

PAPER NO. 5

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 10th OCTOBER 2016

Meeting: Executive
Date: 10th October 2016
Subject: Car Parking Strategy
Report of: Elaine Bird – Regulatory Services Manager
Portfolio Holder: Cllr N. Bannister
Status: Recommendation
Relevant Ward(s): All Wards

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to approve the draft car parking strategy and recommendations for public consultation and to approve the extension of the contract for the interim parking manager to oversee the implementation of the changes to the (Off-Street Parking Places) Order.

2 Recommendations:

2.1 It is recommended that Executive approve the following:

2.1.1 That the draft Car Parking Strategy attached at Appendix A goes out to public consultation; and

2.1.2 The proposed changes to the (Off Street Parking Places) Order set out in a) to g) below go out to public consultation

- a) the proposed tariff structure;
- b) the re-designation of car parks to amend the number of long and short stay spaces;
- c) the introduction of charging at Symington Recreation Ground car park;
- d) the introduction of alternative payment methods;
- e) the proposed changes to the permits currently available to business and residents;
- f) the introduction of electrical charging points;
- g) the provision of coach parking.

2.1.3 That the Executive approves the exemption from the Harborough District Council Procurement Statement of Required Practice, (‘the

Procurement SORP') for the extension of the contract on the grounds that "the particular reputation or personal and professional expertise or experience of the contractor is of central importance to the contract (for example, an expert witness, specialist consultant or advocate). This may also apply if work previously undertaken by the provider means that they are clearly and uniquely best equipped to carry out the new work." (7.1.7).

3 Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The current car parking strategy was published in 2008. Whilst there is no legal requirement for a Council to provide car parking facilities, they do play an important part in promoting the vitality of the town centres.
- 3.2 To ensure that the Council's parking assets meet the requirements of the local residents, businesses and visitors to the district 2020 Consultancy was commissioned to review the current strategy. The draft car parking strategy can be found in Appendix A.
- 3.3 The consultants made a number of recommendations for further consideration which will form the basis of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy.
- 3.4 An Executive Working Group made up of members of the Executive and relevant officers, was established to review in more detail the recommendations.
- 3.5 The recommendations from the Executive Working Group were considered by the Scrutiny Panel for Performance on the 15th September 2016 and their comments have been incorporated into this report.
- 3.6 A number of the recommendations can be implemented without the need to amend the current (Off-Street Parking Places) Order; however there are several changes that will need to be incorporated into the amended order. It is necessary to consult on the proposed changes to the Order. The comments from this consultation will be considered as part of the development of the Order.
- 3.7 The post of Parking Manager is currently covered by a interim contractor as there have been two unsuccessful attempts to recruit to the post on a permanent basis. The current contractor has been an integral member of the Executive Working Group and his expertise in this area has been vital in the development of the recommendations. It is necessary to retain this expertise during the development and implementation of the new Parking Order. To allow his continued involvement it is necessary to approve an exemption to the Council's procurement SORP.

4 Key Facts

4.1 To ensure that the Council's parking assets meet the requirements of the local residents, businesses and visitors to the district, 2020 Consultancy was commissioned to review the current parking strategy.

4.2 The brief to the consultants was to develop a strategy taking into consideration the following factors:

- Consideration of all users
- Ensuring the right mix of long and short stay car parks
- Ensuring effective enforcement
- Ensuring the Council has an adequate charging structure to ensure effective delivery of the service and the quality of parking provision.

4.3 The consultants identified a number of key outcomes for further consideration and development. An Executive Working Group made up of members of the Executive and relevant officers, was established to review the recommendations from the consultants and to develop them into operational proposals.

4.4 The proposals from the Executive Working Group were considered by the Scrutiny Panel for Performance on the 15th September 2016.

4.5 **Use of the car parks**

4.5.1 The economic climate does have an impact on the use of car parks but recent trends show that the number of transactions is increasing. The consultants carried out an assessment of car park usage and modelled future demands. The consultants found that in the short term, parking in Market Harborough should not be a problem. There is more of an issue in Lutterworth, but the different parking tariff structure in Lutterworth may be contributing to this with more people over staying in the car park spaces.

