Overview and Scrutiny Committee

St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Title of Report:	**Car Parking Update January 2018 - November 2018**	
Report No:	**OAS/SE/19/004**	
Report to and date:	**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**	9 January 2019
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Purpose of report:	To update Members on Off Street Parking outcomes and work priorities.	
Recommendation:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee: **Members are asked to <u>note</u> the report.**	
Key Decision: *(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that **do not** apply.)*	*Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?* Yes, it is a Key Decision - ☐ No, it is not a Key Decision - ☒	

Consultation:	• Engagement with customers and external partners has taken place over the past year in order to inform this report and its recommendations.
Alternative option(s):	N/A

Implications:	
*Are there any **financial** implications? If yes, please give details*	Yes ☐ No ☒ • Parking fees and charges provide revenue and costs to the Council. Any surplus income after operation, investment, maintenance and staffing costs have been deducted, helps pay for the delivery of other Council services in our town centres. No recommendations contained in this report will result in a significant budgetary variation to the car parking account
*Are there any **staffing** implications? If yes, please give details*	Yes ☐ No ☒
*Are there any **ICT** implications? If yes, please give details*	Yes ☐ No ☒
*Are there any **legal and/or policy** implications? If yes, please give details*	Yes ☐ No ☒
*Are there any **equality** implications? If yes, please give details*	Yes ☐ No ☒
Risk/opportunity assessment:	*(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

Risk area	**Inherent level of risk** (before controls)	**Controls**	**Residual risk** (after controls)
Car Park charges are set incorrectly resulting in either charges being too high or too low. Both scenarios could result in suboptimal performance in the car parks and town centres	Medium	Consultation has been carried out resulting in a clear rationale being provided by the O&S review for the proposed charges	Low
Town centres adversely affected by any increase	Low	Feedback from customers and other stakeholders along with benchmarking information demonstrates that the charges are not excessive in comparison to other comparable towns	Low

Ward(s) affected:	All Wards
Background papers:	Report CAB/SE/15/078 dated 8 December 2015 – Report of Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group report on Car Parking.
Documents attached:	None

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation

1.1 This report provides an update of the car parking service between January and November 2018, identifying use by customers and projects undertaken across the year.

Usage

1.2 A total of 2,592,487 car parking events were recorded between January and November 2018 across all car parks in the Borough (including the Country Parks and Leisure Centres). This figure is 2.6% down compared to the same period in 2017.

1.3 The number of transactions made specifically in Bury St Edmunds town centre was 2,140,313 in 2018 compared to 2,229,391 in 2017 (down 4%) whilst Haverhill recorded a total of 452,174 parking events in 2018 compared with 432,660 in 2017 (a rise of 4.5%).

1.4 The reduction in parking activity closely mirrors footfall figures and general trends in retail and parking activity both locally and nationally.

1.5 In Bury St Edmunds town centre, the fall in parking events is mostly seen in the main short stay 'shopper' car parks, particularly in the Cattle Market/arc (-3.9%); St Andrews short stay (-6.7%); Robert Boby Way (-3.7%) and Parkway Surface (-1.6%). It is worth noting that the lower cost short stay car parks have also seen less use (Robert Boby, St Andrews and Parkway Surface) and indicates that a trend toward shorter visits is not linked to cost. Long stay parking has remained fairly strong: Ram Meadow and St Andrews have seen small rises of around 1.5% but Parkway MSCP has seen a drop of 10% mainly due to the short stay regime on the weekends – a trend that is seen across all short stay car parks.

1.6 In Haverhill, a similar reduction in short stay parking is evidenced (Lower Downs Slade -3.3%) but overall parking activity has been boosted by high demand at Ehringshausen Way (+24%). Anecdotal feedback suggests this may be due to demand at the new Poundstretcher store opening after the site had been unoccupied for several years.

1.7 Weekly ticket sales in St Andrews and Ram Meadow have continued to grow significantly (+12.4% and +17.3% respectively) whilst they have declined by 5.4% in Parkway MSCP. Season tickets (which offer discounts over longer periods) have declined by 48.5% which would suggest that the cheaper outlay for a weekly ticket is preferable due to the discounts being the same on each product.

