

Title of Report:	Scrutiny review into car parking	Item x
Report to be considered by:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission	
Date of Meeting:	5 January 2016	

Purpose of Report: To outline the results of the review into car parking in the district.

Recommended Action: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission endorses the recommendations of the Task Group prior to their consideration by the Executive.

Key background documentation: The minutes of and papers provided to the task group (available from Strategic Support).

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Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting of 15 September 2015, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) agreed to conduct a review into car parking in West Berkshire.
- 1.2 This report provides the findings and recommendations arising from the review and provides detail on its Terms of Reference and methodology.

2. Terms of Reference

- 2.1 The Terms of Reference for the task group were to conduct a review into car parking in West Berkshire, and in particular to seek an understanding of
- The current policies for residents', on-street and off-street parking;
 - The effect (including on usage, revenue generation, congestion, displacement) of the parking policies in isolation;
 - The interrelationship between the policies and their cumulative effect;
 - The future plans for car parking provision;
 - The method and effectiveness of parking policy communication to the public;

and to then report to the OSMC and subsequently the Executive with recommendations as appropriate.

3. Methodology

- 3.1 The review has been conducted by a cross-party task group, working with Council officers from the Environment Directorate. The members of the working group were Councillors Lee Dillon, James Fredrickson (until his appointment to the Executive), Mike Johnston and Rick Jones. Councillor Johnston was elected as the Chairman.
- 3.2 The task group held the meetings outlined in the table below.

Meeting date	Meeting focus
Tuesday 27 November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Election of the Chairman• Agreement of the scope and Terms of Reference• Briefing on<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Legal duties and powers○ Parking Strategy○ Parking policy framework○ Performance measurement○ Operating costs and income generation• Agreement of the review activity and schedule

Tuesday 10 November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking schemes in operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Locations ○ Rationale and purpose ○ Scheme establishment process ○ Method of operation • Assessment of effectiveness • Future plans • Communications strategy
Monday 6 December 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulation of the recommendations

4. Acknowledgements and thanks

- 4.1 The Chairman and Members of the task group would like to acknowledge and thank all those who supported and gave evidence to the review.

5. Findings

Background and Context

- 1) The Council's duties and powers for the civil enforcement of parking arise from Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 and come from the requirement for it to secure 'the expeditious movement of traffic' on road networks. The Council's current Parking Policies are set out in its Local Transport Plan 2011-2026.
- 2) Car parking forms part of the Council's Clear Streets Strategy, which aims to make best use of the highway. The Council, through the Strategy, aims to
 - Eliminate dangerous and inconsiderate parking on yellow lines.
 - Keep main roads clear of illegally parked vehicles.
 - Keep the roads clear for emergency services vehicles.
 - Relieve congestion by keeping unauthorised vehicles out of pedestrianised areas, bus stops, taxi ranks and disabled parking spaces.
 - Ensure that only vehicles with a valid permit are parked in the Residents' Parking Zones.
- 3) The aims of the Strategy are achieved through the use of regulated on-street parking, off-street parking (car parks) and residents' schemes. Compliance with the terms of schemes and other traffic regulation is carried out by 15 Full Time Equivalent Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs), who are employed by the Council and have been in place since April 2009. The Council operates in accordance with the DfT guidance 'Operational Guidance to Local Authorities – Parking Policy and Enforcement'.
- 4) Transport policy is developed by a team in the Planning and Countryside service, whilst transport operations (including car parking), is the responsibility of the Highways and Transport service. There is close co-ordination and co-operation between the policy and operations teams, which the task group was pleased to note are under the unified direction of a single Executive Member.

- 5) Although there is a close working relationship between the policy teams in West Berkshire and Reading councils, there is scope for greater co-operation, particularly in ensuring that local transport plans are integrated, especially in the east of the district.
- 6) The types and numbers of parking offences are reported on annually and trends are analysed in order that improvements to existing schemes can be made, however performance against the specific aims of the Clear Streets Strategy is not measured. The Annual Report is published on the Council's website.
- 7) Bus punctuality and complaints, for example from the public or refuse crews, which inform assessments of traffic flow, are used as a proxy for assessment of the effectiveness of traffic parking arrangements outside of the Council's managed schemes.
- 8) The realisation of income from car parking – effectively a revenue generation target – forms part of the Highways Service annual budget. All income must be spent on highway maintenance, road safety and traffic management. Net annual income from parking is as shown below
 - Parking fines c£220k
 - Misuse of bus lanes c£60k
 - Parking charges (ticket sales, season tickets, resident permits etc) c£1.6m
- 9) CEOs issue around 8,000 penalty charge notices per year. Individual officers do not work to targets or quotas.

