

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 7 September 2020

Portfolio:	Policy and Resources
Subject:	Parking Service Review
Report of:	Director of Leisure and Community
Corporate Priorities:	Strong, Safe, Inclusive and Healthy Communities. Dynamic, Prudent and Progressive Council.

Purpose:

This report sets out the results of a detailed review of the Council's Parking Service, and provides options for the future delivery of the service.

Executive summary:

The on-street parking enforcement Agency Agreement with Hampshire County Council was terminated, at the County Council's request, on 31 March 2020.

In order to prepare for this change, the Executive agreed to a wide-ranging review of the Parking Service. This took place during 2019 with desk research, parking surveys and a public consultation feeding into the analysis. The detailed results of the review can be found in Appendix A.

A new General Enforcement Team has been created and was fully operational by 01 April 2020, at which point the Council was no longer responsible for on-street parking.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, charging for town centre car parks ceased between 25 March and 1 June 2020. This resulted in lost income of just over £300,000, placing further financial pressure on the Council.

The proposals for the future are outlined in the report and have the potential to generate a significant new revenue stream for the Council which will help to offset the costs of the parking service, including major improvements to Osborn Rd Multi-Storey Car Park, as well as contributing to the £1.5 million shortfall in the Council's medium term financial plan.

Recommendations:

That the Executive approves:

- a) A pay-by-app option be introduced for all pay and display car parks in the Borough;
- b) new pay-on-foot machines be procured for Osborn Road, Fareham Shoppers and Market Quay car parks and a budget of £250,000 be allocated for this purpose;
- c) a charge of £3 be introduced to all coastal car parks in the Borough covering a period of 4 hours;
- d) new solar powered pay-and-display machines be procured for the coastal car parks and a budget of £75,000 be allocated for this purpose;
- e) Meon Shore car park be upgraded with improved surfacing and marked bays at a cost of £40,000;
- f) dragon's teeth and height barriers be installed in Monks Hill and Salterns car parks at a cost of £23,000;
- g) a consultation exercise on a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) be undertaken outlining any required changes to parking restrictions; and
- h) authority be delegated to the Director of Leisure and Community in consultation with the Executive Member for Health and Public Protection to conduct TRO consultations in free car parks where the limited time waiting limit is deemed too long.

Reason:

The introduction of daytime charging in coastal car parks would help fund future parking improvements as well as helping the Council to respond to the financial challenges it faces.

Cost of proposals:

The creation of a new General Enforcement Team has saved £91,300 in annual employee costs. Redundancy costs of approximately £90,000 were met through existing budgets. The provision of new payment equipment at car parks will cost £325,000, with upgrades to coastal car parks costing £65,000. £190,000 to allow the upgrading of the ageing parking infrastructure was approved as part of the Capital Strategy by the 6 January 2020 Executive. The additional £190,000 required would be funded from the Council's reserves, to be paid back through the new revenue streams identified within the report. If approved, the additional charging could generate up to £900,000 a year. Future improvements to Osborn Road multi storey car park and other car parks would also be funded from this income.

Appendices: A: Detailed Parking Review Results

Background papers: Survey results

Reference papers: Report to the Executive on 4 March 2019 entitled "Parking Enforcement"

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Executive Briefing Paper

Date:	7 September 2020
Subject:	Parking Service Review
Briefing by:	Director of Leisure and Community
Portfolio:	Health and Public Protection

INTRODUCTION

1. This report sets out the results of a detailed review of the Council's Parking Service, and puts forward options for the future delivery of the service.

BACKGROUND

2. The Council owns 44 off-street car parks providing approximately 4,400 spaces at different locations across the Borough. The majority are free, with only the 17 car parks based in Fareham Town Centre being chargeable. The other car parks are based along the coast and at smaller district shopping areas such as Portchester and Stubbington.
3. From 2007, the Council was also responsible for on-street parking enforcement (i.e. traffic warden duties). This service was undertaken on behalf of Hampshire County Council via an Agency Agreement. The agreement allowed Fareham Borough Council to recover the costs of on-street enforcement through revenue generated by Penalty Charge Notices (PCN), residents' permits and dispensations.
4. In order to undertake both off-street and on-street parking enforcement, the Council employed a team of 8 Civil Enforcement Officers plus a manager.
5. In early 2019 Hampshire County Council gave notice that it intended to terminate the Agency Agreement at the end of March 2020. This meant that Fareham Borough Council would no longer be responsible for any aspect of on-street parking enforcement, including the management of residents permits.
6. This decision was reported to the Executive on 04 March 2019 and it was agreed that, in the light of such a major change to the Council's Parking Service, a detailed review should be undertaken to determine future options.
7. The results of this review are set out in Appendix A.

