

# Somerset West and Taunton Council

Community Scrutiny Committee - 31 August 2022

## Parking Strategy Actions Review

**This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mike Rigby.**

**Author: Richard Brown – External Operations and Climate Change**

### **1. Executive Summary/ Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 Prior to the formation of Somerset West and Taunton Council the two former Councils of West Somerset and Taunton Deane had separate car parking strategies. The Refreshed Parking Strategy for Taunton was presented and adopted by Full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018. The Final Report of the Parking in West Somerset Task and Finish Group was approved by the Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

Both contained recommendations for the future of off-street parking in the separate authority areas. This report highlights what action has been taken in respect of those recommendations since the formation of Somerset West and Taunton Council.

### **2. Recommendations:**

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Committee is requested to support the following recommendations:-
- a) Note the contents of the report.

### **3. Risk assessment**

- 3.1 There are no risks associated with this report as it is for information purposes.

### **4. Background and Full details**

- 4.1 The Car Park Service Review project was started in 2021/22 to deliver across a range of workstreams relating to the parking service. The expected outcomes of the review were intended to help inform decision making, deliver products to enhance elements of off-street parking provision and to plan

financially for the future and in line with Climate Emergency Strategy and SWT's Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan.

- 4.2 One of the workstreams was to review the recommendations set out in the car parking strategy documents of Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset District Council prior to the merger.
- 4.3 This report sets out the progress made against recommendations contained within the two documents.
- 4.4 Since the adoption of both of these reports there have been significant developments including the creation of Somerset West and Taunton Council, a declaration of a climate and ecological emergency, the COVID 19 pandemic and a decision to create a new unitary authority. The new unitary authority will take responsibility for the future development of both on and off-street parking strategies within its boundaries and therefore it is not appropriate to create a new strategy for just off street parking at this time.
- 4.5 A progress update on each of the nine recommendations in the Taunton Parking Strategy 2018 Refresh are shown in the table below.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Update on progress</b>
<p>1. Creation of long and short stay tariffs and designations to simplify the tariff approach for customers.</p> <p>Short stay would be a maximum of 3 hours.</p>	<p>Taunton car parks have all been designated long or short stay car parks.</p> <p>A maximum 3-hour tariff is available within Taunton's short stay car parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ash Meadows</li> <li>• Coal Orchard</li> <li>• Duke Street</li> <li>• Elms Parade</li> <li>• Fons George</li> <li>• The Crescent</li> <li>• Whirligig Lane</li> </ul>

<p>2. Visitor Management Plans for major events</p>	<p>SWT has dedicated coach parking in Taunton and can extend operating periods for car parks and key staff on request subject to approval.</p> <p>Event organisers are required to complete an application via the events portal, where event management plans are scrutinised in advance including parking plans. The events team requires supporting documents including but not limited to: event health and safety; risk assessments; traffic management plans and fire safety.</p> <p>SWT has a safety advisory group (SAG) which can be used as appropriate for events plans scrutiny.</p>
<p>3. Incentives for the use of the Orchard (Paul Street) and High Street sites due to available capacity.</p>	<p>The parking charging tariffs for the Orchard (Paul Street) and High Street car parks are in line with the other Taunton long stay car parks.</p> <p>All tariffs and charges for parking are agreed by full Council.</p>
<p>4. Extend the use of the Variable Message Signage to utilise live data or apps when generating parking data</p>	<p>The Variable Message Signage (VMS) is linked with the Pay on Foot car parks. The signs display live car park availability data.</p> <p>Other public safety information messages can be displayed with SCC.</p>
<p>5. Review the number of blue badge spaces and motorcycle spaces</p>	<p>The number and location of disabled and motorcycle bays has been reviewed as part of the car parking improvement project. These spaces are also reviewed prior to any relining of car parks.</p> <p>The details of the number of spaces within in each car park are shown within the parking services webpage.</p>

<p>6. Improve the maintenance and aesthetic environment of the car parks. Improve wayfinding and information for those leaving the car parks</p>	<p>A service level agreement has been created for the provision of Ground Maintenance and Street Cleansing works for all car parks. The car park locations are part of a works rota to ensure they are kept clean and tidy to encourage visitors to use the locations.</p> <p>All car parks are clearly identified on the parking services webpages, each car park has a map of the area including postal code information, opening times, pay by phone location codes, charging tariffs and the number of spaces within the location including motorcycle, EV charging, disabled and standard bays.</p> <p>The website is updated regularly to show any changes.</p> <p>Further work on wayfinding and information for those leaving the car parks is planned for 22/23.</p>
<p>7. More efficient use of the spaces by possible consolidation into larger car parks and reduce the use of smaller car parks.</p>	<p>Parking capacity data has been reviewed for each of the car parks within the Somerset West and Taunton district. Data will be reviewed regularly to ensure the car parks are being used to their potential. When each car park is resurfaced or relined a further review is undertaken.</p>
<p>8. In partnership with Somerset County Council review the model of operation of the park and ride sites to enable delivery of a comprehensive solution for parking</p>	<p>SWT does work in partnership with SCC regarding parking including a joint enforcement contract. This included some financial support of the park and ride service across several years prior to 2021. More aligned working such as a joint parking strategy has been identified as a work product for the new unitary authority. This would include on and off-street parking and the park and ride.</p>

4.6 A progress update on each of the nineteen recommendations from the West Somerset Task and Finish Group 2019 are shown in the table below.

