

Meeting date: 16th February 2021
Report to: Highways and Environment Cabinet



Subject/report title: Review of Parking Displacement Programme
Report from: Head of Highway Infrastructure
Report author/lead contact officer: Mark O'Connell

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

Public/private report: Public

Exempt by virtue of paragraph: NA

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To review and consider proposals for a Parking Displacement Programme

2. Decision(s) recommended

2.1 The Cabinet Member is asked to:

- (a) Note the contents of the report and options considered.
- (b) Agree to continue the current position with regards to the Parking Displacement Programme highlighted at 4.19 of this report (Option 1).

3. Matters for Consideration

3.1 In April 2016 a report was taken to a Cabinet Decision Session to review the Parking Displacement Programme (PDP) following a suspension of the programme in 2008.

3.2 Several issues were raised in the report including issues of Officers trying to resolve neighbourhood disputes over schemes; issues of residents using more than one parking space and leaving cars parked for long periods of time; repeat requests being received for areas where new parking areas had already been provided; and the overall reduced effectiveness of the schemes.

In light of these issues, the Cabinet Member agreed to the abandonment of the Parking Displacement Programme.

- 3.3 Where roadside frontages include a grass verge, there is often a conflict between the desires of some residents who wish to park on the verge and those who value the amenity of green spaces along the road side. Verge parking can reduce the verge to an unsightly state, presenting a hazard to pedestrians through deep rutting, making it difficult to maintain and causing damage to trees and their roots.
- 3.4 Before the programme was suspended (and subsequently abandoned), the costs associated with processing requests and constructing parking areas were funded from an allocation within the Local Transport Plan (LTP) capital budget. This and the Ward Member Budgets are currently the only streams of funding available for this type of work.
- 3.5 The £40,000 fund allocated to the programme in 2007 would enable the service to progress between two and three parking displacement projects per year.
- 3.6 Previously demand for parking areas was relatively high with there being 48 locations on the priority list in 2015/16. Increasing levels of car ownership have created greater demands and competition for available parking space and as demand continues to rise this will impact the team's current capacity and funding to progress them all in a single financial year.
- 3.7 Due to the ongoing issues and conflicting demands surrounding verge parking, a review of the Parking Displacement Programme has been undertaken. It also took account of the proposed changes to the Civil Parking Enforcement legislation, the existing Vehicle Access Crossing Guidance and Blue Badge Parking Space and H Bar (access protection markings) Application Process
- 3.8 Whilst this report outlines the impact of verge parking, it also has to be borne in mind the financial implications of addressing residents' concerns.

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

- 4.1 There is a conflict between those residents who wish to park on verges and those who would like to see verges protected, in order to enhance the appearance of the borough. The Council also has a number of responsibilities as Highway Authority, including keeping the highway safe and unobstructed, particularly at road junctions where clear visibility for all road users is important, and to reduce congestion on the highway.
- 4.2 Verges that have been severely damaged by vehicle overrunning and parking look unsightly and can be a safety hazard for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists when the resulting mud gets spread over the footway and carriageway. Removing the verges and replacing them with tarmac resolves these problems, but results in a permanent loss of greenery. It is also costly.
- 4.3 At present the estimated cost of constructing a typical parking area (8 spaces) is in the region of £6,000 - £13,000, depending on type of construction. This does not include

costs for officer time or any costly utility diversions.

