

PARKING STRATEGY ANNUAL REVIEW 2022-23

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES
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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: No
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Community, Leisure, and Parking
Wednesday 22nd March 2023

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on progress towards the delivery of the Parking Strategy and Action Plan (2020-2030) during 2022-23.

Recommendation

2. The Committee are recommended to note the contents of the Report.

Background

3. The Parking Strategy and Action Plan (2020-2030) was considered at the Scrutiny Committee for Housing, Planning and Economic Growth on 22 October 2020, and formally adopted and approved at Council on 9 December 2020.
4. The Strategy provides a strategic direction for the management of the Council's car parks, aimed at supporting sustainable economic growth across Mid Sussex and providing focus on how the Council will manage its car parks over the next decade.
5. The development of the Parking Strategy and Action Plan was led by specialist consultants, Parking Matters Ltd, and was overseen by a Member Working Group. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth attended as an observer and an Officer Working Group, consisting of representatives from across the Council, supported this work.
6. Originally, the Parking Strategy and Action Plan, was due to be presented to Council in the summer of 2020 but the COVID-19 pandemic significantly changed the national and local economic outlook and further work was undertaken to ensure the Strategy remained appropriate and relevant.
7. The Council commissioned a COVID Addendum Report, which considered the economic, societal, and practical impacts of the pandemic and how they might impact the delivery of the Parking Strategy and Action Plan. It was concluded that the original document remained sound and could still provide robust direction for the Council.

Context

8. The overarching vision for the Parking Strategy is to ensure 'The Council's car parks support sustainable growth and provide a positive parking experience,'
9. The delivery of the Parking Strategy (which is published, along with the COVID Addendum, online: [Parking Strategy - Mid Sussex District Council](#)) is supported by a five-year rolling Action Plan, designed to provide an agility to the implementation of the Parking Strategy whilst also responding to a changing landscape within our communities.

10. Key objectives for the delivery of the Parking Strategy are:

- a. Investing in car parks
- b. Sustainable growth
- c. Supporting vitality
- d. Customer experience

Investing in Car Parks

11. The Parking Strategy proposed the production of an Investment Strategy to set out the medium-term strategic objectives for each of the Council's car parks (looking at retention, disposal, expansion and development and re-purposing) to meet the economic needs of the surrounding area. The assessment and subsequent delivery of the recommendations in the Investment Strategy will be key in meeting the ambitions of the five-year Action Plan.

Sustainable Growth

12. Working alongside West Sussex County Council, the Council should ensure that it supports visitors and workers to make sustainable travel choices and support a modal shift towards car alternatives across the district, helping to reduce congestion. The Council should also explore opportunities to support inward investment by developing a season ticket policy that supports travel planning and changing business needs.

Supporting Vitality

13. Setting parking tariffs (both price and duration) is an essential tool in managing supply and demand and ensuring footfall is maintained, to support vitality of town and villages in the district. Tariffs should be determined using knowledge of the local area, including reference to demand, competition, and local economic needs.

Customer Experience

14. As the Council invests in and develops its car parks, using digital innovation to improve service delivery is a key consideration, particularly the development of self-service systems via Variable Message Signage, app technology and alternative payment methods.

15. Appendix 1 sets out the progress made to date with the implementation of the Parking Strategy's five-year Action Plan.

Other Options Considered

16. N/A

Financial Implications

17. Tariffs and stay restrictions (duration) are a tool to manage car parks more effectively, influence behaviour and provide the financial support for investment and improvement. Tariff and stay restrictions in Mid Sussex were revised in March 2022, having not previously been reviewed since 2012.

18. The current blanket approach to pay-and-display and season ticket pricing does not reflect the variation between individual towns and larger villages. Nor does it allow the Council to manage churn and demand effectively.

19. To ensure the car parks continue to support local economies, the Council has committed to an annual tariff review to ensure the structure of charging and stay restrictions reflect the differing requirements of local centres. This will include the exploration of sustainable alternatives to current charging and management regimes.

Risk Management Implications

20. The Parking Strategy was developed to provide a strategic direction for the management of the Council's car parks, with the specific aim of supporting sustainable economic growth across Mid Sussex. There is a risk around effectively communicating the benefits envisaged within the strategy, given the generally negative perception of increasing or introducing parking tariffs and the general misconception that free parking supports economic vitality.

Equality and Customer Service Implications

21. The Council has already made a significant investment in cashless payments and online services and will continue to invest and modernise car parking to ensure the service is accessible to all users.
22. Post-COVID 19 there has been an acceleration of digital technology uptake and the Council needs to adapt to these changing customer behaviours.
23. During 2022-23 the Council expanded its use of MiPermit, a cloud-based system which enables online payments for parking services, already used for pay and display transactions and to administer car park season tickets, to facilitate the management of the Controlled Parking Zone in East Grinstead. In December 2022, 65% of transactions were made digitally, well above our target of 58%.
24. As the Council develops its car parks via the Investment Strategy it will need to share information with digital platform providers and begin to invest further in new technology to better enable this. Information sharing with in-car systems and third-party apps will improve the customer experience of finding spaces.
25. During the next fiscal year, the Council will continue to collect performance data to further inform the management of its car parks and support the implementation of the Investment Strategy.

Policy Context

26. The Council's Parking Strategy and Action Plan directly supports the implementation of the Sustainable Economy Strategy, which was adopted in April 2022.
27. The Parking Strategy also supports West Sussex County Council's Controlled Parking Enforcement Policy to better manage enforcement both on-street and across the Council's car park estate.

