

# Call for ballot on borough split over parking charges

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Tenterden could leave Ashford borough if the town's parking situation is not resolved soon.

The Tenterden Parking Forum has suggested that townfolk be balloted on whether they want to break away from Ashford Borough Council and come under another authority.

Cllr Robin Wade, who chaired the meeting of the town council's finance and general purposes committee and is also chairman of the Tenterden Parking Forum, said: "We are not getting value for money or being taken seriously."

"We should ask the population if it wants to consider another council."

"Tenterden and District Residents Association is sure that if it went to a referendum, there would be a landslide in favour of another council."

Cllr Wade was speaking at the meeting on Monday on the little-used Bridewell Lane car park. Ashford council is refusing to pay for automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) to allow a shop workers' discount scheme



**Cllr Robin Wade**

to go ahead there. Cllr Wade said the mood at the latest meeting of the parking forum – which is made up of councillors, residents, traders, churches and tourist groups – was "hot under the collar".

He said: "The solution for a discount scheme for workers is ANPR at £50,000. Ashford council officers were putting that recommendation to a committee, but we discovered it was crushed before it got to committee."

"We were told there were no capital funds. The forum's view was to ask the town council to fund the work, but it does not



**The Tenterden town crest**

feel right to ask the council to pay." Cllr Wade said the forum had come up with three options – get Ashford council to reconsider funding the ANPR system, consider getting the town council to buy and run Bridewell Lane car park, or break away from Ashford borough completely.

He said: "It is not good enough to say anything that happens has to be across the borough. There are concessionary parking schemes in Ashford."

"Our shop workers on zero-hours contracts are key workers for the town. They cannot afford these very high parking



**The Ashford borough crest**

charges." Cllr Sue Ferguson said that something had to be done to get commuter cars off residential streets.

She said: "We need fairness for Tenterden. You cannot have workers in Ashford paying one amount and people in Tenterden paying much more."

Councillors agreed to leave further negotiations to the Tenterden Parking Forum.

What do you think? Write to [Kenshi Express, 34-36 North Street, Ashford TN24 8JR](mailto:Kenshi Express, 34-36 North Street, Ashford TN24 8JR) or email [kenshiexpress@thekmgroupp.co.uk](mailto:kenshiexpress@thekmgroupp.co.uk)

NO FEES ON SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS



Free town-centre parking will be launched in Tenterden this weekend.

Fees will be scrapped at the Ashford Borough Council-run car park in Bridewell Lane on Sundays and bank holidays.

The motivation is to support retailers by attracting more visitors into the town and making the High Street an attractive option for new businesses.

Cllr Bernard Heyes, Ashford council portfolio holder for transportation, highways and engineering, said: "Over the past year we have undertaken an extensive review of our parking policy throughout the borough."

"As a consequence, I am sure that these bold initiatives will attract more visitors to Tenterden and boost trade,

which will ultimately benefit trading ventures and visitors."

Talks between Ashford council and Tenterden Parking Forum are under way regarding a further discount scheme for workers in Bridewell Lane car park.

Town clerk Phil Burgess said: "This is a great outcome for the town and is a direct result of the strong working relationship between Tenterden Parking Forum and Ashford Borough Council."

That relationship has already resulted in free tourist coach parking in Station Road.

Ashford council plans to update car park payment machines later this year by installing modern ones which accept fees by phone, bank cards and contactless technology.

## 'THE BUDGET IS NOT YOURS'



**Cllr Paul Clokie**

Criticism of the town council and Tenterden Parking Forum demanding that money be spent came from borough and town councillor Paul Clokie.

He said: "The budget you are playing with is not yours, it is someone else's."

"It is to pay for all the services you receive."

"You can demand that money is spent as much as you like, but you do not have the budget

and only contribute 6% to it. Ashford council has said no to automatic number plate recognition."

"Having said no, we have to fall back and see what other systems we can have that let people use the car park."

"One way is to have some of the spaces blocked off for cheap commuter parking, but the majority [of commuters] will not pursue that."



**The debate is raging over Bridewell Lane Car Park**