

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission 6 November 2017

Town Centre Parking Scrutiny Panel Update Report

Report of the Head of Crawley Homes, CH/177

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Commission with an update following the conclusion of the Town Centre Car Parking Scrutiny Panel that concluded in July 2014. Details from the review can be found in the background papers.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission note the report and the work undertaken within the car parking service.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission has a role in reviewing and scrutinising the implementation of completed scrutiny reviews.
- 3.2 To ensure that the Commission only establishes Scrutiny Panels for appropriate topics, that will be likely to create strong recommendations which will add value and make a difference, whilst not duplicating any other work that has recently taken place or currently being programmed.

4. Background

- 4.1 A Scrutiny Panel was established in 2014 to review the transport/travel and parking related issues within the Town Centre and four adjacent neighbourhood parades.
- 4.2 The Panel met 4 times between March 2014 and May 2014. The Members of the Panel were Councillors B K Blake (Chair), B J Burgess, R G Burgess, C A Moffat and P C Smith.
- 4.3 The initial scope of the review was to explore the range of parking opportunities currently available in the Town Centre and to explore the range of parking opportunities currently available (including the quantity and cost of parking) in adjacent neighbourhoods. Its purpose was to ascertain if there was demand for and the potential to create additional parking sites, whilst also identifying if there could be improved or alternative travel options or travel incentive options for Crawley Residents or whether to provide specific recommendations that could attract new customers to the Town Centre and help retain or increase new businesses to the area.

- 4.4 The Panel was able to compare parking costs of all parking operators across the Town Centre and in doing so found that Crawley Borough Council parking charges compared favourably with other parking operators in the Town. From 1st April 2017 the council altered its Town Hall pay and display tariffs to make them more competitive with other local car parks. It also introduced Sunday all day parking charges of £1 all day for its off-street car parks.
- 4.5 The Panel was also able to compare parking costs with other Local Authority facilities in West Sussex and in doing so found that Crawley Borough Council parking charges compared favourably with other Local Authority parking facilities.
- 4.6 A very comprehensive survey of the Town Centre Accessible Parking provision was undertaken by Crawley Borough Council's Access Officer. The survey and report were presented to the Panel. The Panel were advised that prescribed Standards were not being met across the Town but some operators were working in partnership with the Town Access Group (TAG) to continually improve provision and standards of disabled parking spaces.
- 4.7 From evidence provided by Car Parking Providers within town centre (CBC, WSCC, NPC, County Mall and RPC) there is no shortage of parking facilities at most times within the town centre. Data provided showed that outside of the seasonal peak, most car parks are averaging less than 70% occupancy. As some of the surface car parks are developed for residential purposes this will change and there will be more of a premium on parking in the town centre.
- 4.8 Car parks in the main were well situated around the periphery of the town shopping centre with most located on or near the major distributor roads.
- 4.9 Most parking is in 'off street' car parks with very little 'on street' parking. This was by 'design' with the original traffic management plan for the new town. On street parking was controlled by pay & display. Most 'off street' car parks also worked on a pay & display system meaning that it was easy to either over pay for a short stop or to underpay if delays are encountered. There is a range of charging scales around the various car parks in the town centre allowing people choice of best value for the time taken whether short (under one hour), medium term, or long term (4 hours and over to all day). Tariffs are linear so time is accorded for the amount paid (rather than fixed per hour). Zoned Parking charges are higher the nearer you get to the Town Centre. The Council's car parks were competitively priced in comparison to neighbouring Towns. County Mall operates on a 'pay on exit' system, ensuring customers pay only for the time used.
- 4.10 Accessible car (Disabled / Blue badge) is predominantly 'on street' in the centre of town. There are also spaces for disabled in all 'off street' car parks but privately owned operator sites were not always to standard. Some town centre car parks had won awards for design and 'usability', The Council's car parks at both the Orchard Street and Exchange Road had both received the 'Safer Car Park' award.
- 4.11 The electronic display system highlighting empty car park spaces to drivers entering the town are showing their age and could be updated. Additional information could be displayed with either additional windows or on a time sharing basis to show number of Accessible spaces and availability. The signs could also display a fixed message on average cost per hour. This system is WSCC owned and managed. Although both CBC & WSCC web sites have live information on car parks and space availability, these do not appear to be widely used.
- 4.12 Car park use appears to be based on the customers' previous experience and choice, as most were unaware of the available options and so would not necessarily get best value in parking time for their money.

5. Update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Town Centre Car Parking Scrutiny Panel

5.1 A systems thinking review was undertaken with the car parking service and a number of changes were implemented as well as progressing work on these recommendations. Unfortunately, all members of the original team have left the Council's service so both maintaining the systems thinking approach and progressing the recommendations has been difficult. Most processes have been reviewed and a new IT system introduced.

5.2 Recommendations –

a) Increase public awareness throughout parking facilities within the town. Some car parks (Town Hall especially) should have more prominent marking/labelling.

CBC website has been developed to highlight car parks within town centre (not just CBC owned). The website also includes available disabled bays within the town centre. Banners and large signs have also been displayed on Kingsgate, Kilnmead, Babcocks, Exchange Road and Orchard Street to market these specific sites, together with information being displayed on the front of the car parking webpage.

b) Increase direction sign posting to major car parks. Increase prominence of active / live parking available pages on web sites.

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c) Consider the development of a Crawley Borough Council smart phone APP that would include details of town centre and neighbourhood car parks.

Whilst an app has not been developed the website now displays town centre car park information.

d) Consider occasional / seasonal 'wrap' feature to include a map/plan identifying parking availability in local press, to increase public awareness of parking offered in Crawley Town Centre highlighting variations in cost/hour for specific usage.