8. The Covid-19 pandemic has further intensified the financial challenges faced by the Council. Amongst other local responses, charging in town centre car parks ceased between 25 March and 01 June 2020. Approximately £150,000 a month was lost in off-street parking income during this time, with just over £300,000 being lost in total.
9. Whilst charging has now recommenced in the town centre, parking income will likely be negatively impacted for the foreseeable future as people continue to observe social distancing measures, resulting in less visits to the town centre.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

10. The overall aim of the review was to ensure that residents could benefit from improved off-street parking choices and a more responsive enforcement service, whilst delivering new revenue streams for the Council.
11. The review included research into the charging regimes of comparable councils as well as the latest parking technologies. It also included a consultation exercise on customers parking preferences, plus usage surveys in the town centre and coastal car parks.
12. It was also necessary to review the future size and structure of the Council's car parking team, given the loss of on-street enforcement responsibilities. This provided an opportunity to look at the possibility of merging the roles of car parking enforcement and environmental enforcement (i.e. dog control, littering etc).
13. The main results of the review are as follows:-
14. *Town Centre Parking income has seriously declined:* Income from parking charges dropped by nearly a quarter from approximately £2.50m in 2011/12 to £1.88m in 2019/2020.
15. *We offer good value:* Inner and outer car park charges have not risen since 2010 and 2008 respectively. Parking in the town centre is generally good value when compared to other Hampshire Councils, particularly if visiting for a number of hours in our 'outer' car parks.
16. *Daytime charges should not change:* Based on comparisons, there was scope for increasing charges, particularly in the outer car parks. However, in order to continue to support the vibrancy of the town centre, particularly as it recovers from the impact of Covid-19, it is proposed that charges should be maintained at their current level.
17. *Customers want more payment options:* Whilst we already offer a number of ways to pay for parking, many customers expressed a wish to be able to make payment by phone app within the public survey. It is proposed that this service is introduced in all of the Council's Pay-and-Display car parks.
18. *Season tickets and permits are complicated and hard to enforce:* The old system of Season Tickets; Blue Badge Parking; Employee and Tenant Parking is complicated and difficult to enforce. Many Councils now manage these digitally without the need for paper permits. It is proposed that, in future, season tickets are managed electronically, improving the user experience. Parking officers will have all the ticket data on their handheld devices making enforcement much simpler. This would be achieved by minor modifications to the current permit system and met within existing budgets.

