

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of Meeting: 24 November 2020

Report by: Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

Report title: Review of Outcomes of the Parking Task and Finish Group

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

To present to the Executive on the outcome of work of the parking task and finish group in the context of the medium term financial plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS for EXECUTIVE:

(a) the findings of the review of the parking task and finish group recommendations be received and considered.

(b) To approve the cessation of the following recommendations within the Parking Task and Finish group report:

- a. Recommendation 3: improve the accessibility and availability of short stay parking including an increase to the number of limited waiting, free bays where possible, throughout the town.
- b. Recommendation 10: Support Parish council the lobbying for an increase in the number of parking spaces in the station car park.
- c. Recommendation 17: The Council to challenge station car park operators to reduce their charges to reflect closer to the all-day charge in East Herts town centre car parks.

(c) To approve the following recommendations for deferral:

- a. Recommendations 1: Design and implement measures to encourage rail commuters to park in station car parks
- b. Recommendation 16: Revise the designation of Council owned car parks

(d) To note that the following recommendations will be incorporated in service plans for officers to monitor, reporting periodically to the portfolio holder for parking:

- a. Recommendation 2: Revise the designation of Council owned car parks
- b. Recommendation 6: Review Blue Badge provision in Council-owned car parks
- c. Recommendation 9: Implement a permit parking scheme for town centre workers
- d. Recommendation 11: Lobby for improved cycle parking facilities and improved public transport
- e. Recommendation 13: Establish EV charging bays in EHDC car parks
- f. Recommendation 15: Implementing and lobbying for sustainability improvements including solar canopies, on-street EV charging and car clubs.

(e) To refer the amendment in the Residential Parking Zone policy as described in paragraph 2.24 and Appendix A to Council for adoption.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 It is proposed that the Executive considers the review of the recommendations of the Member Task and Finish Group established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which cover the following issues related to the council's Parking Policy:

1.1.1 Town Centre Parking

1.1.2 Resident Parking Zone (RPZ) policy

1.1.3 Climate change/ sustainability implications of parking policy.

1.2 It is proposed that the updated RPZ policy is referred to Council for approval as described in paragraph 2.22

2.0 Background

2.1 In 2019 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a Member Task and Finish Group to consider parking matters. At its meeting on 10 December 2019 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report from this Group outlining its findings and recommendations for further consideration. This report was received by the Executive on 11 February 2020, with the following recommendations approved:

(A) the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Parking Task and Finish Group be received and considered, and

(B) Authority be delegated to the Head of Operations, in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Chairman of the Parking Task and Finish Group, and with the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability, to assess the full viability of the recommendations and bring a further report to the Executive setting out cost implications.

This section of the report will review each of the recommendations in the context of cost, operational delivery implications and the objectives of the corporate plan (Sustainability, Enabling communities, Economic growth and Digital by Design). Updated recommendations will provide the following outcomes:

- **Complete:** for those items with no further actions
- **Cease:** for items that either no longer apply or recommended to stop
- **Monitor:** for items that will be built into officer service/work

plans for monitoring

- **Defer:** pausing items due until parking behaviour stabilises
- **Refer:** items that can be referred to Council for approval

Town Centre Parking Policies (Part 1- Bishop's Stortford)

2.2 **Recommendation 1:** Design and implement measures to encourage rail commuters to park in station car parks rather than Council owned facilities on the basis that this will increase the availability of town centre parking spaces for town workers and shoppers.

2.3 **Review:**

Work to date:

Prior to lockdown, work was being developed to propose an uplift to the “all day” car parking tariff which would have matched station car park prices, in some areas this could be £10 per day. The impact of this could have a) deterred commuters from parking in EHDC car parks and park closer to the station by using the station car parks and b) ensure that commuters using EHDC car parks paid a premium for the parking space, income from this would have supported a discount scheme for town centre workers.

Updated costs:

The set up cost for such a scheme would include a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), updated tariff board, re-programming for pay and display machines and pay by phone service. The total set up costs would be in the region of £65,000. Though the income generated from such a scheme could offset the set up costs and ongoing revenue implications from enforcement, in the current climate of working from home due to Government guidance as a response to Coronavirus and with long stay car parking occupancy at only 15% it would be prudent to re-assess the need for such a scheme when a “new normal” is

established.

SEED Review:

This work supports the “encouraging economic growth in Town Centres” theme of the corporate plan by providing a way to fund town worker discount.