1.8 Adoption of cashless alternatives to coin payments at pay machines continues to see high adoption. The value of credit/debit card transactions has increased by 58% to £460,000 whilst the value of payments through RingGo has risen 21% to £540,000.

1.9 The financial impact of prolonged Highways works in Bury St Edmunds can be seen to have affected demand in this last period. Lower Baxter St dropped 21% in usage during the period of works to the highway whilst St

Andrews short stay dropped by 6.7% due to access issues as a result of the extended works at Station Hill and the roundabout off Tayfen Rd. Anecdotal reports from customers indicated that the likelihood of queuing put customers off their visits to town.

1.10 Weather may also have played a part in reduced short stay (shopping) parking over the period. Snow reduced demand in the early months of the year and was followed by a notably hot summer. Examples of the impact are:

- Snow in 28 February – 1 March caused 77% decrease in usage
- Summer heat wave – 23-29 July. Transaction down in BSE by 11% (4,800 less)

Car Park Usage Tables

1.11 Bury St Edmunds

Car Park	2017	2018	%
School Yard East	27,256	27,231	-0.09
School Yard West	38,480	38,666	+0.48
St Andrews	333,227	310,853	-6.7
Ram Meadow	308,311	312,936	+1.5
Robert Boby Way	216,111	208,119	-3.7
Cattle Market/arc	772,973	742,694	-3.9
Parkway MSCP	259,966	233,442	-10.0
Parkway Surface	138,166	135,941	-1.6
Lower Baxter St	32,787	25,906	-21.0
Shire Hall (weekends)	3,543	3,230	-8.8
Hardwick Heath	98,571	101,295	+2.7

1.12 Haverhill

Car Park	2017	2018	%
Leisure Centre	88,171	80,309	-8.9
Lower Downs Slade	100,468	97,103	-3.3
Meadows	14,394	14,941	+3.8
Corn Exchange	11,619	10,960	-5.6
Town Hall	71,811	67,141	-6.5
Ehringshausen Way	146,197	181,720	+24

1.13 As a result of the falling transactions, income fell by £109,477 (-2.7%) to £3,919,776 between 1st January 2018 to 30 November 2018 compared to the year previous.

Issue of Fines

1.14 A total of 6,339 parking fines were issued in the car parks between January and November 2018 representing a rise of 49% against the previous period. The can be largely attributed to less vacancies within the front line team. The car parking service continues to develop an ambassadorial, customer focused approach to service delivery and these figures indicate that the majority of our customers understand and comply with our car parking regulations. The number of fines issued continues to represent only 0.2% of our total transactions, indicating that 99.8% of our customers comply with the regulations.

Service Improvement

1.15 Electric Charging Points

There are six Electric Charging Points available to electric/hybrid car users; four in Bury St Edmunds (Parkway Multi Storey and Ram Meadow car parks) and two in Haverhill at the Ehringshausen Way car park. In addition, two bays are being provided at the School Yard East car park in Bury St Edmunds giving access to a newly installed 'rapid' charging point allowing an average vehicle to be charged in around an hour. This is due to go live in early 2019. Given the authority's commitment to the promotion of green energy, vehicles are not charged for parking but are required to pay a charge for the electricity.

1.16 Park Mark

As in previous years, the Council's pay and display car parks have been independently inspected by the police and parking specialists and all car parks in SEBC are currently awarded with the Park Mark accreditation. The award is for two years with an interim review after one year which we are currently undertaking. The award covers the level of safety, cleanliness, quality of signage, frequency of patrols by uniformed attendants, and maintenance within our car parks. The Borough's car parks have again been recognised for their high quality of management with a Park Mark award.

1.17 Disabled Parking Accreditation

This accreditation is a new initiative by the charity Disabled Motoring UK (DMUK) and is managed by the British Parking Association (BPA). Car parks that achieve the DPA demonstrate to their customers that they are committed to creating high quality parking facilities for disabled people. All the Borough's car parks were assessed in December 2017 and passed with only Ram Meadow requiring some upgrading to create two new disabled bays. As with Park Mark, this is a two year award with an interim 12 month assessment planned for in early 2019.

