



Committee and Date

Place Overview Committee

29<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Item

Public

## **PARKING STRATEGY REVIEW**

**Responsible  
Officer**

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### **1. Synopsis**

*This report seeks endorsement to review the existing parking strategy to ensure that it meets current and future needs of all stakeholders.*

### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1. The current parking strategy was approved by Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018. Since that time priorities and behaviours have changed significantly.
- 2.2. The focus on carbon reduction and sustainable travel has increased significantly in recent years and covid has changed working and travel behaviours significantly over the last couple of years.
- 2.3. The economic downturn over the last few years is also impacting on the local economy in many areas of the county and parking is often seen as having a positive or detrimental impact on retail and visitor numbers and the success of staff recruitment/ retention in key employment sites as a result of appropriate commuting infrastructure.
- 2.4. The council is currently reviewing its Local Plan, Economic Growth Strategy, Local Transport Plan, Bus Service Improvement Plan and Active Travel Strategy and cashless payments.
- 2.5. It is considered that the current parking strategy is not conducive to satisfying all of the above and complementing the requirements of emerging plans and therefore it is considered that there is a need to review the strategy to ensure that it strikes an appropriate balance between competing demands.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1. The Committee support a review of the current parking strategy being undertaken over the next few months and a draft document be submitted to Cabinet before the end of the financial year for public consultation.**
- 3.2. That the Committee provide a steer on whether a pricing mechanism should be developed and consulted upon in parallel with the strategy.**
- 3.3. The Committee consider and provide a steer to officers for issues to be considered or not considered within the development of the strategy, namely**
  - 3.3.1. Dynamic Parking Charges**
  - 3.3.2. Review of Current Bandings**
  - 3.3.3. Evening Parking**
  - 3.3.4. Sunday and Bank Holiday Concessions**
  - 3.3.5. Christmas Concessions**
  - 3.3.6. Extensions of Pay and Display provision in Shrewsbury**
  - 3.3.7. Indexation of parking charges**
  - 3.3.8. Review of Car Parks Currently in Band 7**
- 3.4. The Committee provide a steer on any other elements of parking that the parking strategy should consider.**

## **REPORT**

### **4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 4.1. Parking is a complex and emotive issue that is often trying to weave a balance between several competing demands. It is therefore essential that any parking strategy proposals are fully consulted upon to ensure that all views are sought to help inform where the most appropriate balance between competing demands can be struck.
- 4.2. The effectiveness of a parking strategy will be very reliant on the pricing mechanisms used. It is considered that an initial pricing mechanism and charging rate should be developed and consulted upon in parallel with the parking strategy to ensure that consultees are able to provide fully informed feedback on proposals and the potential implications that may arise from a strategy.
- 4.3. It is difficult to predict the impact on parking and travel behaviours arising from any significant changes to parking strategy and pricing

mechanisms, particularly as working and travel behaviours arising post-covid and the cost-of-living crisis, are significantly changing behaviours in a way that could not have been foreseen and for which it would seem unlikely that there will be a return to pre-covid trends for travel.

- 4.4. In view of the above uncertainty, there is an unknown risk that may see either a positive or negative impact on both transport objectives being realised and on council budgets which may undermine the viability of the continued operation of some car parks. A negative impact on income or travel behaviour would require the council to review its levels of charging more frequently than it has in the past to ensure that the provision of effective parking infrastructure remains viable and transport objectives achieved.

Any increases in parking pricing mechanisms may result in displacement of parking onto unrestricted kerb side parking in nearby residential streets rather than diverted to alternative travel modes as intended. It is important therefore that any strategy considers both on street and off-street parking to ensure that the aims of the broader transport objectives can be achieved.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1. Statutory guidance for parking states that Authorities should never use parking charges just to raise revenue or as a local tax. No presumptions on income arising from a parking strategy are considered at this stage
- 5.2. The strategy at this time does not have any financial implications as the development of the strategy will be undertaken within existing budgets and staffing resource. Any resultant changes to parking charges arising from the final strategy may have financial implications, either positive or negative, and the impact of those will be reflected in the final report.
- 5.3. The council does not currently reflect the full cost of operation of car parking within its accounting, with functions such as maintenance and staffing often undertaken from other budgets. As such the council reports a surplus greater than should be the case. As part of analysing the parking strategy a review will be undertaken so that the full operating costs are captured and included within parking reporting so that a more accurate cost vs income analysis can be undertaken.
- 5.4. Where the demand for parking is high, the delivery of transport objectives with realistic demand management prices for parking may result in surplus income. In such cases local authorities must ensure that any on street revenue not used for enforcement is used

for legitimate purposes only and that its main use is to improve, by whatever means, transport provision in the area so that road users benefit.