- 4.4 When the PDP was in operation, the amount of officer time required to administer the schemes was disproportionate to other areas of work carried out by the Highways division. Managing the PDP would still require a substantial amount of officer time, which would need to be fully funded by the programme.
- 4.5 Due to the nature of the works there are limited options to fund a PDP, with the only funding options being the LTP Capital Budget or Ward Member Budgets.
- 4.6 Since 2010/11, revenue funding for highway maintenance budgets have reduced from £1,965,000 to £1,846,000 this financial year (6% decrease) and capital LTP funding has reduced from £4,131,000 to £3,733,000 (10% decrease).
- 4.7 Capital LTP allocations are spent across several different areas within the Highways Asset Management Investment Plan, (with priority given to statutory areas), including carriageway surface treatments, street lighting, drainage, highway structures, Community Liveability Programme and Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO). Funding a PDP would result in expenditure being reduced in one of these areas.
- 4.8 A recent National Highways and Transport Network survey ranked Solihull as the 4th best performing Highway Authority out of 109 Councils for delivering highway maintenance services.
- 4.9 Ward Member Budgets cover all place based activity requests by Members, not just highways, with the approval process at ward member level. The overall budget of £128,790 (equating to £7,575 per ward) is split between the Neighbourhood Delivery Team and the Community Development Team, with each service responsible for £64,400 per annum.
- 4.10 The Neighbourhood Delivery Team undertakes highway safety inspections, including grass verges. When there is damage to the highway verge, letters are sent to responsible residents and they may be liable for any costs incurred for the reinstatement of the affected area. Verges are also repaired where damage exceeds a "safety intervention level". Since 2017, £5,060 has been spent on repairing highway verges and protecting them with bollards.
- 4.11 The latent demand for measures to help resolve parking problems in our local residential areas is likely to be high, and an approved prioritisation process would be required to identify those areas most in need.
- 4.12 Officers are frequently involved in trying to resolve neighbourhood disputes over parking issues and schemes; issues of residents using more than one parking space and leaving cars parked for long periods of time; impeding upon vehicle access crossings and the type of parking provision required. To address these issues and disputes a full consultation would be required before a PDP is progressed. This would add substantial additional costs to each scheme to cover the process.
- 4.13 From a road safety viewpoint, if no off street parking is available, it is less dangerous if cars are parked fully on the carriageway, rather than partly or wholly on the grass verge. This is because in both situations, pedestrians are likely to be crossing the road

and children might run out into the carriageway from between parked cars. However, if these cars are parked fully on the carriageway, then it is likely that vehicles on the road will be travelling more slowly, due to the carriageway being perceived as narrower and requiring more driver concentration. With lower vehicle speeds it may be possible to prevent, or reduce the severity of, an accident.

- 4.14 Increased parking space is likely to encourage further car use, further car use will increase congestion and more importantly, fail to deliver on our Green Prospectus and Net Zero Plans. It is vital that we prioritise sustainable modes of transport to deliver on our transport and environmental strategies including the Clean Air Strategy, Net Zero and Solihull Connected.
- 4.15 Green spaces, including grass verges, provide an amenity in local residential areas, not only for local residents, but also for those passing through. Grass verges also play a role in mitigating the effects of climate change, for example by reducing the rate of surface water run-off into the sewers from rainwater.
- 4.16 Recognising the concerns regarding pavement and grass verge parking, the Department for Transport recently carried out a nationwide consultation exercise in respect of restricting such activity via the Council's Civil Parking Enforcement powers. If enacted, this change would make it a civil parking offence to park either partly or fully on any grass verge or pavement unless permitted by specific traffic regulation order. Any such change still has a number of steps to go through before becoming law.
- 4.17 A limited number of other measures have been implemented in the past through the Neighbourhood Team budget to protect grass verges with double height kerbs and wooden trip rail fencing. These measures protect the grass verges but do not alleviate the parking issues.
- 4.18 **Option 1: No change** – Continue with the current decision with regards to the Parking Displacement Programme. The Council does not have to provide this service and the continued abandonment would enable Highways to focus funding on priorities and statutory activities that contribute to the Council Plan.

Option 2: Re-introduce Parking Displacement Programme – secure £50,000 of Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding to fund the introduction of the programme and associated new verge parking policy. As there are no new funding streams available existing Ward Member budgets or LTP funding would need to be diverted from other activities.

Constructing parking bays would alleviate some parking issues, however, as the costs are high only a small number of parking spaces would be able to be constructed each financial year. For example, as each space costs in the region of £750 - £1,620 (not including officer or utility diversion costs) Highways would only be able to construct between 24 and 53 spaces each year (£10,000 of budget used to cover officer time). Any utility diversions required would reduce this number further.

Option 3: Introduce discounted vehicle access scheme - draft new policy and prioritisation matrix to offer qualifying residents discounted vehicle access crossings

(VAC's). The VACs would be offered at cost and would not require the use of LTP funds.

The installation of VACs is common practice throughout the borough and they completely remove vehicles from the road at no cost to the Council. However, for some properties this option is not physically possible and residents may not be able to afford the costs, even if they are at cost.

Option 4: Physically prevent verge parking - secure £50,000 of LTP funding or utilise Ward Member Budgets to fund measures such as bollards, double height kerbs or trees to physically prevent vehicles from being able to park on or overrun the verge.

The use of bollards raises a number of problems including the cost of installation, future maintenance (bollards are regularly knocked down and vandalised), appearance (large numbers of bollards look unsightly) and the fact that they can be a hazard to road users.