Updated Recommendation:

Defer – officers to continue to monitor the use of long stay car parks in EHDC and re-assess long stay parking demand prior to the 2022/23 budget setting process.

- 2.4 **Recommendation 2:** Revise the designation of Council owned car parks, placing most long stay provision at the edge of the town centre with charges set at a level that supports town centre workers in particular.

2.5 Review:

Work to date: Most of the long stay car parks in Bishop’s Stortford are at the peripheral areas of the town already with Elm Road car park having a lower tariff to direct usage for long stay users. Apton Road and Link Road car park are currently mixed used car parks which has the potential to change to short stay car park. However, with the new Northgate Gate End (NGE) car park due to open in February 2022, it would be more beneficial to review the designation of car parks in Bishop’s Stortford in line with the finalised car park management plan of the new NGE car park which is due to be completed imminently.

Updated Costs:

This is a significant piece of work in relation to officer time which can be absorbed within the current resourcing levels if there are no other projects going live at the same time. Should the review result in changes to designation the cost for this is approximately £18,000 which includes the cost of a TRO, change in signage and programming with no guaranteed

increase in income. As the new Northgate End car park will require a TRO it is recommended this work is carried in simultaneously to minimise costs and ensure the car parking provision within EHDC assets are effective.

SEED Review:

This work supports the “encouraging economic growth” in Town Centres theme of the corporate plan.

Updated Recommendation:

Monitor - Review the designation of car parks in Bishop’s Stortford in conjunction the car park management proposals for Northgate End car park.

- 2.6 **Recommendation 3:** In parallel with (recommendation 2), improve the accessibility and availability of short stay parking in the town centre with the aim of promoting the town’s economic wellbeing. This to include an increase to the number of limited waiting, free bays where possible, throughout the town.

2.7 Review:

Work to date:

Following the introduction of social distancing measures in town centres and pedestrianised areas, limited waiting bays are currently restricted and therefore this work may need to be revisited once the parking behaviour has stabilised. However, the creation of “more” parking provision and free parking bays goes against the Council’s sustainability agenda. The removal of free parking will be reviewed as part of a wider piece of work regarding sustainable travel town status.

Updated Costs:

Should this be implemented the cost of changes would be dependent on the number locations included in the TRO. Broadly, this would include the cost of a TRO and change to signage and increased enforcement presence.

SEED Review:

In order to balance the sustainability objectives of the Council and economic viability of towns, clear parameters and priorities need to be set including:

- Minimising the creation of free parking provision
- Utilising the Council's current parking provision (including NGE) to promote the economic viability of town centres i.e. designation and pricing.

Updated Recommendation:

Cease - Improving the accessibility of short stay provision can be created by the review of designation in recommendation 2. As this recommendation creates the provision of "more" free parking, it is recommended that this item is not adopted.

2.8 **Recommendation 4:** Introduce a permit scheme for employees of town centre businesses to incentivise them to park away from the town centre (through the shared use of Resident Permit Zones (RPZ) where possible).

2.9 This recommendation is reviewed within the RPZ recommendation section of this report.

2.10 **Recommendation 5:** Better publicise the existing on-street business permit scheme in the 'Chantry' RPZ, widen the criteria for eligibility for permits and offer more flexible payment terms such as monthly/quarterly payment options.

2.11 Review:

Work to date – Complete

Further communications and marketing of this scheme took place prior to lockdown. The eligibility criteria was widened and the annual payment was offered at a 6 monthly instalments. Take up is still low which could be impacted by more people working from home or that the payment options requiring further flexibility. Promotion of this scheme will take place on a periodic basis.

Updated Costs:

Currently the Council's payment system does not cater for direct debit payments outside the Council tax system. Should this be available at a later stage the payment mechanism can be adjusted. Any manual work arounds for this will incur increased administration which would impact the price of the permit.

SEED Review:

This work supports the "encouraging economic growth in Town Centres" theme of the corporate plan.

Updated Recommendation:

Complete - No further action required.

- 2.12 **Recommendation 6:** Review Blue Badge provision in Council-owned car parks with a view to moving towards the 6% proportion recommended by the DfT where there is demonstrable demand.

2.13 Review:

Work to date:

A review of blue badge provision within East Herts Council car parks demonstrated that blue badge bays make up approximately 3% of bays. Also as blue badge holders are able to park in any parking bay for free there has been no demand from the public to increase the number of bays. A number of blue badge bays are underutilised. The Parking Service will continue to monitor usage of blue badge bays and respond accordingly to any changes in demand.