## 6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. **Energy and Fuel Consumption** - A parking strategy has the potential to promote more sustainable modes of travel and as a result reduce carbon emissions, particularly in the larger towns of Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Bridgnorth. A new parking strategy would therefore be expected to have a positive effect on carbon emissions from energy and fuel consumption.
- 6.2. **Renewable Energy Generation** – The parking strategy is not expected to provide any opportunities for renewable energy generation.
- 6.3. **Carbon Offsetting and Mitigation** – Any surplus income arising from a parking strategy would be reinvested into funding improved sustainable transport and highway infrastructure to further drive behaviour change and carbon reduction.
- 6.4. **Climate Change Adaptation** - The parking strategy is not expected to provide any direct opportunities for improving climate change resilience and adaptation.

## 7. Background

- 7.1. Part 1 of the current parking strategy was approved by Cabinet on 17th January 2018 and included a total of 22 initiatives based upon the introduction of a linear pricing model that uses standard criteria for the setting of standard banding levels.
- 7.2. The strategy rollout included the purchase and installation of new pay and display parking machines across the county, with all new machines having facilities for cash, card and contactless payments. Digital permits and tickets are also now available being rolled out through the Mipermit system.
- 7.3. There are 7 bands of car parks and on-street parking areas with bands 1 to 6 currently being chargeable. In addition to the linear hourly charges, specified car parks also offer;
  - Discounted weekly tickets
  - 3 monthly, 6 monthly and 12 monthly season tickets
  - Residents parking permits
  - Tariffs for HGV parking
  - Free coach parking

- 7.4. Part 2 of the current parking strategy was approved by Cabinet on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and included an increase in on-street resident permit costs and a new policy for On-Street Residents Parking along with a prioritised schedule of requests for either new or existing residents parking schemes upgrades.
- 7.5. A review of the parking strategy and its progress with implementation was undertaken by the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee on 5 June 2019. Following recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee amendments to the parking strategy were approved by Cabinet on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2019 relating to both parts 1 and 2 of the Strategy.
- 7.6. Appendix 1 to this report catalogues all 28 initiatives approved by Cabinet on 17 January 2018 and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019 relating to part 1 of the strategy. There are 5 initiatives outstanding awaiting implementation.
- 7.7. Appendix 2 to this report details the on-street residents parking policy and initiatives approved by Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019 relating to part 2 of the strategy.
- 7.8. The programme for implementation of part 2 of the strategy (on-street residents parking policy) shown in appendix 3 to this report has been severely disrupted by the Covid 19 Pandemic and have become increasingly less affordable as a result of inflationary parking costs not being met by a reciprocal inflationary increase in charges resulting in costs being higher than income and needing to be subsidised from other budgets. The impact from covid saw a further significant drop in income. The changes in behaviours arising from covid and cost of living means that some of these initiatives may not reflect contemporary needs and therefore should be reviewed.
- 7.9. The covid pandemic and cost-of-living crisis has impacted behaviours in a way that could not have been foreseen with many people working from home or choosing to use their car less often as a result of rising fuel prices and it would appear unlikely that travel and working patterns will return to pre-pandemic trends. Overall carpark usage has returned to pre-pandemic levels however patterns of usage are believed to have changed.
- 7.10. Our parking assets, capacity levels and service offerings remain relatively unchanged since approval of our current strategy in 2018. During the last 4 years new issues have emerged, parking demand frequently exceeding supply at peak times, compounded by an increase in frequency of emergency and flooding events disrupting service provision.

