Data

The volume of appeals heard at the Traffic Parking Tribunal saw an increase in 2019/20 over the previous year 2018/19. This is due, in part, to consideration of genuine mistakes and Ashford's continued vigilance in addressing potential issues on-street.

The percentage of cases where adjudicators found in favour of the Council (dismissed) saw an increase in 2019/20, which is a clear indication of Ashford's commitment to providing quality, robust evidence presented at the appeal stage.

### 2019-20

31 appeals made

17 dismissed

10 allowed

4 not contested

### 2018-19

25 appeals made

20 dismissed

5 allowed

10 not contested





## 7. Customer Care

Customer satisfaction is key to the delivery of parking services. With a growing move to online and self-service parking account management services, we continue to make enhancements to the permit system and online PCN representations.

More information is now available on the parking pages of the Council's website about on-street and off-street parking provisions, products, services and general information. Careful care and attention has been taken to ensure navigation around the site is simple.

In the final week of March 2020, an unprecedented lockdown was introduced by Central Government to mitigate the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. Motoring activity was reduced to significantly less than half its normal level, with a corresponding significant reduction in parking income. Ashford Parking Teams responded quickly and effectively to this challenge. All back-office staff were immediately enabled to work from home with no significant loss of service.

The pandemic has had an impact on everyone and has created pressures on residents and local business owners – both financially and in terms of physical and mental health. Whilst there have clearly more important things than parking with which we have all concerned ourselves over the last 12 months, the Council

has adjusted its services to meet the new needs that have arisen due to COVID-19.

To date, these measures include:

- A reduction in parking enforcement staff presence during full lockdown, with special focus put on protecting access to parking and loading for key workers.
- A reduction in the types of debt collection activities our enforcement agents undertake, temporarily halting doorstep visits and recommending debt collection whilst considering the impact COVID-19 may have on debtor's ability to make payments – these the doorstep visits have re-commenced.
- Suspending numerous parking spaces outside shops to allow for footpaths to be widened and help people maintain safe distances from one another.
- Some members of staff from the parking team were temporarily redeployed to facilitate distribution of food parcels to those who needed to shield between March and July.



## Customer Complaints

Parking Services receives complaints and must respond to these in accordance as per our website, the link is below.

<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints/>

2019-20  
24

2018-19  
27

## Freedom of Information (FOI)

Parking Services receives Freedom of Information requests and must respond to these in accordance with the legislation. For the financial year 2019-20, Parking Services received a total of seven Freedom of Information Requests, compared to 31 in the previous year.

You can view the archive of requests at:  
<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/transparency/freedom-of-information/>

## 8. Paid for Parking

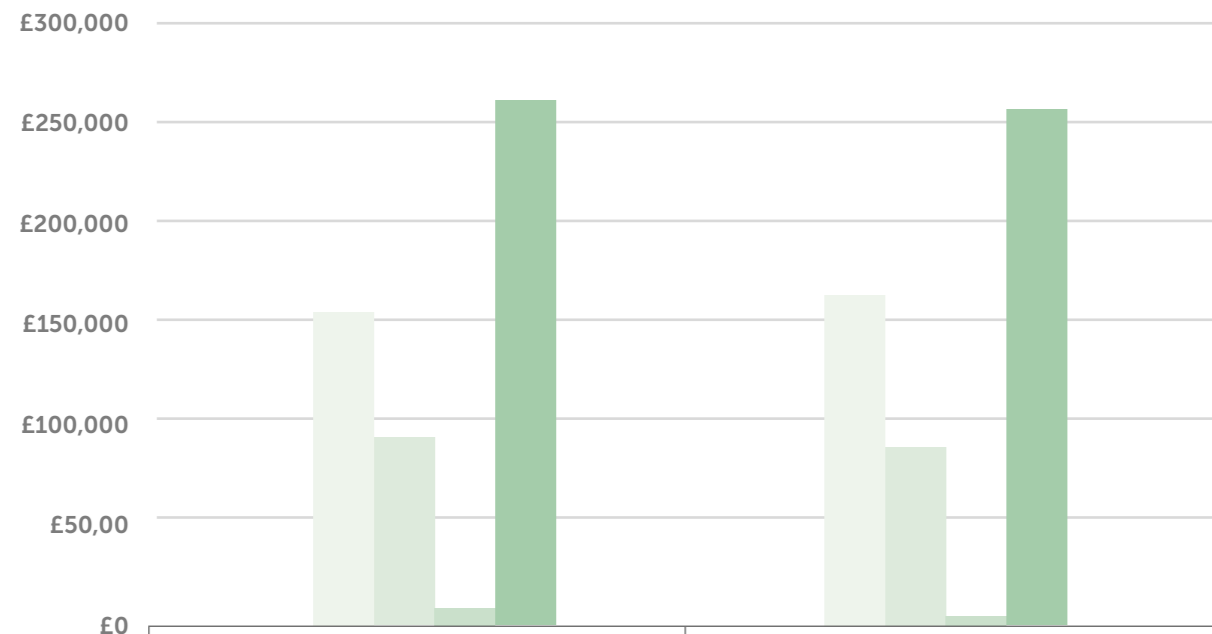
Parking enforcement includes combined revenue from suspensions, dispensations, permits and PCNs. This is to provide financial information relating to all aspects of parking enforcement operations including, the income and expenditure related to the enforcement activities recorded in the Parking Account, and how the surplus on the account has been, or will be spent.