4.5.2 There is more demand on parking spaces in Market Harborough at weekends which reflect the fact that the town is an attractive place to visit at weekends.

4.5.3 In the longer term capacity might become more of an issue as the size of the population increases. Maintenance programmes in the car parks are being designed to maximise the number of spaces available and also improved signage should direct users to currently under-utilised car parks.

4.5.4 The current Off Street Parking Order includes a number of non-council owned car parks and during the consultation we will be contacting the owners of these car parks to determine whether there is any merit in removing them from the Order. If a private car park is in the Parking Order the Council could

undertake enforcement on behalf of the owner and if appropriate charge the owner for this service.

4.6 Parking Tariff Structure

4.6.1 The right parking tariff is important in managing parking provision. It is generally acknowledged that charging for car parking is accepted by motorists and in setting the proposed parking tariff structure, the Executive Working Group considered the how the charges would:

- Support economic vitality
- Make best use of Council assets
- Recover costs, maintain and improve the service.

4.6.2 Benchmarking data shows that the current charging structure for the Council is lower than the majority of the comparator towns for both long and short stay car parks. A full breakdown of the benchmarking data can be found on page 11 of the attached draft parking strategy – Appendix A.

4.6.3 The car parking tariff was last reviewed in 2012 and following consideration of a number of different options, the Executive Working Group proposes the introduction of the parking tariff set out in table 1 below

Car park	Up to 1 hour	Up to 2 hours	Up to 3 hours	Up to 4 hours	Over 4 hours
Current Short-stay	N/A	70p	£1.20	£1.70	£3.20
Lutterworth	N/A	£1.00	£1.50	£2.50	£4.00
Market Harborough Short stay	N/A	£1.00	£1.50	£2.50	£6:00
Current Long-stay		£1.20			£2.20
All long stay car parks		£2.00			£4.00

4.6.4 The Scrutiny Panel for Performance queried what impact maintaining the current 70p charge for 2 hours would have on the projected income. The 2 hour tariff is the most popular length of stay and maintaining at the current level could reduce the projected income by approximately 30% per annum which would have a significant impact on the Council's ability to develop the car park assets.

4.6.5 Currently the parking charges apply Monday to Saturday, including Bank Holidays. Data shows that there is a demand for parking on Bank Holidays and transaction figures for the Bank Holidays (excluding Easter) for 2016 show that there were over 5300 parking tickets purchased. The

recommendation is to remove the requirement to pay for visiting on a Bank Holiday.

- 4.6.6 The proposed tariff will remove the 1 hour free parking for Lutterworth but to off-set this impact a number of “pop and shop” free bays will be introduced. The pop and shop bays have proved to be very popular in Market Harborough to enable shoppers to carry out short term shopping trips without incurring any costs but still ensuring there is sufficient turn over of spaces in the car parks.
- 4.6.7 The proposal is to change the designation of all of the Council car parks in Lutterworth as short stay car parks and the proposed pricing structure reflects this change. It is anticipated that this will provide more flexibility in Lutterworth for parking provision.
- 4.6.8 It is also proposed to introduce charges to the Symington Recreation Ground car park. Parking at the recreation ground is not currently charged for however observations do indicate that most vehicles use this car park for purposes other than the use of the recreation facilities and the car park is in close walking distance to the town centre and the train station. The proposal is to introduce some wait limit areas which will not be charged to allow users of the ground to use the facility without payment.
- 4.6.9 The Council offers a number of permits for specific car parks in Market Harborough and Lutterworth. The permits can be registration or businesses specific and based on the current charging structure the permits are heavily discounted and there is a high demand for them. In recent months several applications have been rejected because there were insufficient numbers of permits to meet demand.
- 4.6.10 The current permit scheme is very complex and permits are available for either 3, 5 or 6 days and can be renewed annually, half yearly or quarterly. Evidence shows that the majority of permits purchased are for either the 5 or 6 day period and are renewed annually.
- 4.6.11 The Executive Working Group have looked to review the current permit system and concluded that the present range of permits should be simplified to a single 6 day permit (Mon to Sat) only available in long stay car parks.
- 4.6.12 The cost of the permit is based on the actual cost of the highest tariff for the long stay car park with a 40% discount and the proposal is to introduced a phased increase in the price of the permits. Each increase in the charges will require a variation to the (Off Street Parking Places) Order. The proposed charges are set out in table 2 below.