- 7.11. A review of the parking strategy to identify potential improvements is considered necessary to ensure that it better reflects changing priorities and adapting travel patterns and remains affordable to the council.
- 7.12. A parking strategy should be part of a holistic, integrated approach to all transport modes across public and private areas to provide good access to town centres and other visitor destinations. It should complement the authority's broader transport and traffic management strategies.
- 7.13. There are often competing demands between a user base that seeks convenient parking availability at minimal cost, the need to reduce the carbon impact of transport and manage growth sustainably and the affordability to the council to provide an infrastructure that delivers this balance at a time when budgets to local authorities is coming under greater pressure year on year.
- 7.14. The Secretary of State recommends that authorities set charges at levels which are consistent with the aims of the authority's Transport Strategy, including its road safety and traffic management strategies.
- 7.15. It is considered that the strategy should look at best practice from elsewhere to inform an innovative and dynamic approach to parking management. Areas for consideration within the parking strategy could include the following
- 7.16. Dynamic Parking Charges: The current linear pricing strategy (i.e. same cost per hour throughout the day) does not distinguish between long stay commuter parking that may be more appropriately diverted to more sustainable travel means where available, and short stay retail parking where conveniently located and priced parking supports the footfall in local shopping areas.
- 7.17. A dynamic charging system could better promote parking habits within the individual market towns and improve traffic management by utilising parking charges during peak congestion periods being at levels that deters travel by car into the town centres, whilst providing cheaper parking and availability during less busy times to support local businesses and retail sectors.
- 7.18. Review of Current Banding: In Shrewsbury, the use of the Park and Ride (P&R) service needs to be better incentivised to encourage commuter, long term shopper and visitor parking. The lower band carparks of Frankwell, Abbey Foregate and St Julian's are still a draw for commuters and long-term visitors who could be serviced by Park & Ride provision, and create capacity issues for shoppers during the day. A higher turnover and availability of additional short and medium term parking capacity within Shrewsbury needs to be

encouraged during out of peak travel times. Similarly, some market town premium parking is included within higher bands which may not be appropriate if charging mechanisms are to be used to incentivise sustainable travel in Shrewsbury, which are not currently available elsewhere. It is therefore considered that there should be criteria for each band to inform how selection of car parks relate to banding so that should transport provision change over the life of the various transport strategies car parks can move between banding to reflect transport objectives.

- 7.19. Any change to the parking strategy will need to appropriately manage customer demand during periods when public transport in particular the P&R service is not available, whilst maintaining a focus on transport hierarchy which includes the continued promotion of active travel, as well as maintaining suitable service provision to support the night time economy, demand and supply at weekends, bank and public holidays.
- 7.20. Evening Parking – in recent years, activity in the evening in our town centres is considered to have increased, consequently a number of our town centres now become congested with parked vehicles shortly after the existing charging period ends at 6pm. With the exception of the Ravens Meadow multi storey car park in Shrewsbury parking charges on all Shropshire Council carparks and on-street pay and display car parks end at 6.00pm creating congestion between those leaving the town after work and those entering the town to take advantage of the free parking. It is proposed that consideration be given to extending parking charges further into the evening to reduce congestion during evening peak travel times.
- 7.21. Sunday, public and bank holiday concessions - current parking strategy gives concessions on Sundays, public and bank holidays that include free parking in band 4, 5 and 6 carparks such as the Shrewsbury Frankwell and Abbey Foregate carparks and the Ludlow, Smithfield car park. In higher band carparks such as Shrewsbury Bridge Street (band 2) and Oswestry Festival Square, half price concessions apply. This differential charging system within the same town centres understandably leads to the roads accessing the cheaper parking being busier and often vehicles driving past parking availability creating longer journey times and greater carbon emissions.
- 7.22. As retail centres open later and throughout the week, visitor numbers are now high on every day of the week including at weekends and on bank and public holidays, there is therefore a need to better manage the parking provision available. It is believed that introducing a consistent charge 365 days a year and a review of the parking bands would simplify the charging and ensure the

best availability for visitors to park and reduce impact on unnecessary travel.

7.23. Christmas Concessions – At the request of town council and business improvement groups, Christmas parking concessions (suspension of parking charges at specified times in specified car parks) have historically been authorised on an annual basis in most market towns. These concessions are considered a means of promoting shopping and special events during the run up to Christmas but the council has no policy surrounding this and are often considered on a case by case basis.

