

Meeting date: 12 July 2022

Report to: Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure

Subject/report title: Parking Services Strategy and Service update

Report from: Head of Highway Management

Report author/lead contact officer: Paul Tovey / Steven Halsey / Krissy Coley

Wards affected:

- All Wards | Bickenhill | Blythe | Castle Bromwich | Chelmsley Wood |
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath | Elmdon | Kingshurst/Fordbridge | Knowle |
 Lyndon | Meriden | Olton | Shirley East | Shirley South |
 Shirley West | Silhill | Smith's Wood | St Alphege
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Public/private report: Public

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek comments on the draft Parking Services Operations Strategy and consider the service improvement plans.

2. Decision(s) recommended

- 2.1 The Cabinet Member is asked to:
- (a) Consider and agree the draft Parking Services Operations Strategy, plan on a page version and service improvement plans, as set out in Appendices A and B and delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Highways and Environment to make any minor changes in the future.
 - (b) Agree to change the car park management system at the M&S multi-storey car park to a "Pay and Display Plus" facility.
 - (c) Agree to introduce enforcement of Pedestrian Dropping Kerbs, using the Council's civil enforcement powers.

- (d) Agree to work collaboratively with the West Midlands Combined Authority to develop a Moving Traffic Enforcement draft business case, as required by the Department for Transport.
- (e) Agree to receive a further update from the service in March 2023.

3. Matters for Consideration

3.1 The Parking Services team provide the following statutory services:

- **Car Parks** – Manage and operate 5 multi-storey car parks and 17 surface car parks.
- **Civil Parking Enforcement** – Enforcement of the terms and conditions that support the council’s off-street car parks and compliance with on-street parking restrictions across the Borough.
- **Bus Lane Enforcement** – Delivery of CCTV based enforcement for bus lanes.
- **Abandoned Vehicles** – Investigation and response to enquiries relating to motor vehicles that have been abandoned on the public highway or on land in the “Open Air”.

3.2 These services are delivered in partnership with the Council’s operations partner NSL Ltd., who deliver the front line customer facing operations and enforcement services.

3.3 To ensure the services provided are aligned to the Council Plan, the Parking Services Operations Strategy has been refreshed, as set out in Appendix A. This draft document includes alignment with national, regional and local transport policy and covers areas such as technology and innovation opportunities. It also resets the ambition and strategic objectives to ensure the service continues to provide customer focused services.

3.4 To support this, a complementary “Plan on a page” version has also been produced (Appendix B) which showcases services provided, the vision and the 5 key priorities, which are to:

- Provide safe and accessible car parks
- Give customers more control over their parking
- More effectively manage the road network
- Increase awareness and promote inclusion
- Develop partnership

3.5 Updating the Strategy has led on to producing strategic objectives and improvement plans for both of the current main service areas - Car Park Operations and Civil Parking Enforcement. Looking to the future, the legal process to decriminalise certain moving traffic offences has now commenced and this report also looks at the options available to manage this service area going forward.

4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?

4.1 The draft Parking Services Operations Strategy has been circulated to internal and external stakeholders for comment to ensure it is comprehensive, inclusive and aligned with the Council Plan. Progress against the objectives and service improvements will be reviewed regularly and the Cabinet Member updated annually.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

5.1 Having a clear and aligned Strategy to the Council Plan is important and it is recommended that the draft Strategy, set out in Appendix A and B, provides a balanced document which is aligned to the Council's assets, services and resources. It is recommended that this document should be adopted and made available on the Council's website to our stakeholders and customers.

5.2 There are many objectives and initiatives set out in the strategy that will be progressed as and when resources are available. However, at this time, the following 3 key service improvements require consideration and formal approval before they can be progressed:

M&S Multi-storey Car Park - Future management solution

5.3 Performance of the M&S multi-storey car park has been under close scrutiny following the closure of the town centre store. This car park is the only facility being operated with a "Pay on Exit" barrier controlled system. The manufacturer has advised that parts are already in short supply and will soon be discontinued.

5.4 This facility is closely aligned to the Council's Mell Square multi-storey car park that also provides access to the Mell Square retail development. This car park was successfully converted to a "Pay & Display" system, complete with e-payment options, 5 years ago.

5.5 Redevelopment proposals incorporating Mell Square car park are actively being progressed by the Council which could see the closure of this facility in 2 to 3 years' time. This will also result in a reduction in the available parking space during the construction phase, projected to be for a further 2 to 3 years' duration.