Residents' Schemes

- 10) Fifteen residential parking schemes, introduced and operating on common principles, are in place in Hungerford, Lambourn, Pangbourne, Theale, Thatcham, and, the majority, in Newbury. These cover 98 roads across the district, for which 1,078 permits have been issued.
- 11) Residential parking schemes were (and are) introduced in response to residents' complaints that they have been unable to park close to their properties and where they have few opportunities to park off street. Prior to their introduction, all residents in (but not around) the proposed scheme are consulted for their views, with the decision on whether to introduce them being dependent upon majority support. They are administered as 'zones' within which individual roads, or parts thereof, are then subject to the enforceable restrictions imposed by Traffic Orders. Ward Councillors are kept informed throughout the process.
- 12) The impact of on-street parking schemes is reviewed 1 year after implementation to ensure that their aims have been achieved and that there are no unintended consequences. The assessment of a scheme's effectiveness and the extent to which it has satisfied residents is assessed through the monitoring of enquiries and complaints.
- 13) The introduction of schemes can cause 'displacement' of parking to other areas and some schemes have been extended beyond their original boundaries to address this unintended consequence.

- 14) Schemes are considered to be 'relatively' costly to introduce although this is in part off-set by revenues from the annual charge of £25 per permit. There is also a small income from the visitor parking permits, with 12,640 being issued to residents in 2013/14.
- 15) Some residents' parking space is made available for wider day time use by allowing between 1 and 4 hours free parking to the general public.
- 16) In Newbury residents' parking schemes have been extended to incorporate access to off-street parking during the evening parking charge period (from 6pm to 8am the next day) when demand for on-street parking exceeds supply. The long-term viability of such use will need to be assessed given the trends in development and loss of surface level parking, for example in the Market Street car park which will be lost to the new development.
- 17) It is the Council's intention to replace the existing residents' and visitors' paper permits with 'virtual' (or electronic) permits during 2016. In order that effective enforcement can be carried out, remote access to the permit database will be provided. It is not yet clear whether this change will allow the use of scanning technology, for example Automatic Number Plate Recognition, to ensure that the use of virtual permits does not create unintended operational inefficiencies for CEO's.
- 18) The provision of parking spaces is incorporated into the wider town planning policies, with the Residential Parking Policy setting out the parking requirements for new developments. This ranges from 0.75 parking spaces for a one-bedroomed flat through to 3 parking spaces for houses of 4 bedrooms or more. The spaces may be either within the curtilage of the property or in car parking areas within the overall site.
- 19) The Residential Parking Policy also expressly states that development resulting in an intensification of dwellings within an existing Residential Parking Zone will need to accommodate its parking needs within its site. The residents of the new development would not be eligible for a residents' parking permit under the Residents' Parking Scheme. Conversion of office buildings to flats, could also create a significant demand that will not be provided for.
- 20) The Task Group was concerned to learn that only 60% of the properties in the proposed Market Street development would have allocated parking.

Off-Street Parking

- 21) The Council operates 28 car parks, the majority of which are in Newbury, which provide for 2,134 general use and 95 disabled spaces. A number of tariffs operate, with car parks being priced to promote the maximum usage. More than 500 season tickets were purchased in 2013/14, the last year for which figures are available.
- 22) A study, commissioned by the Council and conducted in 2013 by the company WSP, gives a projection that demand for off-street parking in Newbury is set to increase to such an extent that by 2025 there will be a shortfall in provision. It is the Council's aspiration to increase supply before this point, although it is not clear from

where the supply will be found and the costs are presently unknown. Given the significant changes resulting from unanticipated developments (for example office to housing conversions), new forecasts for residential developments (although offset to some degree off-set by the retention of The Wharf), officers in the Highways service are of the view that a further study to assess the impact of recent developments, current usage, future demand and potential supply would be of benefit.

- 23) A bid by Great Western Railway (to Network Rail) for infrastructure improvements around Newbury train station includes provision for an additional level on the proposed multi-storey car park at the Market Street development.
- 24) The use of the Variable Message Signs, which indicate where in Newbury off-street car parking spaces are available, have helped to increase occupancy and usage. The use of season tickets at the Northbrook multi-storey has increased usage but the capacity exists for it to be increased further still.
- 25) There is a recognised demand for additional parking in Thatcham.
- 26) It is anticipated that there will be a redevelopment of the Kennet Centre in the 10 years to 2025 which will present an opportunity for the provision of additional car parking capacity, required to meet the projected demand. Separately, the Council has a lease on the Kennet Centre car park until 2112.
- 27) The feasibility of operating a park and ride scheme in Newbury has been examined twice in recent years by the Transport Policy Task Group. Both studies have concluded that such a scheme could only operate if it were to be subsidised by the Council and is not therefore a preferred option.