Updated Costs:

N/A

SEED Review:

This item supports the "enabling communities" work strand of the corporate plan.

Updated Recommendation:

Monitor.

Town Centre Parking Policies (Part 2 - Hertford)

2.14 **Recommendation 7:** Improve the quality and quantity of on-street directional signage to the town's car parks. Including the use of digital availability signage where possible (use of S106 from developments to fund this)

2.15 Review:

Work to date/ Updated Recommendation: Complete – No further action.

2.16 **Recommendation 8:** Support offering town centre workers use of the Wallfields staff car park at weekends due to the additional pressure on parking in Hertford at present arising from the temporary loss of the Bircherley Green multi-storey car park.

2.17 Review:

Work to date/ Updated Recommendation: Complete – no further action

2.18 **Recommendation 9:** Implement a permit parking scheme whereby town workers can park at a lower charge in lesser used, edge of town car parks.

2.19 Review:

Work to date:

A town worker permit scheme is underpinned by the Information Technology (IT) infrastructure required to manage it or else a manual work around would incur additional costs which would impact on the cost to the user making the "lower charge" insignificant. Work continues in this area to negotiate costs and find a suitable solution.

Updated Costs:

To be confirmed at a later date.

Updated Recommendation:

Monitor - It is recommended that this item is continued to be monitored.

Parking Policies in Other Towns

2.20 Recommendation 10: Support the Parish Council in an approach to the provider of the free car park at Watton at Stone station, requesting that they increase the number of parking spaces in the station car park.

2.21 Review:Work to date/ SEED Review:

Given that this is a request for further/new free parking, this recommendation does not align with the Council's sustainability agenda nor does it meet other strands of the corporate plan. It is recommended that item is no longer pursued.

Updated Recommendation:

Cease- continue to understand parking pressures for alternative solutions

2.22 Recommendation 11:

The following recommendations have been reviewed as one as they simply commit the Council to lobby for improvements in public transport provision with providers where appropriate to do so. No further action is required in this area.

11A) Encourage the provision of improved, secure bicycle parking facilities at ALL stations.

11B) Encourage the delivery of improved public transport, including 'on demand' services that will link with train arrivals and departures and serve the needs of residents of outlying villages who currently have to drive to St Margarets or Watton at Stone to catch the train.

Resident Permit Zone (RPZ) Policy

2.23 **Recommendation 12**, this consolidates all the principles regarding RPZs suggested in the task and finish including:

A) Review the current RPZ Policy and Operational Guidance, in part to create more favourable eligibility criteria and terms on which new schemes might be awarded and operate.

B) Require that through their design, new RPZs maximise parking availability to non-resident motorists on a managed basis where this can be achieved at little or no detriment to residents (to include the creation of permit-based parking for business workers where appropriate).

C) Require that the implications of a proposed RPZ for the wider parking and traffic management situation in the town be fully understood and appropriate mitigations identified before that scheme is granted.

D) Require that scheme set-up costs are recouped over a defined number of years through the permit charge levied against residents within that RPZ.

E) As a quid pro quo for agreeing to the above, the permit charge to residents to be offset by the revenue generated from the sale of permits to businesses and their staff.

2.24 Review:

Work to date:

The proposed principles for recommendation 13 A-D can be supported however expectations need to be managed within the current resources. Principles that need to be agreed include:

- No more than two RPZs can be investigated and processed at any given time which will be on a first come first serve basis.
- All set up costs associated with the RPZ must be covered within the permit price and re-couped within 4years with ongoing permit costs thereafter covering all revenue costs.

- The permit price will be issued as part of the consultation so residents can make an informed decision.
- All RPZ permit prices need to be reviewed as part of the Council's Medium term financial plan.
- Should external funding be sourced, this may impact the price of the RPZ however not the time taken to process. Given the Council's financial strategy, it is not recommended that additional resources in terms of officer time be sought to process additional RPZs.
- Recommendation E, should not be adopted as it does not account for the additional administration required to process adjusted pricing in accordance with business/non-resident permit take up. Also the Chantry RPZ scheme would suggest that a shared scheme may not always be popular despite the rationale being sound.
- In all cases/requests, officers will liaise with members to explore a more strategic approach to RPZs to minimise the impact of displacement. This will prevent the piecemeal approach to RPZs to help manage expectations.
- Should a RPZ request be refused, the same street/road will not be revisited for a minimum of 2 years.