5.6 Two options have been appraised and converting the M&S facility to "Pay & Display plus" is the preferred option for the following reasons:

- Lower operating system replacement cost.
- Maintains free parking for Blue Badge customers
- Lower revenue annual operating costs
- Safer system for customers to operate as all interactions with the system are carried out from outside of their vehicle and there are no moving parts that can cause harm to our customers.

5.7 The other option is to replace the current "Pay on Foot" barrier access controlled system. It is liked by some customers, but is more expensive, less flexible, has higher operating costs.

6. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 6.1 It is recommended that Pay and Display be introduced at the M&S multi-storey car park in Solihull Town Centre. It will support the Council's development proposals for Mell Square and provide customers with a consistent management system used in every Council managed car park. It will maintain the ability to provide free parking for Blue Badge customers, will include the latest e-payment options and parking duration can be extended remotely. For these reasons, it is recommended that the M&S car park should be converted to "Pay & Display plus" method of operation.

Civil Parking Enforcement - Extended enforcement powers

- 6.2 As part of the review of the Parking Services Strategy, a review of the decriminalised parking contraventions available to the Council has been carried out. This identified that the Council has the ability to issue a £70 Penalty Charge Notice to a motorist who obstructs a pedestrian dropped kerb, where tactile paving is present.
- 6.3 It would seem appropriate to formally adopt this power for Civil Parking Enforcement officers, given the latest advice provided in the new Highway Code, that raised the importance of promoting and encouraging walking and cycling activity. These facilities are of particular importance to those people with restricted mobility, in wheelchairs or pushchairs, and who rely on these being free from parked vehicles to enable them to use the footways safely.
- 6.4 If the enforcement of this offence was to be adopted, a communications campaign would be launched, alongside a two-week period of warning notices to raise awareness of the change, prior to any live enforcement taking place.

7. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 7.1 The Council's Civil Parking Enforcement powers contain a provision for officers to issue a Penalty Charge Notice to a vehicle that has been observed to be parked preventing access to a pedestrian dropped crossing point.
8. Following the introduction of the new Highway Code giving great emphasis to walking and cycling, and the review carried out to produce the new Parking Services Operations Strategy, it is recommended that this should be included to help reinforce the need to keep footways clear of vehicles.

Moving Traffic Enforcement – Development of a Business Case

- 8.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) is in the legal process of decriminalising certain moving traffic offences and the Council can apply for new powers of enforcement. The details are yet to be confirmed, however, it is anticipated that, for example, No Entry, Prohibited Movement and Yellow Box junction enforcement, via an approved CCTV system.
- 8.2 The Council has the option of submitting an individual business case or working collaboratively with Transport for West Midlands and our neighbouring local highway authorities. Whilst submitting a Solihull only based business case to the DfT is an option, it is suggested that working collaboratively through a partnership approach

may deliver a more efficient solution, including the potential for shared services to help ensure a consistent approach to enforcement across the region.

8.3 At this stage in the process, which is expected to take up to two years to complete, the Council needs to decide whether it wishes to submit a single or joint application to adopt these new enforcement powers and if so, prepare the associated business case which will be brought back to Cabinet, for further consideration, before it is submitted to the Department for Transport.

8.4

8.5 The Council could progress a business case on its own but early information from the DfT sport suggests a consistent enforcement approach is taken and specifically calls for collaboration and partnership working, for example with the back office processes which could be shared regionally. It is for these reasons that Transport for West Midlands have offered to support and fund the work necessary to produce the business case, much of which will be common across the seven constituent West Midlands Authorities. The next stage in the process will be to bring the draft Business Case back to Cabinet Member to consider in 2023 to consider the most appropriate way forward for Solihull will be in respect of decriminalising certain moving traffic offences.

9. Reasons for recommending preferred option

9.1 With the Council’s growth plans over the next 10 to 15 years, identified in the Draft Local Plan, demand to use the highway network in Solihull is set to significantly increase. With that extra use, will be added congestion and pressures on the network. The powers described above have been available to the Great London Traffic Authorities since 2004 and have helped manage congestion and compliance on London’s highways. It is recommended that the Council should initially work collaboratively with West Midlands Combined Authority to investigate and develop the Business Case, which is considered to be the most cost effective and efficient delivery method and aligns with the DfT advice.