## Car Park Income

### Off Street Income



	2018/19	2019/20
Ashford Car Parks	£158,547.00	£163,239.30
Tenterden Car Parks	£93,165.70	£86,512.90
Off Street Income	£11,205.00	£9,426.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>£262,918.40</b>	<b>£259,178.50</b>

### Demand for paid-for parking fell slightly

There has also been a slight decrease in the number of transactions compared to 2018/19 and this is prevalent across all parking zones. In 2019-20 transactions were 1,281,284 compared to 1,303,907 in 2018-19.

### How Car Park Payments are made Cashless

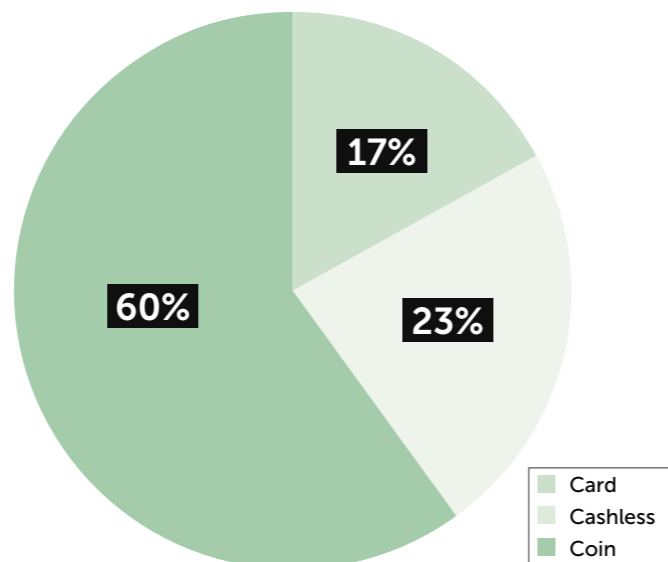
The Council remains firmly committed to delivering the best value for money to our residents and visitors to the borough. The public's appetite for cashless parking continues to grow. As more and more customers are choosing to pay electronically for all their purchases, we need to adapt and make sure we offer a convenient way to all customers to purchase their parking.

We are continuing to review and rationalise the number of pay and display machines needed to provide service to customers by removing underutilised machines.

We are reducing our carbon impact, reducing on-costs for cash collection and maintenance.

Where demand shows a need for a pay by cash option, we will continue to provide an option to pay by cash in that location.

### Payments Methods for 2019-20



### Resident's Parking Permits

The way the Council's parking permit scheme operates is changing. Over the coming year we are moving to virtual permits.

Customers will be able to apply for and manage their permits online. Valid permits will appear on our officers' handheld devices. Residents must meet specific criteria to buy a resident's parking permit. There will be no need to wait for a paper permit to arrive in the post. Once we accept an application, the virtual permit will generally be ready to use the next day.

Permit charges apply primarily to manage/review demand to ensure the resident permit scheme is currently not over-subscribed, which could be particularly acute in certain parking zones within Ashford.

The aim is to regulate parking where demand is high, to ensure safe and free flow of traffic and give residents, who live in a zone, a reasonable opportunity to park their car.

We will endeavour to monitor the shift in people's transport patterns over the last few years; moving away from cars with an increase in greener options such as cycling and public transport. We hope to evidence that residents

are adopting a different view on car ownership. We operate a fully integrated online system for resident permits, and online transactions account for the majority of applications and renewals.