Permit Type	Long Stay Car Park Permit - New Price		
	Annual	Half Yearly	Monthly
6 day permit			
Actual costs	£1152.00	£576.00	£96.00
Year 1: 40% discount	£696.00	£350.00	£62.00
Year 3: 33% discount	£777.00	£390.00	£69.00
Year 5: 25% discount	£869.00	£437.00	£77.00

4.6.13 The car park in Stamford Road Market Harborough has been designated as permit holders only for residents of Nithsdale Avenue. There is no charge for the permit subject to an administration fee of £5 +VAT. The administration charge has never been reviewed and no longer reflects the cost of delivering this service. The recommendation from the Executive Working Group is to increase the administration charge to £40 per annum.

4.6.14 The Scrutiny Panel for Performance did raise some concerns that increasing the cost of the Stamford Road car park significantly may deter residents from purchasing a permit resulting in more displaced vehicles in the local vicinity. It was agreed to monitor the situation.

4.7 **Alternative methods of payment.**

4.7.1 The user survey and discussions with a small business focus group confirmed that alternative payment methods would be welcomed by car park users. Whilst pay on exit was the favoured method by users, this approach is not readily suitable for the types of car parks within the district as it would require significant resource to manage each car park and also the current location and lay out of the car parks could create congestion problems with users needing to obtain a ticket when they enter the car park.

4.7.2 The introduction of pay by phone provides car park users the convenience to extend their stay without having to return to the car park to purchase a further ticket.

4.7.3 The exiting machines are due for renewal and quotations have been received from a number of suppliers for their replacement. All new machines offer cashless and contactless payment methods as standard as well as accepting cash payments. The budget has been identified in the Capital Programme for 2016-17 for the replacement of the machines. The new machines will be purchased during this year and the cashless functionality can be switched on at a later date when the new Parking Order takes affect.

4.7.4 There is a transaction charge for using both cashless and pay by phone payment methods. The Executive Working Group agreed that due to the potential financial impact on the Council with the introduction of chip and pin/cashless payments (including pay by phone) all transaction costs should

be passed on to the service user. Appropriate signage will ensure that all service users are made aware of this additional charge.

4.8 Other proposed amendments to the (Off-Street Parking Places) Order

- 4.8.1 Whilst there is relatively low demand for the provision of electrical charging points in the car parks, it is recognised that demand may increase and the Executive Working Group recommends the inclusion of the provision of electrical charging point be included in the amended parking to enable installation to be carried out in the future.
- 4.8.2 Officers are continuing to explore options in relation to coach parking within Market Harborough.

4.9 Car Parking Management

- 4.9.1 The Council has had problems recruiting to the post of Parking Manager and the post is currently being cover by a contractor. Whilst the provision of this service is within existing budget, the value of the contract has now exceeded the Council's threshold for tenders of £50,000 (Procurement SORP 16.1). The contractor has been an integral member of the Executive Working Group and his expertise has helped develop the proposed recommendations and his expertise and knowledge is vital for the implementation of the changes. Consequently an exemption to SORP is therefore necessary on the grounds that:

“the particular reputation or personal and professional expertise or experience of the contractor is of central importance to the contract (for example, an expert witness, specialist consultant or advocate). This may also apply if work previously undertaken by the provider means that they are clearly and uniquely best equipped to carry out the new work.” (7.1.7).