9.2 There will be a number of project gateways along the estimated 2-year change programme that will provide Cabinet with further opportunities to comment on and have more detailed oversight of specific powers and delivery options.

10. Implications and Considerations

10.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
People and Communities: 1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull.	At the centre of everything people do is travel on and use the public highway network. The Parking Service and in particular the draft strategy will enable

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it.</p> <p>3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>4. Enable communities to thrive.</p>	<p>communities to thrive by ensuring access to local services is available for everyone.</p> <p>The deployment of Moving Traffic Enforcement will also be of benefit to local communities to help improve road safety risks and the level of congestions on the network.</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <p>5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres.</p> <p>6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2.</p> <p>7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.</p>	<p>Parking Services will be required to support growth and development across the borough including the council's priority development zones as outlined in the strategy.</p> <p>Resources are already and will continue to be deployed along the WM Key Route Network and other classified roads in the borough.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <p>8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions.</p>	<p>Keeping traffic moving is at the heart of the strategy and the adoption of the new Moving Traffic Enforcement powers will further strengthen our capabilities to improve air quality and reduce vehicle based emissions.</p>
<p>9. Promote employee wellbeing</p>	<p>Not directly applicable.</p>

10.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

10.2.1 The draft strategy has been circulated to key stakeholders and their feedback has been taken into consideration.

10.2.2 The operational strategy and service improvement plans have not been reviewed by one of the Council's Scrutiny Boards.

10.3 Financial implications:

10.3.1 The costs of producing the strategy has been funded from the Parking Services staffing revenue budget.

10.3.2 The cost to convert the M&S car park to a "Pay and Display Plus" management system is estimated to cost in the region of £120,000 which if approved will then be subject to a competitive tender process in accordance with the Council's procurement regulations. For comparison purposes, the cost to retain a Pay on Exit management system could cost between £400,000 and £500,000 depending on the specification, available budget and extent of associated communications equipment that also has to be replaced. The cost of this work will be funded from the Parking Services equipment maintenance budget and also from the Mell Square development lease agreement

whereby they are required to fund a proportion of the car park operating and maintenance costs.

- 10.3.3 The ongoing annual revenue operating and maintenance costs of a Pay and Display system will be approximately £30,000 p.a. lower than the current system. The savings will be used towards the funding of the conversion costs and in future years, be used to offset against other service pressures.
- 10.3.4 There are no significant cost implications associated with invoking the Dropped Kerb enforcement powers. Over time, income generated from any parking contraventions will contribute to funding the overall service operating costs.
- 10.3.5 If the option to work collaboratively across the region to develop the business case for Moving Traffic Enforcement is approved, then the majority of these costs will be funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority City Regional Sustainable Travel Settlement (CRSTS). The Council will be expected to support the project and provide officer time to support the specialist consultant lead process which will be funded from within existing budgets. Progressing this project on its own may cost the Council in the region of £100,000 to £150,000 in consultant's fees.
- 10.4 The income generated from the council's car parks is recovering slowly from the impact of Covid and changes to the retail offer in Solihull Town Centre. Last financial year, the service received support from the Council's Covid support grant to enable a balanced budget to be delivered at the end of March 2022. The service is forecasting that similar financial support will be required again this year, and going forward the position will be monitored as part of the Portfolio's quarterly finance update reports and through the corporate risk management system.

10.5 Legal implications:

- 10.5.1 None, as a result of the recommendations in this report.
- 10.5.2 It will be necessary to amend the M&S car park's off-street parking order, if the recommended change to Pay & Display is approved.

10.6 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

- 10.6.1 Parking Services maintains a risk register on the corporate system and will continue to use this throughout the year to manage and mitigate any risks.
- 10.6.2 At this time, the only RED risk being the car park income position which is being closely monitor through the Council's financial monitoring processes as well.

10.7 Equality implications:

- 10.7.1 None as a result of the recommendations in this report.
- 10.7.2 The draft strategy also been through the council's Fair Treatment Assessment process.

10.8 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care

System (ICS):

10.8.1 The Moving Traffic Enforcement project has strong links with the WMCA and other neighbouring Local Highway Authorities that, over time, will ensure the highway network is effectively managed to minimise delay and disruption to all road users and bring economic benefit for the region too.

11. List of appendices referred to

11.1 Appendix A – Draft Parking Services Strategy

11.2 Appendix B – Parking Services Strategy on a page

12. Background papers used to compile this report

12.1 Various

13. List of other relevant documents

13.1 Various