### Suspensions and Dispensations

Parking bay suspensions and dispensations are available for a fee. These facilitate large deliveries to residential properties, allowing residents to move home with as little inconvenience as possible. Suspensions are also arranged for a fee per week to allow for road or utility works to take place on the highway or during construction works.

The temporary suspension of a parking bay reserves a specific bay or bays for use on a specified day, or part of a day, by a specified vehicle. If granted, the Council will post notices in advance alerting motorists of when the bays will be suspended. Commercial building works, including loading/unloading access, tend to be for the longer term.

A dispensation temporarily allows parking in a location that is ordinarily not possible. If granted, the Council will issue a permit that must be displayed in the windscreen on the authorised vehicle.





# Financial information

An important purpose of the Annual Report is to meet a key requirement set out in the 2015 Statutory Guidance issued under the Traffic Management Act 2004. This is to provide financial information relating to all aspects of parking enforcement operations including the income and expenditure related to enforcement activities recorded in the Parking Account and how the surplus on the account has been, or will be spent, the number of PCNs issued and the number of PCNs paid.

## Parking Surplus

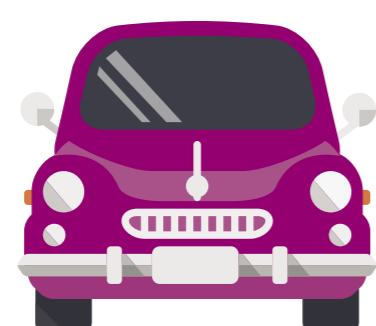
The use of any surplus in the parking account is governed by Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The legislation specifies how the surplus may be used and be allocated to cover the costs as detailed below (but not limited to):

- Transport, highway or road improvements
- Environmental improvements (includes a reduction of environmental pollution)
- Provision of outdoor recreational facilities available to the general public without charge.

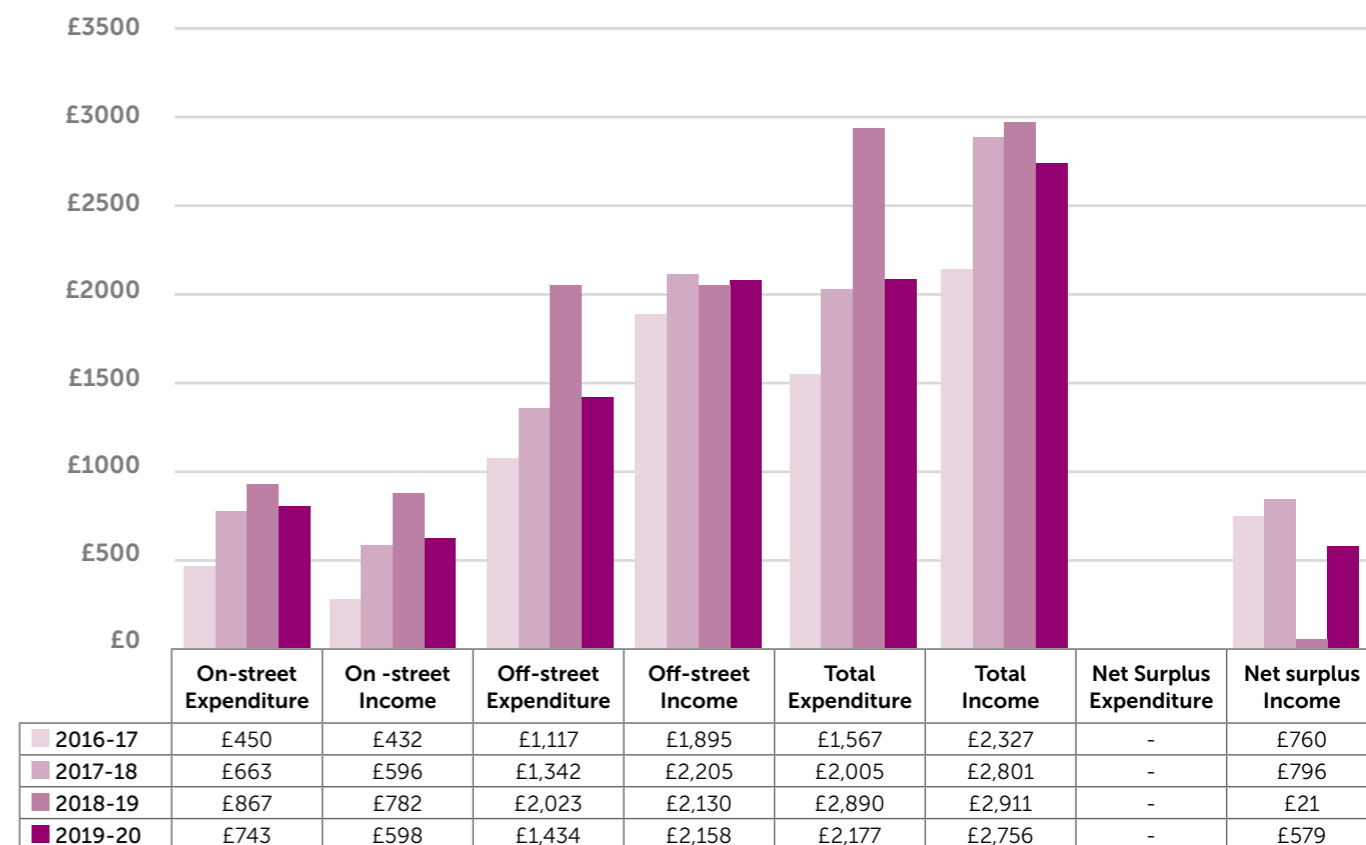
Income from off-street charges goes into the Council's general fund and is not ring-fenced for transport related schemes.