Crawley Live 'wrap' information was used at Christmas time. This is a popular time to display car park information.

e) Consider highlighting the location of spaces for the disabled. Erect large notice boards at the entrances to the car parks showing the floor (if applicable) and location(s) of accessible spaces. On each floor there should be a ceiling mounted sign to indicate location of each space.

The disabled spaces are highlighted within Council car parks and clearly identified on the ground within car parks. In car parks signage in place on the wall where appropriate. Exchange Road car park has been re-designed following systems thinking as there was feedback that there were too many conflicting signs. The CBC surface car park has also had new signs installed. The CBC website also includes available disabled bays within the town centre.

f) Investigate possible use of parking enforcement team in oversight of parking in the many service areas that are not part of highways area by providing a service contract between the Town Centre Partnership (on behalf of the many shops and commercial concerns) and the County and Borough Councils.

The parking enforcement team operates primarily under contract with WSCC in enforcing on street parking areas and the controlled parking zones. WSCC provide 80% of the funding for the service. Any variations to the current workload would need to be evaluated against expected income from parking enforcement or from parking fees against the costs of additional staff to manage this. There is a need to balance resources alongside the many service areas. However, the Council now operates control of Crawley Hospital car park, with an agreed percentage of income retained from the P&D and all income from PCNs. An additional CEO is also funded through the hospital car park agreement.

- g) Seek additional areas from current unused land for long term (6 hours or over) for commuter traffic. Only one car park at moment specifically targets this market segment. More of this parking type would decrease use of parking spaces in recreation areas. Encourage private land owners to consider this temporary use of their land.

Work is ongoing in relation to the impact of losing certain car parks to future housing development and the increased housing development in the town centre.

- h) Consider ensuring that all parade car parks and recreational areas in the neighbourhoods with immediate access to the town centre (West Green, Northgate, Three Bridges & Southgate) have parking restrictions in place allowing parking up to a maximum of 2/3 hours with no return for 2/3 hours. Ideally this should be consistent throughout all neighbourhoods.

It is intended to recommence work on this by carrying out parking surveys of the parades to understand the extent of the problem but this will also link in with the work on the town centre parking capacity, and the road space audit now underway through WSCC. Any increase in CBC off-street restrictions would need to be matched by appropriate staffing (on-street and office based) to ensure we are fulfilling our obligations to WSCC.

- i) Consider stopping access to playing field car parks before 9:00am to discourage commuter parking in these areas.

This was investigated and a report prepared identifying the problem car parks and recommendations are currently with the relevant Cabinet Members.

- j) Consider replacing current Council obsolete parking meters used in its own Car parks with modern, state of the art 'Pay on Exit' machines that will accept payment by cash (full change given), card or by mobile phone.

The pay machines have been updated at Exchange Road and Orchard Street car parks and now allows payment by coins, cards and contactless. Payment can be for part hours. Charges are linear for time required.

- k) Improve pedestrian access from the High Street through to Orchard Street to increase awareness and use of Orchard Street Car Park for both the day time and night time economies.

The redesign of the High Street, together with the advancement of Morrisons and new housing development has increased awareness of Orchard Street. The increased use of Orchard Street is almost entirely business users. Several large companies have purchased a large number of Season Tickets this year greatly improving revenue.

6. Further Information

- 6.1 There have been many changes in service provision since 2014, most notably the Systems Thinking Review. Whilst it is acknowledged that some car parks have restrictions, there are several car parks in the town including the following:

Kilnmead surface	County Mall	The Broadway
Town Hall Multi Storey	Railway Station	The Broadway (Disabled Only)
Town Hall surface	Centenary House	Barclays Bank
Babcock's	Crosskeys	Orchard Street Multi Storey
The Boulevard (West)	Crawley Leisure Park	Orchard Street surface
The Boulevard (East)	B&Q	Morrisons
Kingsgate Multi Storey	Library	Asda
Queensway (Disabled Only)	Parkside	

- 6.2 Car and Parking Standards are set out in the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015 – 2030, which was adopted by Full Council on 16 December 2015. It now forms the council's development plan and sets the planning policies under which development control decisions will be taken.
- 6.3 Parking standards are essential in terms of ensuring that developments have a satisfactory provision of car parking spaces and cycle parking spaces, but also to ensure that other more sustainable methods of transport are still utilised.
- 6.4 In addition, the older residential neighbourhoods, where modern parking needs of residents were not foreseen when the neighbourhoods were first developed, have limited on-street car parking spaces available. However, owing to the limitations of the highway network and the ever increasing need to retain environmental assets and open space, it is believed that policies contained within the Local Plan should still concentrate on more sustainable modes of transport in order for the town to accommodate a growing travel demand.
- 6.5 WSCC has recently commenced feasibility work into its road space audit for Crawley and recent information has been circulated to Commission Members.

7. **Background Papers**

[Town Centre Parking Background Report OSC/205](#)

[Town Centre Parking Scoping Framework](#)

[Town Centre Parking Introduction Report OSC/216](#)

[Town Centre Parking Scrutiny Panel Minutes 18.2.14](#)

[Town Centre Parking Scrutiny Panel Minutes 18.3.14](#)

[Town Centre Parking Scrutiny Panel Minutes 14.4.14](#)

[Town Centre Parking Scrutiny Panel Minutes 13.5.14](#)

[Town Centre Parking Final Report OSC & Cabinet July 2014 OSC/223](#)

[Town Centre Parking Scrutiny Panel Documents 2014](#)

Contact officer:

Karen Dodds, Head of Crawley Homes

karen.dodds@crawley.gov.uk

01293 438256