

Report to: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 6th March 2014

Lead Members: Lead Member for Public Realm/Leader

Report Author: Head of Highways and Environmental Services and Head of Housing and Community Development

Title: Parking Policy and Parking and Traffic Review Scoping Exercise

1. What is the report about?

Firstly, this report gives an overview of the draft new parking policy which has been produced. It will replace the previous parking policy that dates back to 1996. Secondly, it reports on a scoping exercise carried out to assess options for conducting a Traffic and Parking Review for the main towns across Denbighshire.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

This report is a follow up to the report that was submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Committee in November 2013 and which is included in Appendix A for ease of reference. The November Committee accepted the report's recommendations that the parking policy is reviewed and that a scoping exercise is undertaken to assess the options for a Traffic and Parking Review.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee:

- 3.1. Provides observations and supports the introduction of the new parking policy as drafted; and
- 3.2. Provides observations and supports the suggested approach for conducting traffic and parking review for the towns listed in this paper.

4. Report details

4.1. Draft New Parking Policy

As stated above, the existing Parking Policy was introduced in 1996. A copy is attached in Appendix B to this report for ease of reference. Whilst there are many items in the existing Policy which are still relevant there are some items which have since been superseded owing to subsequent other developments. An example of this is that the old Policy states the Council will investigate introducing Civil Parking Enforcement; Civil Parking Enforcement was subsequently introduced in 2004.

The new policy has been drafted jointly by staff from the Highways and Environmental Services and staff in the Business and Economic Development Team. It is included in Appendix C for reference purposes. The purpose for this approach was to recognise the role that effective management of parking can play in

supporting the local economy and to draft the policy with this in mind. Whilst previous research has found that retail offer is the biggest factor in affecting footfall and retail performance in town centres, there is little doubt that a well-managed parking regime can have a positive effect in assisting a retail centre.

There are ten priorities in the new policy and these are listed as follows:

- (i) In residential urban areas the Council will encourage motorists to use off-street parking where it is available. The Council will only introduce parking restrictions in such locations where there are overriding considerations of safety, amenity or the need to retain or improve the capacity of a road.
- (ii) The Council will introduce residents' parking schemes upon request where there is sufficient support from residents and where schemes are feasible
- (iii) The Council will continue to promote Safe Routes in the Community schemes to try and reduce parking demand around our schools.
- (iv) The Council will review instances of footway parking and will use enforcement, publicity or engineering measures, as appropriate, to ensure that pedestrian routes are not obstructed and damage to footways is minimised.
- (v) The Council will provide short stay on-street car parking in town centres to complement off-street car parking provision, subject to considerations of road safety, capacity and visual amenity.
- (vi) The Council will manage the car parks in its ownership to provide short stay parking close to main shopping streets and long stay car parks located further from town centres for commuters and other longer stay uses.
- (vii) Priority will be given to catering for the parking needs of disabled people. In car parks owned and managed by the Council, reserved spaces will be designated for Blue Badge holders as follows:-
 - a. for car parks associated with employment premises and provided for employees and visitors:
5% of the capacity should be designated
 - b. for car parks associated with shopping areas, leisure or recreational facilities, and places open to the general public:
A minimum of one space for each employee who is a disabled motorist, plus 6% of the total capacity for visiting disabled motorists.
- (viii) The Council will promote the provision of lay-bys and car parks to cater for demands for recreational parking in rural areas.
- (ix) The Council will carry out routine enforcement patrols to provide a good geographic spread whilst also ensuring that enforcement frequency is proportionate to parking demand, whilst retaining the flexibility to respond to requests for enforcement in a specific location. Enforcement will be

carried out at non-standard times (e.g. evening) when specific needs are identified.

- (x) The Council will continue to develop a charging regime for car parking which takes account the needs of its residents, businesses and visitors and is reviewed on an annual basis.

4.2 Traffic and Parking Review

- 4.2.1 Action 5.1d in the Council's *Economic and Community Ambition Strategy* is to carry out a Traffic and Parking Review for the main towns across Denbighshire. This is potentially a very significant and expensive piece of work and, because of this, a scoping exercise was undertaken. The result of this exercise has been the development of a suggested methodology for the Traffic and Parking Review which is outlined in the following paragraphs. The detailed methodology can be found in Appendix D. The proposed methodology was presented to the Economic and Community Ambition Board at its meeting on the 11th February 2014 which enabled feedback received from the Board to be incorporated into the methodology.
- 4.2.2 The Traffic and Parking Review has been proposed to evaluate how parking and traffic management can contribute towards the corporate priority of supporting local businesses. Whilst research has shown retail offer to be the dominant factor that affects town centre performance, effective parking management can clearly assist retail centres. It should also be recognised that from a traffic management perspective, it is not just parking provision that can influence the vitality and vibrancy of town centres. For example, good signage is important too, as is the provision of safe access for pedestrians, cyclists, passenger transport and those with impaired mobility. Similarly, too much traffic congestion or a parking "free for all" can potentially create an unattractive, unsafe and unwelcoming environment.
- 4.2.3 The present pay and display meters used in the Council's car parks provide data regarding total income and the quantity of each ticket tariff that have been issued e.g. how many 50 pence tickets have been purchased. There is, however, a current lack of data in regard to visitor patterns, exact duration of stay, occupancy by time of day or day of the week and so on. This makes it much more difficult to evaluate the cost of "what if" scenarios such as offering concessions by time of day or day of the week.
- 4.2.4 The starting point for the parking review will be to gather information in the form of both traffic surveys and social research. The traffic surveys will provide information in regard to existing patterns. The social research will target businesses and customers. The purpose of the social research will be to gain a better understand of the underlying reasons behind existing visitor patterns and to also try and understand what interventions could positively change these patterns; for example, to increase footfall in our towns. The Business and Economic Development team already intend to conduct social research into retail patterns and it is proposed that this could be combined with the social research element of the traffic and parking review.
- 4.2.5 The final stage of the Review will be to identify potential solutions to try and improve the influence of traffic and parking management in town centres.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

It will contribute towards the priorities of “Developing the local economy” and “Improving our roads”.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The detailed study methodology attached has been prepared by consultants who are experienced in conducting this type of review. The specialist nature of the review and the resources required to complete it mean that it will not be possible to undertake it internally. The consultants have provided low, medium and high cost estimates for each stage of the review. This gives an overall estimated cost range of £40k to £95k. However, based on the opportunity to combine the social research and to provide much of the information regarding existing supply (number of parking spaces etc.) in-house, it is suggested that this would equate to an estimated cost of £50k for the review.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?

The parking policy makes recommendations for minimum numbers of disabled parking spaces in-line with the Department for Transport document, “Inclusive Mobility”. The requirements of those with mobility impairments will be fully considered during the undertaking of the Traffic and Review and this would include specific consultation with organisations that represent those with impaired mobility. Equality Impact Assessment document is attached at Appendix E

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

The proposal to review the parking policy and to scope the Traffic and Parking review was reported to the November Communities Scrutiny Committee.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The review of the Council's parking policy must be undertaken within existing service budgets. The effect on costs and income levels will need to be assessed during the reviews. The current budget pressure, primarily relating to Prestatyn and Rhyl car parks, will need to be considered as part of these reviews.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There are no significant risks associated with introducing a new parking policy or conducting a Traffic and Parking Review.

11. Power to make the Decision

Article 6.3.3 of the Council's Constitution sets out Scrutiny's powers with respect to policy development and review

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