Restrictions imposed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant effect on the level of parking revenue generated in the last remaining weeks of the financial year.

The reported level of revenue generated from the parking service for 2019/20 saw a decrease of 1.05% over the previous year.



## Income and Expenditure







### Contravention Code List – On Street

Higher / Lower	Offence Code	Offence Description
Higher	01	Parked in a restricted street during prescribed hours
Higher	02	Parked or loading/unloading in a restricted street where waiting and loading/unloading restrictions are in force
Higher	12	Parked in a residents' or shared use parking place or zone displaying an invalid permit, an invalid voucher or an invalid pay & display ticket
Higher	16	Parked in a suspended bay or space or part bay or space
Lower	19	Parked in residents' or shared use parking place or zone displaying an invalid permit, an invalid voucher or an invalid pay & display ticket
Higher	21	Parked in a suspended bay or space or part of bay or space
Lower	22	Re-parked in the same parking place or zone within one hour of leaving
Higher	23	Parked in a parking place or area not designated for that class of vehicle
Lower	24	Not parked correctly within the bay or space
Higher	25	Parked in a loading place during restricted hours without loading
Higher	26	Vehicle parked more than 50 centimetres from the edge of the carriageway and not within a designated parking place
Higher	27	Parked in a special enforcement area adjacent to a dropped footway, cycle track or verge lowered to meet the level of the carriageway
Higher	28	Parked in a special enforcement area on part of the carriageway raised to meet the level of a footway, cycle track or verge
Lower	30	Parked for longer than permitted
Higher	40	Parked in a designated disabled person's parking place without displaying a valid disabled person's badge in the prescribed manner
Higher	42	Parked in a parking place designated for police vehicles
Higher	45	Parked on a taxi rank
Higher	46	Stopped where prohibited (on a red route or clearway)
Higher	47	Stopped on a restricted bus stop or stand
Higher	48	Stopped in a restricted area outside a school when prohibited
Higher	49	Parked Wholly or partly on a cycle track or lane
Higher	55	A commercial vehicle parked in a restricted street in contravention of the overnight waiting restriction
Higher	56	Parked in contravention of a commercial vehicle waiting restriction
Higher	61	A heavy commercial vehicle wholly or partly parked on a footway, verge or land between two carriageways
Higher	62	Parked one or more wheels on any part of an urban road other than the carriageway (footway parking)
Higher	99	Stopped on a pedestrian crossing and/or crossing area marked

### Contravention Code List – Off Street

Higher / Lower	Offence Code	Offence Description
Higher	70	Parked in a loading place or bay during restricted hours without loading
	80	Parked for longer than the maximum period permitted
Higher	81	Parked in a restricted area in a car park
Higher	82	Parked after expiry of paid for time
Higher	83	Parked in a car park without clearly displaying a valid pay & display ticket or voucher or parking clock
Higher	85	Parked in a permit bay without clearly displaying a valid permit
Lower	86	Parked beyond bay markings
Higher	87	Parked in a designated disabled person's parking place without displaying a valid disabled person's badge in the prescribed manner
Higher	89	Vehicle parked exceeds maximum weight and/or height permitted in the area.
Higher	91	Parked in a car park or area not designated for that class of vehicle
Higher	92	Parked causing an obstruction.
Lower	93	Parked in car park when closed.
Lower	95	Parked in a parking place for a purpose other than the designated purpose for the parking place.





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