Double height kerbs are the most expensive of these measures, however, they are more durable than bollards and are not visually detrimental to the street scene and cause few verge maintenance problems.

5. Reasons for recommending preferred option

- 5.1 Of the 4 options set out above, Option 1: No change will enable the service, through good asset management, to target budgets and programmes to ensure the right thing is done at the right time, thus optimising funding to make sure risks are mitigated and managed.
- 5.2 The amount of Officer time required to administer the programme would be disproportionate to other services and could impact upon the quality of other programmes within the Highway Infrastructure Service. For example, existing Officers would need to prioritise and design schemes, liaise with utility companies, undertake consultation with Ward Members and residents, answer queries and manage contractors on top of the other duties they already perform. This is considered to be an ineffective use of resource.
- 5.3 Although schemes could be seen to improve the parking facilities in local areas the programmes are often contentious with residents. Only a limited number of schemes could be implemented each year, therefore, the programme would not be able to mitigate numerous issues leading to disgruntled residents. For example, a scheme funded by Ward Member budgets was implemented on Auckland Drive in 2020/21; since this scheme was completed there have been complaints from nearby residents on why this area was chosen and also the manner in which vehicles are now parking (overhanging the footway and carriageway).
- 5.4 Increased parking is likely to encourage further car use, further car use will increase congestion and more importantly, fail to deliver on our Green Prospectus and Net Zero Plans. It is vital that we prioritise sustainable modes of transport to deliver on our transport and environmental strategies including the Clean Air Strategy, Net Zero and Solihull Connected.

- 5.5 Green spaces, including grass verges, provide an amenity in local residential areas, not only for local residents, but also for those passing through. Grass verges also play a role in mitigating the effects of climate change, for example by reducing the rate of surface water run-off into the sewers from rainwater.
- 5.6 If external funding were to become available the Highway Infrastructure Service will review the need for a Parking Displacement Programme and report back to the Highways and Environment Cabinet Member.

6. Implications and Considerations

6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the Council Plan:

| Priority: | Contribution: |
|---|---|
| <p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revitalising our towns and local centres. 2. UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2. 3. Increase the supply of housing, especially affordable and social housing. | <p>Ensuring high quality highway assets provide a stable infrastructure to support economic growth and prosperity throughout the borough</p> |
| <p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Enhance Solihull's natural environment. 5. Improve Solihull's air quality. 6. Reduce Solihull's net carbon emissions. | <p>Through maintaining our assets to a high standard helps reduce journey times limits the effects of vehicle emissions on the environment.</p> |
| <p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities. 8. Enable communities to thrive. 9. Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults & children with complex needs. | <p>A good quality road network allows ease of movement that support businesses and associated jobs</p> |

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 The Parking Displacement Programme has not recently been considered through the Council's Scrutiny Board process.

6.3 Financial implications:

6.3.1 The key financial implications are all considered within the main body of this report. The recommended option 1 would enable funding to be focussed on Highways priorities and statutory activities that contribute to the Council Plan.

6.3.2 Full details of next year's LTP capital allocation and associated programmes of work will be considered in the February 2021 Asset Management and Service Priorities report to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways

6.4 Legal implications:

6.4.1 None

6.5 Risk implications:

6.5.1 Based on the available information it is the officers' opinion that there are no net "Red" risks to the Council associated with the recommendation of the report. The Corporate Risk Management Approach has been complied with to identify and assess the significant risks associated with this decision / project. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation and reputation risks.

6.5.2 The Approach is not intended to eliminate all risks and not all the risks identified can be managed all of the time. Also, risks will still exist that have not been identified.

6.6 Equality implications:

6.6.1 Any additional space provided for parking on the public highway is provided for all types of road user and where appropriate, specific spaces can be reserved for those motorists who qualify under the Blue Badge Scheme.

6.6.2 An Equalities impact assessment is not considered necessary as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

7. List of appendices referred to

7.1 None

8. Background papers used to compile this report

8.1 Review of Parking Displacement Programme Report – 07 April 2016 - Cabinet Member Decision Session for Transport and Highways

8.2 Review of Parking Displacement Programme Report – 10 May 2016 - Call in Committee

8.3 Parking Displacement Review and Report on Requests / Petitions Received - 01 December 2011 – Cabinet Member Decision Session for Transport and Highways

8.4 Review of Parking Displacement Strategy – 23 February 2005 - Cabinet Member Decision Session for Transport and Highways

9. List of other relevant documents

9.1 Highways Act 1980

9.2 Well Managed Highway Infrastructure