Sustainability Implications

28. The growth outlined in the Council's District Plan presents both challenges and opportunities. The Council is already committed to delivering change through initiatives such as the Sustainable Economy Strategy, Burgess Hill Growth Programme, and the Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan, and the Government has indicated that post-COVID recovery will likely accelerate sustainable transport initiatives.

29. During 2022-23 the Council worked alongside West Sussex County Council and Connected Kerb to introduce 60 Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) in car parks across the district. Whilst EVCPs themselves do not reduce carbon emissions, replacing petrol and diesel miles with electric miles does and, as such, facilitating the development of the EVCP network enables visitors and workers to make sustainable travel choices.
30. By continuing to implement the Action Plan the Council will work alongside West Sussex County Council, local businesses and other key partners to identify how technology and supporting different types of mobility could reduce congestion, improve air quality and local townscapes.
31. By investing in car parks there will be opportunities to introduce better information systems to guide customers straight to available spaces and support new transport initiatives, such as modal shift, mobility hubs and further introduction of alternative fuels.

Other Material Implications

32. The Council commissioned an Investment Strategy, which clearly sets out strategic principles and provides a framework to support the future ambitions for the Council's car parks.
33. Parking is an asset and provision of safe parking in well-maintained car parks can help an area to thrive, reduce nuisance parking and provide income for the Council.
34. A key outcome from the Investment Strategy was for a feasibility study and business case for investment in Queensway Car Park, East Grinstead. This will be commissioned during 2023-24.
35. Another recommendation was for the Council to create a fit-for-purpose Asset Management Plan and, during 2022-23 a Capital Project Justification was submitted to finance the production of this Plan during 2023-24.

Background Papers

36. None

Appendix 1- The Action Plan

Objective	Action	Target date	Progress to date and Proposed Programme for 2023-24
Investing in Car Parks	Commission an Investment Strategy setting out medium term strategic objectives for each of the Council's car parks in terms of retention, disposal, expansion, development / re-purposing to meet the economic needs of each settlement.	2020	Investment Strategy completed during 2021-22. This sets out strategic principles and provides a framework to support future ambitions for the Council's car parks across all three towns, and within the district's main villages.
	Assess the feasibility and business case of specific actions identified in the Investment Strategy.	2021	Car Park Investment Plan produced to identify a prioritised programme of works.
	Deliver the priority actions arising from the Investment Strategy and feasibility work.	2021 - 2025	Proposed to carry out Feasibility Study/ Business case for Queensway Car Park, East Grinstead in 2023/24. Further work to follow in Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill in line with wider plans for each town centre and recommendations of Asset Management Plan.
	Renew the Asset Management Plan which sets out business as usual maintenance and investment programme.	2021 - 2025	Funding sought through Corporate Planning and Budget process to finance production of new Asset Management Plan during 2023/24.
Sustainable Growth	Work with WSCC to ensure parking policy supports sustainable transport initiatives, encouraging visitors / workers to seek car alternatives to support modal shift in each settlement.	2020 - 2025	Installation of 60 Electric Vehicle Charge Points across the district. Further roll-out of on and off-street Electric Vehicle Charge Points to take place during 2023/24.
	Explore the opportunity to support inward investment by developing a season ticket policy that supports travel planning and changing business needs to encourage economic growth.	2021- 2022	Introduction of a range of flexible season ticket products in March 2022. Monitor impact of new flexible season tickets through 2023/24. Work with WSCC and the business community to explore scope for implementation of policy

			that supports preferential allocation of season tickets to local businesses with a travel plan.
	Work with WSCC to actively promote and monitor employer travel plans to encourage modal shift and reduce congestion.	2022 - 2024	To engage with WSCC and the business community in 2023/24
Supporting Vitality	Undertake an annual review of tariffs to reflect local circumstances	Annual	New tariffs introduced March 2022. Further annual review undertaken as part of 23/24 Corporate Planning and Budget process. No further uplift currently proposed. Annual review of tariffs to take place going forward, as part of annual budget process.
	Commission feasibility work to explore opportunities for differential tariff regimes in town centres to support local vitality	2020 - 2021	Initial feasibility work carried out in 2021
	Implement a differential tariff and stay restriction regime between and within town centres to support the local vitality.	2021 - 2022	Decision made to defer implementation of differential tariff and stay restriction regime until long-term impact of Covid better known.
	Commission feasibility work to explore opportunities for alternative management regimes in the larger village car parks	2020 -2021	Initial feasibility work carried out in 2021
	Implement new management regimes that support local vitality in the larger villages on a case-by-case basis.	2021 - 2022	Decision made to defer further consideration until long-term impact of Covid better known.
Customer Experience	As the Council invests and develops its car parks, it will utilise digital innovation to improve service delivery e.g. Variable Message Signage, app technology and alternative payment methods.	2022 - 2025	Expanded usage of MiPermit to include Controlled Parking Zone in East Grinstead.

			Feasibility Study/ Business case for Queensway Car Park, East Grinstead taking place in 2023/24, to include options for trialing new technologies/ alternative payment methods for subsequent roll-out across the district.
	Continue to develop digital platforms to provide more convenient self-service systems e.g., virtual season tickets.	2020 - 2021	Evidence of on-going channel shift from manual to digital self-service systems seen in cashless transaction figures.
	Respond to the WSCC Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) Review and the outcomes of the MSDC Parking Strategy to manage the impact on the enforcement and management of the off-street estate.	2021 - 2022	Continuing to meet expectations for on-street Civil Enforcement deployment on behalf of West Sussex County Council, alongside enforcing in the Council's own car parks.