Recommendation	Update on progress
<p>1. Engage constructively with SCC Highways in their county wide Parking Review and encourage the active involvement of Parish and Town councils to examine the options for on-street parking to encourage more use, particularly by commuters of off-street parking.</p>	<p>SWT engages regularly with Somerset County Council regarding highways issues and countywide transport matters. More aligned working such as a joint parking strategy has been identified as a work product for the new unitary authority. This would include on and off-street parking and the park and ride. A new strategy would include a consultation with parish and town Councils.</p>
<p>2. To review the charging regime to retain seasonal charging where there is a significant difference in usage between summer and winter. To consider the part that reduction in car park charges can play to increasing off-street parking. Both to be considered as part of the combined parking strategy review for the new council of Somerset West and Taunton.</p>	<p>Seasonal car parking charges have been adopted. A new parking strategy was delayed due to the LGR process.</p>
<p>3. To reconsider the charging for blue badge holders in car parks in the light of a perceived increase in on-street parking by blue badge holders after the introduction of charging for them. To be considered as part of the combined parking strategy review for the new council of Somerset West and Taunton.</p>	<p>On-street parking is free for blue badge holders. SWT off-street parking charges require blue badge holders to pay when parking within its car parks but provides blue badge holders (if a valid badge is displayed) an extra hour extension on top of the purchased parking session; this does not include pay on foot locations.</p>
<p>4. As part of the combined parking strategy review for the new council of Somerset West and Taunton carry out a comprehensive assessment of signage to and signage within car parks so that facilities are identified within the car parks and that directions to town and village centres are clear. Also ensuring that accurate up to date terms and conditions on both signage and the website as legal requirements of Traffic Regulation Orders.</p>	<p>SWT did review its signage after the merger within all its car parks to ensure that car parks have the correct signage and that tariffs are displayed in the same format across the district.</p> <p>Any changes to the Off-Street Parking Order are also reflected on signage at the time of change.</p>

<p>5. As part of the combined parking strategy review for the new Council of Somerset West and Taunton identify suitable locations for electric car charging points within the main car parks of each settlement together with dedicated parking bays. Work with local communities to establish such charging points and to make such efficient arrangements to maintain them as necessary.</p>	<p>The roll out of electric vehicle charging points is being led and delivered under the climate change agenda by the Climate Change team.</p> <p>The Climate Change team works closely with the parking services department to provide EV charging facilities within the Somerset West and Taunton off-street car parks. Currently there are 16 double socket 22kw charging points within the car parks with a plan for a further 19 to be installed in 2022/23.</p>
<p>6. Establish new working and accounting practices such that routine maintenance tasks are commissioned by the car park team and set against car park income.</p>	<p>All off-street car parks across SWT are managed and monitored by the Parking Services team. The team manage an allocated car park maintenance budget which is used for car park improvements in conjunction with the Assets team.</p> <p>Costs for maintenance and income are monitored monthly in line with service requirements.</p>
<p>7. Ensure that 26% of car park income derived in Minehead and Watchet car parks is allocated to the Harbour account in the interests of greater transparency to reflect the use of car parks by those using the Harbour.</p>	<p>Car parking income from all the off-street parking locations is allocated and monitored monthly and can be detailed by each car park. This income sits within the Councils general fund account.</p>
<p>8. A maintenance strategy is adopted forthwith as set out in appendix of the Strategy and a robust inspection regime is put in place to identify maintenance, Health and Safety and other issues which require action in the immediate and short term. Such action to be commissioned by the car park team and recharged to the car park budget.</p>	<p>The off-street car parks within the district are visually inspected on a daily basis by our parking enforcement contractor, reports are submitted each day for actioning if required. On a quarterly basis the Highways Inspector carries out in-depth checks and identifies/records any maintenance and health and safety issues. These are reported and actioned by the team in order of priority.</p> <p>A car park condition survey has been commissioned and is set to deliver a 30 year costed maintenance plan with a schedule of car park repairs and refurbishment which will be needed.</p> <p>The car park service team manage the responsive and planned maintenance budget for all car parks.</p>