- 4.9.2 The Council is legally required under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 to issue a tender for any service whose total contract value exceeds £164,176. The value of the current contract will therefore be capped at this level. If there is a possibility that work required means that this sum is likely to be exceeded, either a full tender process will be instigated well in advance of the point at which the threshold is reached or a further recruitment attempt will be carried out. That side, once the new Parking Order is in place it is the intention to attempt to recruit to this post on a permanent basis rather than having the need to use a contractor.

5 Legal Issues

- 5.1 Any changes to the current arrangements will require an amendment to the (Off-Street Parking Places) Order. In light of this it is necessary to retain the experienced officer to complete the development and implementation of the amended (Off-Street Parking Places) Order.

5.2 The procurement of services is covered by the Council's Statement of Required Practice and EU Procurement legislation as set out in the body of this report.

5.3 Whilst there is no legal requirement to undertake enforcement it is recognised that effective and proportionate enforcement is essential to protect the vitality of the local community and to control illegal parking.

6 Resource Issues

6.1 The extension of the interim Parking Manager contract will be met within exiting budget.

6.2 The replacement of the pay and display machines has already been identified through the Capital Programme.

6.3 A number of the proposals within this report will increase the potential income from the car parking service which can help support the maintenance of the parking assets and enforcement provision. If all of the proposals are adopted it is anticipated that the yield from car parking will increase in the region of £200K

6.4 Under Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulations (1984), a Local Authority's surplus from the car parking service can be allocated to cover the costs as detailed below, but not limited to:

- Transport, Highways or Road improvements
- Environmental improvements (including reduction of environmental pollution)
- Provision of outdoor recreational facilities available to the general public without charge

7 Equality Analysis Implications/Outcomes

7.1 The review of the parking strategy will have an impact of certain sectors of the population. The main areas are:

- Lack of suitable parking spaces, including disabled bays
- Revised tariff structure.
- Security in car parks
- Alternative payment methods

The Equality Assessment in appendix B sets out in more detail the issues and mitigation measures to be taken to minimise the impact.

8. Risk Management Implications

8.1 Parking is a service, and the service has to be managed properly. A "free for all" i.e. no restrictions, no charge and no enforcement approach is not an

option in good management and will have a detrimental impact on the local community.

9 Consultation

9.1 The Executive Working Group, comprising of Cllrs Pain, King and Bannister have been fully involved in the development of the proposals set out in this report.

9.2 The consultants who developed the draft parking strategy carried out a survey on current service users prior to the development of the strategy and their findings helped shape the recommendations of the strategy. The overarching findings of the survey are:

- Generally the users of car park are happy with the current arrangements
- Shopping trips are the main reason people use the car parks
- Alternative payment methods would be appreciated
- The current charging structure is deemed appropriate.

9.3 A small focus group of local businesses or their representatives through the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Trade and Commerce was held to discuss the Council's approach to reviewing the parking strategy and the recommended outcomes. Generally the feed back was very positive and the areas of discussion included:

- The introduction of cashless payments, especially pay by phone and the benefits this would have for businesses
- Getting the right mix of long and short stay car parks
- The ability for local businesses to advertise on the pay and display machines and the possible expansion of the parking refund scheme to other shops.
- The use of car parks, particularly in Lutterworth, to promote the night time economy
- The importance of interdependency of parking services with local development and growth.
- Possible coach parking in Lutterworth.

9.4 Any amendment to the (Off Street Parking Places) Order will require full public consultation.

10. Options

10.1 The Executive Working Group considered a number of different options as part of the development of the proposed recommendations. This included the impact of different tariff structures, the introduction of Sunday charging and the widening of the "pop and shop" throughout the district. These options were not considered viable because of the potential impact on the vitality of the

towns and the financial impact on the council to deliver the current service and to provide future improvements.

11 Background Papers

11.1 None

Previous report(s):

Report to the Scrutiny Panel for Performance 15th September 2016

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: N

Ward Members Notified: N/A

Appendices:

A. Draft Car Parking Strategy

B. Equality assessment