On-Street Parking

- 28) The Council applies charges for on-street parking in 17 locations in Newbury and Hungerford, introduced in two phases. There are 114 spaces on Hungerford High Street which are subject to pay and display restrictions and 312 spaces around Newbury which are subject to on-street charging restrictions (142 of these are Pay by Phone only). The effect of these schemes will be assessed after one year of operation.
- 29) Although the principle of paying to park is broadly accepted – if not entirely welcomed – by the public, take up and utilisation is dependent on charges that are carefully set and which have their effect monitored. Although not measured, it is expected that the introduction of fees for on-street parking causes some drivers to change their parking habits.
- 30) An increase in the number of locations that are subject to on-street parking charges would appear to present an opportunity for the Council to generate additional revenue.
- 31) On street parking can be paid for in cash or by mobile phone.

- 32) Officers in the Highways and Transport Service are of the view that the Council's Parking Policies could be developed further and more widely communicated to the public to promote understanding of the Council's position.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Overall the task group has formed the view that each individual aspect of the Council's involvement in car parking is being managed adequately.
- 6.2 There is however scope for a higher and more strategic view to be taken, incorporating each aspect of car parking – on-street, off-street and residential – into a holistic plan. The development of such an integrated plan, tied to articulated outcomes, should enable the public to better able to understand what the Council is aiming to achieve.
- 6.3 There are also a number of, smaller scale, recommendations that should improve specific aspects of the Council's planning and operations but overall the task group has confidence in the political oversight and day to day application of the planning and operational management of car parking.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Executive Member for Transport should:
- (1) Working through both the Head of Highways and Transport and the Head of Planning and Countryside, develop a parking plan to ensure that all aspects of the planning, implementation, development and operation of on-street, off-street and residential parking in the district is managed holistically. The plan should include, but not be limited to,
 - an assessment of the needs of all likely stakeholders, including residents, shoppers, visitors and commuters (and the extent to which 'transport hubs' should be developed and operated)
 - how the identified needs will be met;
 - how that outcome will be achieved
 - the ongoing measurement and reporting of key performance information to ensure that the stated aims of the plan are being achieved
 - a communications plan;
 - how complimentary strategies (e.g., signage, public transport) can be used to offset demand;
 - (2) To further embed transport planning co-operation with Reading Borough Council, through the Head of Planning and Countryside, consider the preparation and development of an integrated transport plan (to include all aspects of car parking) in the east of the district;
 - (3) Through the Head of Highways and Transport, consider extending the capability and coverage of the 'Ticketer' system used by certain operators of Council-contracted bus services, to allow the generation of reports that can help show where traffic congestion affects local roads, and causes delays to contracted local bus services using those roads;

- (4) Through the Head of Highways and Transport, ensure that the views of those in streets neighbouring proposed residential parking schemes are obtained, in addition to those directly affected by proposals;
- (5) Through the Head of Highways and Transport, ensure that residential parking schemes are revenue cost-neutral (or better) to the Council after no more than 3 years operation;
- (6) To ensure that there is sufficient parking for residents close to their own homes, through the Head of Highways and Transport, consider where necessary the extension of access to off-street parking to augment capacity in residential schemes. This may be particularly relevant for those planned residential developments with limited on-street and off-street spaces;
- (7) Through the Head of Highways and Transport, carefully evaluate the impact on operational efficiency of the introduction of paperless residential parking permits. If necessary, strong consideration should be given to the introduction of technologies, such as hand-held or body mounted Automated Number Plate Recognition systems for CEOs, to reduce or eliminate the requirement for time-consuming data entry;
- (8) Through the Head of Highways and Transport, commission a study to further understand the recent growth trends, current and future demand for car parking in Newbury. The Terms of Reference for the study should expressly include the identification of ways to increase both the capacity (initially) and (subsequently) the occupancy of on-street and off-street schemes and the use of complimentary strategies to mitigate demand.
- (9) Through the Head of Highways and Transport, assess the effectiveness and take-up of the payment methods by which on-street parking is paid for. The use of a mobile telephone application should also be considered.

Appendices

There are no appendices to this report.