Updated Costs:

- The cost of each RPZ will differ depending on the size of it. A "small scale" RPZ would be in the region of £10,000.

Updated Recommendation:

Refer - Changes to the policy and operational guidance can be recommended to Council for approval subject to the changes listed in 2.24. These can be found in Appendix A

Climate Change/Sustainability and Parking Policy

2.24 Recommendation 13: Establish an initial 5% of bays in EHDC

car parks as electric vehicle (EV) charging bays and commit to increasing this proportion in anticipation of growing demand.

2.25 Review:

Work to date:

An audit of all EHDC car parks has taken place and determined the following in relation to the number of Electric Vehicle bays:

- 4 general EV bays in Gascoyne Way Multi Storey, Hertford
- 4 in Causeway, Bishop's Stortford.
- 5 EV "pool cars": X2 in Causeway, Bishop's Stortford and X3 in Wallfields, Hertford.
- 3 scheduled for Bell Street, Sawbridgeworth in the near future.

Subject to successful external funding EV provision could be expanded to:

- Buntingford
- Stanstead Abbots
- Other off street provision in Hertford
- Grange Paddocks, Stortford

The new Northgate End MSCP will have 54 EV bays.

SEED Review:

This supports the sustainability and enabling our communities theme of the corporate plan.

Updated Recommendation:

Monitor - this item will be incorporated into the sustainability action plan of the corporate strategy and actioned where external funding is available.

2.26 **Recommendation 14:** Place a time limit on the use of EV

charging bays to ensure an appropriate turnover of qualifying vehicles.

2.27 Review:

Work to date/Updated Recommendation:

Complete. A 3 hour maximum stay has been successfully advertised under a TRO. The infrastructure should be implemented before the end of December 2020. No further action required on this item.

2.28 Recommendation 15: the following 5 recommendations will be treated as one:

- A) Consider the erection of solar canopies where appropriate to generate electricity for possible sale to the National Grid.
- B) Support an investigation into options for the creation of on-street EV charging facilities, for example from lamp posts and raised kerbs.
- C) Support the use of electric bicycles through the provision of dedicated charging facilities, including around stations
- D) Encourage the implementation of car clubs, ideally electric, alongside new residential developments plus the installation of additional electric vehicle charging points throughout the town.
- E) Ensure public transport services are commissioned and operational at the same time as major new residential developments are occupied, to encourage new residents to shift towards public transport use as a first choice.

2.29 Review:

Work to date:

Further work needs to be carried out to assess the suitability of installing solar canopies in EHDC car parks ensuring the cost of these is balanced by the savings created in electricity use in the car parks.

The current on-street infrastructure is not designed to generate the level of electricity required for EV charging points without retro-fitting which could require the need for new substations in some areas. Street lighting is not an EHDC asset however the Council can retain an influencing role in this. Through the Council's supplementary planning document (SPD) for sustainability the Council's policy expands on the requirements for sustainable design and zero and low carbon development in East Herts. The policy expects new developments to achieve a high standard of design and electric vehicle charging points.

In terms of public transport the Council will continue to have an influencing /lobbying role in this area.

Updated Costs:

Solar canopies to be explored further.

SEED Review:

This supports the sustainability agenda of the corporate plan.

Updated Recommendation:

Monitor this work through the sustainability action group of the corporate plan.

- 2.30 **Recommendation 16:** Implement variable message signage (VMS) to direct motorists to car parks with available spaces (and where appropriate to the location of those spaces within a car park). This is aimed at bearing down on the problem of vehicles searching for available spaces which is known to contribute significantly to air pollution in town centres.

2.31 Review:

Work to date:

Officers have received an initial quote for this work for Bishop's Stortford town centre which is approximately £100,000. It is recognised that this is a substantive piece of work and that within the current climate that this work should be revisited when parking behaviour has stabilised. In the meantime, it is

anticipated that following the national lockdown; the run up to the Christmas period could be busy and as a “work around” officers will engage with the parking contractor to explore whether Civil Enforcement Officers would take on a stronger marshalling role in and around car parks to reduce congestion in town centres at key times.