19. *There is a high level of failure demand:* Out-of-date infrastructure (e.g. cameras, barriers and ticket machines) in Market Quay, Osborn Road and Fareham Shoppers car parks have resulted in a high level of failure demand (i.e. tickets not working). This creates additional work for officers and impacts on the customer experience. It is proposed to introduce the latest pay-on-foot technology to these car parks on a phased basis.
20. The preferred approach is one that combines ticketless and ticketed technology. Drivers visiting Fareham and parking in barrier car parks would have their number plate read with the barrier raising automatically on entrance. When leaving, visitors would type their number plate into a payment machine, make payment and then drive out as the barrier automatically raises on exit. If for any reason the number plate was not read on entrance, a barcode ticket would automatically be issued. These ticket types are much more reliable than the magnetic strip tickets that are currently issued by existing ticket machines.
21. *Many Councils charge for parking in the evening:* A number of Councils within Hampshire charge for evening parking in their town or city centres. Market Quay car park is well used during the evening and the results of the public survey show that people are willing to pay for the convenience of its location. Both Osborn Road Multi-Storey and Ferneham Hall car parks will increase in use once the remodelled Ferneham Hall opens. Therefore, a small evening charge at Market Quay, Osborn Road Multi-Storey and Ferneham Hall car parks could be a reasonable approach to take, and would generate significant income for the Council.
22. However, as the Council is committed to supporting the rejuvenation of town centre businesses following the impact of Covid-19, it is not proposed to introduce a charge at this time. Evening charges may be considered again in the future.
23. *Blue Badge Parking should remain free:* Other councils are beginning to introduce charges for disabled parking. It is not proposed to introduce such a fee in Fareham.
24. *Parking at District Centres e.g. Portchester and smaller car parks should remain free:* Most Councils within Hampshire do not charge at district centres, and there would potentially be a significant impact on local traders if this was introduced.
25. *Some designated waiting times are too long:* Some free car parks allow prolonged stays, potentially impacting on the availability of spaces. It is proposed that the limited waiting time allowed be reduced in car parks that currently allow longer stays e.g. 24 hours.
26. *Introduce charging for coastal car parks:* All councils on the South Coast (from Cornwall to Kent), apart from Fareham, charge in their coastal car parks. There is an expectation that people pay when parking by the coast, and are willing to do so.
27. The introduction of charging would help encourage greater turnover at busy car parks during the peak summer months. Issues such as motorhomes using the car parks as holiday destinations would also be tackled through updated parking conditions restricting overnight parking. Waiting restrictions would be placed on the Warsash Road car park to help keep spaces free for those wanting to visit local shops.
28. It is proposed to introduce a charge of £3 for 4 hours between 10am and 6pm (allowing local dog walkers time to walk their dogs in the morning and evening with no parking fee). This compares well with neighbouring Gosport, which charges between £3.50 and

£4.00 for 4 hours parking and Hayling Island which costs £5.80. Other charging prices were assessed but they did not provide the right balance between being competitive with other local Councils, offering value to the customer and income to the Council.

29. Based on the parking surveys conducted, this proposal could generate up to £900,000 income per year. The purchase of the solar powered pay-and-display machines would cost approximately £75,000. There would also be some additional costs associated with cash collection and maintenance of the machines.
30. Condition surveys of the coastal car parks were conducted and a number of potential improvements were identified. The installation of height barriers and dragon's teeth, would aid enforcement and help contain parking within the designated areas in both Monks Hill and Salterns car parks. This proposal would cost £23,000.
31. Improvements to the shingle surface, the clear marking of parking bays and the replacement of the tired wooden barriers at the western end of Meon Shore car park would improve user experience and aid enforcement. This proposal would cost £40,000.

THE ENFORCEMENT TEAM

32. As stated above, it was necessary to review the future size and structure of the Council's car parking team, given the loss of on-street parking enforcement responsibilities. Members will be aware that such a restructure falls under the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer in his role as Head of Paid Service.
33. The first phase of the restructure was to split the Parking Enforcement Team into an off-street team of 4 officers and an on-street team of 4 officers, which took place late in 2019. The officers working within the on-street team were then offered the opportunity to transfer to the private parking contractor appointed by the County Council. No officers wished to transfer, resulting in redundancy costs of approximately £90,000.
34. The second phase of the restructure involved a review into the possibility of merging the roles of off-street car parking enforcement with environmental enforcement. Issues linked to environmental enforcement, such as littering and dog fouling, have long been priorities for our residents. More recently, many residents and businesses have also expressed concerns about anti-social behaviour in Fareham Town Centre linked to drug misuse, many of which have an environmental impact (e.g. drug paraphernalia littered in the town centre).
35. The review identified that whilst the two Environmental Enforcement Officers worked hard to tackle these issues, the limited level of resourcing meant that it was impossible to provide a responsive and effective service 7 days a week. As a result, it was decided to merge the roles of the Parking Enforcement Team and Environmental Enforcement Officers to create a General Enforcement Team of 6 people plus a manager.
36. The second restructure took place in early 2020 creating a General Enforcement Team. The timing of the restructure meant that there was sufficient time for the new team to become operationally effective before the removal of on-street enforcement in April.
37. Led by the Parking Manager, the team now provides the Council with a more resilient and flexible approach to enforcement, with a good level of parking and environmental enforcement across the Borough 7 days a week.