Civil Parking Enforcement

1.18 As previously noted, in February 2017 Cabinet agreed a business model for the potential transition of on-street parking enforcement in Suffolk from the Police to Local Authorities. Such a change is known as Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE). An outline application has been submitted by Suffolk County Council to Department of Transport with a view to implementing the new enforcement regime from April 2019. We await confirmation from the Department of Transport (DfT) that the processing and legislative timeline is acceptable given the commitment of resources to Brexit. Despite the most recent re-application being made in September 2017 there is still no definitive go-live date indicated by the DfT.

Planning for Future Car Parking Provision in Bury St Edmunds

1.19 During the year we have been undertaking occupancy testing of our car parks to test growth assumptions made by an independent assessment in 2015.

Updated occupancy figures suggest:

a) *Weekday* – Across all car parks occupancy peaks at 72% full, averages at 60% across day

b) *Saturday* – Across all car parks occupancy peaks at 96% full for 1.5 hours, averages at 70% across day.

c) Cattle market is still operating above 95% occupancy on Saturday for 3.5hrs, Parkway surface 2.5hrs, St Andrews for 2hrs.

d) Based on existing usage and growth, it is anticipated that the average duration of full occupancy will increase to 2hrs by 2025 and to 3.5 hrs by 2035 at peak times

e) *Sunday* – Across all car parks occupancy peaks at 52% full, averages at 40% across day

f) Ram is up by 7% but Parkway MSCP is down by 10% - displacement based on cheaper tariff

g) Cattle market/arc car park is down 8.6% whilst Robert Boby, our lowest tariff car park, is down 10%.

1.20 This data suggests that peak time demand for parking will continue and by 2035 an additional 485 spaces will be needed at peak time. Conversely across the week the supply of car parking spaces is significantly well below levels of stress.

1.21 A review of potential sites for a new car park providing further capacity in the town has been undertaken. However, given the reduction in car parking occupancy, the fall in transactions, the reduced income and minded of the significant investment needed in building a new car park, this option will not be progressed at the current time. Capacity demands can be managed over the short to medium term and a review of occupancy and performance will be undertaken on an annual basis. Mitigation measures to address peak time capacity issues are set out below. Should there be a reversal of the current trends, the feasibility work already started on a new car park will be progressed to a full business case.

2. Conclusion and future work streams

2.1 We recognise that the Car Parking Review is not due to commence until next summer and that there are obvious challenges facing parking across the Borough in the coming months, these being falling parking events at off peak times, higher levels of occupancy at peak times, the deferment of Civil Parking Enforcement and concerns by business and retail sectors about a reduction in town centre footfall.

2.2 Short term objectives will therefore include:

a) Developing a marketing strategy to promote the park and walk scheme at Olding Road with the offer of free long stay parking. This will be carried out in conjunction with a review of infrastructure including improvements to the access, highway and footpath signage;

b) Engaging with the owners of car parks in and around the town centres to provide long stay parking for general public use at weekends;

c) Working with the Our Bury St Edmunds BID team and the business community in Haverhill to identify initiatives to increase footfall in the town centres and raise the number of parking events across the car parks; and

d) Engage with SCC and seek funding to improve signage in Bury St Edmunds. This could not only display occupancy information for the car parks, but have the ability to display traffic warning and promote special events.

2.3 This report has made reference to issues of occupancy at peak times and this undoubtedly limits our ability to deliver a pay on exit payment facility. Members will recall that Cabinet agreed in 2015 that all car park must operate below 95% occupancy at peak times before Pay on Exit could be implemented or risk significant town centre congestion. Current peak time usage means this level has not been met. Nevertheless, we recognise the preference by some users to be able to pay at the end of their visit and to flexibly extend their stay if required. To this end, new technology is being explored with RingGo that will enable to the user to pay at the end of their stay and we are working on a proposal using mobile communications that can be trailed in Spring 2019.