7.24. There is little evidence that such initiatives lead to an increase in footfall but does have an impact as a result of a diversion of travel from more sustainable transport methods in favour of the car.

7.25. Extension of pay and display provision to peripheral areas of the Shrewsbury River Loop – There are 3 immediately identifiable areas of limited waiting parking on the peripheral of the Shrewsbury River loop that could benefit from the introduction of pay and display parking provision to better manage parking. 3 hour limited waiting parking is currently available in Shrewsbury on the Abbey link road and on Cotton Hill opposite Benbow Quay. These restrictions are considered outdated and are not in keeping with the principles of the parking strategy in terms of promoting both parking and transport hierarchy. It is considered that the introduction of pay and display with shared use on-street residents parking would be far more beneficial. Long and medium stay parking provision in these areas is available outside the loop in Abbey Foregate and Frankwell surface carparks and in Ravens meadow multi storey carpark. There is also potential to consider the introduction of pay and display, shared use residents permit in Longden Column where shorter limited waiting periods currently apply.

7.26. Indexation of parking charges – Since parking charges were last increased, the council sought to maintain the charge level for as long as possible to ensure that users did not face increasing costs. Public transport travel costs did increase over that time however, meaning that any incentivisation of higher parking charges in relation to public transport charges diminishes over time and may lead to a reduction in transfer of travel mode. It is therefore felt that parking charges should rise with inflation annually in April (rounded up to the nearest suitable coin denomination) to ensure that the balance between parking charges and public transport charges is retained.

7.27. Review of car parks currently within band 7 - Cost pressures are now resulting in impacts on service, there are currently a number of carparks listed in band 7 of the strategy where charging does not apply and it is currently free of charge to park with no income or



budgets to cover maintenance/running costs. A review of these carparks is recommended and consideration given as to how future maintenance costs can be covered.

- 7.28. Options to be considered should include the possible transfer of ownership to town and parish councils to allow maintenance and management and price setting at a local level, the introduction or amendment of existing traffic regulation orders to better deter indiscriminate parking and promote enforcement service efficiencies.
- 7.29. There are also some car parks within the county that residents are dependent on for overflow parking due to on-street parking congestion, there is potential to ease these pressures by incorporating concessions for residents to use these car parks, this is being taken into consideration within current resident parking scheme development.

## **8. Additional Information**

- 8.1. All of the proposed measures within this report as presented will require detailed consideration, appropriate public consultation and decisions by Cabinet before implementation. Following approval of any changes to the strategy, statutory traffic regulation order procedures will also be required.
- 8.2. A minimum period of 6 months should therefore be allowed to review the parking strategy and undertake the required consultations with a rolling programme of implementation during financial year 2023/24.
- 8.3. Additional staffing resources will be required to undertake this review.

## **9. Conclusions**

- 9.1. The current parking strategy was approved over 4 years ago, the majority of the initiatives within part 1 of the strategy have been implemented. Implementation of part 2 of the strategy has been significantly delayed due to the Covid 19 Pandemic however this work is now progressing with a focus on the introduction of new residents parking schemes in Bridgnorth
- 9.2. A review of the existing parking strategy is recommended with a focus on the introduction of a more dynamic model that will assist in both the continued promotion of our town centre economies and encourage modal shift and transport hierarchy.

- 9.3. A minimum period of 6 months should be allowed to review the parking strategy with a rolling programme of implementation during financial year 2023/24.

**List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

Cabinet Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018: Parking Strategy part 1 – consultation results

Cabinet Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018: parking Strategy Part 2.

Performance Management Scrutiny Committee on 5 June 2019: Parking Strategy review.

Cabinet Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019: Amendments to the parking strategy.

Cabinet Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022: Amendments to Parking Charges

**Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)**

Councillor Dean Carroll

**Local Member**

All

**Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Parking Strategy Part 1 as approved by Cabinet 17 January 2018 including amendments also approved by Cabinet 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019.
- Appendix 2: Parking Strategy Part 2: Approved by Cabinet 11 April 2018, including amendments also approved by Cabinet 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019. Appendix 3: Responses received to consultation for proposed increase in on and off- street parking charges.
- Appendix 3: On-street residents parking scheme requests and implementation priorities as approved by Cabinet Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018.