38. The team are also working closely with the officers involved in the town centre security trial with a view to including these security duties in their future role, as the security activity has been very well received by Fareham residents. They also played an important role, supporting the Police to enforce restrictions during the Coronavirus lockdown, providing guidance to the public and speaking to any people breaking the rules. This experience has given the Enforcement Officers a good grounding in many of the additional face-to-face enforcement duties they intend to take on.
39. In addition to providing a more effective enforcement service, the new approach has resulted in employee savings of £91,300 per year.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

40. It is important to recognise that the review of the parking service has been undertaken at a time when the Council faces a shortfall of £1.5 million in its medium term financial plan. In addition, the impact of the Covid-19 emergency is placing further pressure on the Council's finances. An "opportunities plan" has been compiled to identify new ways of generating income to reduce the shortfall, and the parking review is a key element of that plan.
41. The termination of the Agency Agreement also presented the Council with additional costs to meet, which have largely been offset by the annual reduction in staffing costs.
42. The proposals within this report include one off costs of approximately £325,000 to pay for the new parking machinery, £63,000 for improvements to coastal car parks and then approximately £900,000 in potential additional revenue. The new revenue stream would be used to pay back the one off costs as well as contributing to the overall costs of improving parking facilities (see below). The revenue stream would also make a significant contribution to closing the £1.5 million gap in the Council's future finances.

CAR PARK IMPROVEMENTS

43. A separate report is included on today's Executive Agenda regarding the long-term future of Osborn Road Multi-Storey Car Park. Following extensive testing and advice from structural engineers, it is proposed that the car park is remodelled to guarantee a good level of town centre parking for the foreseeable future. This will require a significant level of capital investment and will complement the Civic Quarter Masterplan and remodelled Ferneham Hall.
44. Condition surveys of all the Borough's Council owned car parks were conducted towards the end of 2019. They identified a number of car parks (excluding coastal car parks) that required a limited amount of maintenance such as re-lining, to continue to ensure a good level of parking provision. This work has now been completed.
45. Future improvements to all car parks will include electric car charging points and this will be reported to a future meeting of the Executive once the necessary research has been undertaken.

EQUALITIES

46. An Equalities Impact Assessment regarding the proposals in this report has been completed. It did not identify any significant impacts on residents and visitors. Blue Badge parking would remain free in coastal car parks and disabled spaces would

continue to be clearly marked. Both the new coastal and pay-on-foot payment machines would need to demonstrate their accessibility when procured. The pay by phone options, also provide alternatives for those not wanting to use the coastal payment machines.

47. Economically disadvantaged visitors would still be able to park at the coast for free before 10am and after 6pm. It must also be remembered that the Council's proposed coastal charge provides better value to the customer when compared to those levied by other local Councils.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CARBON REDUCTION IMPACT

48. The Government's strategy is to move away from petrol and diesel cars to electric cars. As such, there will still be a need for adequate car parking provision in the Borough in the future. The main impact of this report is to provide a significant new revenue stream which can be used to fund future improvements to the Council's car parks. Such improvements could include electric charging points and solar panels to provide energy to any car park infrastructure.
49. Specifically, the report includes a recommendation to purchase solar powered pay-and display machines for coastal car parks.
50. Initially, the proposals in the report would increase journeys by the General Enforcement Team as they would need to visit the coastal car parks for enforcement purposes. However, in the medium term, as the Council gradually replaces its fleet of diesel vehicles with electric vehicles, these carbon emissions would be significantly reduced.

NEXT STEPS

51. If the proposals outlined in the Parking Services Review are approved, the Council would need to consult on updated Traffic Regulation Orders for daytime charging at the coastal car parks. Procurement of the new pay-on-foot systems and the pay-and-display machines for the coastal car parks would begin immediately.
52. A further review will be undertaken after the first full year of operation to measure the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

CONCLUSION

53. This report has set out the results of a detailed review of the Council's Parking Service, and has put forward options for the future delivery of the service.
54. A new General Enforcement Team has been created and was fully operational by 1st April 2020, at which point the Council was no longer responsible for on-street parking. They played an important role in supporting lockdown restrictions during the Covid-19 emergency.
55. The proposals for the future have the potential to generate a significant new revenue stream for the Council which will help to offset the costs of the parking service, including major improvements to Osborn Rd Multi-Storey Car Park, as well as contributing to the £1.5 million shortfall in the Council's medium term financial plan.

Enquiries:

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