Updated Costs:

£100,000 for Bishop’s Stortford. A scheme in Hertford is comparable in scope and would be a similar cost. Where external funding is available through section 106 this will be explored by officers.

Updated Recommendation:

Defer this work until parking behaviour stabilises and use the current enforcement resources to marshal areas periodically during traditionally busy times in the year.

Other Recommendations:

2.32 Recommendation 17:

The Council to instruct that a letter be sent to station car park operators challenging their current parking charges and requesting that they be reduced to something closer to the prevailing all day charge in our town centres.

2.33 Review:

Work to date:

Given that parking occupancy in EHDC long stay car parks is currently underutilised this recommendation can be put on hold. However, the likelihood of the letter having any impact is highly unlikely as it will impact the station car park providers income. Recommendation one seeks to *“Design and implement measures to encourage rail commuters to park in station car parks rather than Council owned facilities on the basis that this will increase the availability of town centre parking spaces for town workers and shoppers”*; using pricing as a way to change

behaviour, may be more beneficial and feasible for the EHDC to consider increasing long stay parking to match station car park tariffs to deter use.

Updated Costs: N/A

SEED Review:

This recommendation does not align with the corporate plan.

Updated Recommendation:

Cease moving this recommendation forward and revisit long stay parking when parking behaviour stabilises.

- 2.34 **Recommendation 18:** Residents to be encouraged to notify Manchester Airport Group (MAG) of 'airport parking' problems and the Council to be encouraged to publicise the number and website as widely as possible using its own website, social media and other forums.

2.35 Review:

Work to date/Updated recommendation:

Complete. Periodic communications on this will go out on social media.

Recommendations for Further Scrutiny

- 2.36 **Recommendation 19:** the following recommendations have been consolidated.

- A)** Policies and strategies to address 'airport parking' in primarily residential streets (primarily in Bishop's Stortford).
- B)** Policies and strategies to address commuter parking in primarily residential streets.
- C)** Policies and strategies to address the problem of overnight HGV parking in town centres and primarily residential streets.

2.37 Review:

Recommendations 19 A) and B) are primarily dealt with via RPZs. Limited short stay and waiting restrictions can be

implemented where appropriate in liaison with the County Council.

Recommendation C) will need to be monitored as there is currently no substantial evidence to suggest overnight HGV parking in centres is an issue. Should evidence be gathered on this the Council could explore a larger vehicles ban.

Updated Recommendation:

Monitor HGV overnight parking.

2.37 A Summary of the review of recommendations can be found in the table below.

Recommendation/ Short name	Updated Costs	S	E	E	D	Review Outcome
1. Commuter Parking	£65,000			✓		Defer
2. Designation Review - BS	£18,000			✓		Monitor
3. Limited and free bay provision	£10,000					Cease
4. Shared RPZ / Refer to No. X						
5. Chantry RPZ promotion	-			✓		Complete
6. Blue badge	-		✓			Monitor
7. Signage – Hertford	£500			✓		Complete
8. Wallfields Car park	Officer time			✓		Complete
9. Town worker	TBC			✓		Monitor

permit						
10. Watton at Stone station parking	-					Cease
11. Public transport provision	-	✓	✓			Monitor
12. RPZ	min £10,000			✓		Refer
13. EVs	Externally funded only	✓				Monitor
14. Time limit EV	£3,000 TRO	✓				Complete
15. Sustainability	-	✓				Monitor
16. VMS	£100,000 in BS	✓		✓	✓	Defer
17. Letter to railway car parks	None					Cease
18. MAG airport parking	N/A		✓			Complete
19. Further scrutiny	TBC					Monitor

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 In line with the Constitution, the Executive is required to consider reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and/or Performance, Audit and Governance Oversight Committee. At the meeting of the Executive 11 February 2020 it was approved that a review of the recommendations will be provided to the Executive.

4.0 Options

4.1 Alternative options would be to consider implementing all recommendations of the parking task and finish

group without reviewing the updated recommendations in the context of changes in parking behaviour, the new corporate plan and pressure on budgets.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 This approach minimises the Council's risk in a time of uncertainty.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 The implications are highlighted within the body of the report.

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

Yes – comments highlighted within the report

Financial

Yes – comments highlighted within the report

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

All

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 All previous information can be found here:

<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/documents/g3518/Public%20reports%20pack%2011th-Feb-2020%2019.00%20Executive.pdf?T=10&J=5>

7.2 The updated RPZ policy is in Appendix A.

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