<p>9. Where on-street parking abuses are identified which might contribute to the reduction of off-street parking, consideration should be given to funding extra on-street enforcement patrols.</p>	<p>SWT work in partnership with Somerset County Council who commission NSL to deliver joint on and off-street parking enforcement. Any issues can be identified and dealt with jointly.</p>
<p>10. As part of the combined parking strategy review for the new council of Somerset West and Taunton, consideration should be given to the conclusions and recommendations contained in the area conclusions section which forms a part of the Strategy document attached.</p>	<p>Recommendations contained are considered with a view to delivering equitably across all car parks managed by SWT. These can be picked up by the wider somerset parking strategy</p>
<p>11. Commence work to establish ownership and responsibilities for car park boundaries and establish contact with boundary owners to agree maintenance duties for the future. If necessary, increase officer capacity to undertake this work in a timely manner. Such work be chargeable to the car park account.</p>	<p>SWT has undertaken work to identify the legal constraints so that the Council understands and has a full record of ownership, boundaries, rights, easements etc. This has been undertaken within existing resource of the assets team.</p>
<p>12. The principle of charging users for our off-street car parks should be levied on a suggested calculation of the following charges being made up of operational costs including capital and put asides for routine and long term expenditure minus the income generated through charges.</p>	<p>Parking charges are set by the Full Council of SWT annually. A full review of fees and charges is planned as part of the LGR process.</p>
<p>13. The Group recommends the New Council should consider some form of zoning in its charges e.g. urban, rural, tourist.</p>	<p>SWT has classified car parks as short, medium or long stay car park and charges have been levied and agreed according to designations. Seasonal charges remain in force within the old West Somerset area due to their location. A full review of fees and charges is planned as part of the LGR process.</p>
<p>14. The New Council as part of its review should look at those Car Parks that are currently free/non charging but owned by the Council to determine whether to bring these into line with charging regime or asset transfer to the community / appropriate responsible body.</p>	<p>As part of the car parking services review a report is being completed with the 30 year maintenance plan which will show the expected annual cost and income for each car park. This information will then be used to help with the review of fees and charges as part of the LGR process.</p>
<p>15. Consideration should be given to a “free after 3pm” offer in designated car parks to encourage use/behaviour patterns, help town centre businesses, and discourage on- road commuter</p>	<p>Parking charges are set by the Full Council of SWT annually. A full review of fees and charges is planned as part of the LGR process.</p>

parking. Care should be taken when publicising these initiatives.	
16. Consideration should be given to revising the budgets to include all costs and account for all legitimate income to the appropriate service.	All costs and income associated with the parking services are in one cost centre.
17. The Council could make a decision to do the same and move a percentage of income from Watchet and Minehead car parks into the harbour.	As Recommendation 7
18. Consideration should be given to including any or all of the above when and if set against the car park budget	All costs and income associated with the parking services are in one cost centre.
19. In order to meet the Government's Transparency Code, a maintenance and improvement strategy should be set out within short, (1-3 years) medium, (3-6 years) and long term (6 years +)	A car park condition survey has been commissioned and is set to deliver a 30 year costed maintenance plan and with a schedule of car park repairs and refurbishment which will be needed.

## 5. Links To Corporate Strategy

5.1 The current work of the Parking Service supports the corporate strategy by:

- Pursue commercial investment opportunities that generate additional income that can be reinvested in service delivery in order to protect or enhance services on which our communities rely. Supported by a commercial investment strategy.
- Meet the challenge of Government completely withdrawing grant funding.
- Ensure land and property assets support the achievement of the council's objectives (including service delivery, regeneration projects and community initiatives).

## 6. Finance / Resource Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications for this report.

6.2 Covid 19 has significantly impacted on income received from parking services over the past 2 years. The reduction in income was likely linked to changes in behaviours by motorists. Income levels have improved in the last 12 months and stabilised but are still down on pre covid levels and have been reflected in the budget set for 2022/23.

## 7. Legal implications

7.1 There are no legal implications associated with this update report.



## **8. Climate and sustainability implications**

- 8.1 The Climate Emergency Strategy has provided some resources to install electric vehicle charging points in line with recommendations and thereby help encourage the uptake of electric vehicles and reduce the carbon foot print of motor vehicles using car parks.

## **9. Safeguarding and Community Safety Implications**

- 9.1 There are no new safeguarding or community safety implications because of this report.

## **10. Asset Management.**

- 10.1 There are no new asset management implications because of this report.

## **Demographic Path**

- Scrutiny – 31<sup>st</sup> August
- Cabinet/Executive – No
- Full Council – No

**List of Appendices** - None

## **Contact Officers**

Name	Richard Brown
Direct Dial	07500 028420
Email	r.brown@somersetwestand Taunton.gov.uk
Name	Stuart Noyce
Direct Dial	01823 218712
Email	s.noyce@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk