

**CABINET
29 JANUARY 2019**

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: NHDC PARKING STRATEGY 2019-2031 AND STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - REGULATORY

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING, ENTERPRISE & TRANSPORT: COUNCILLOR DAVID LEVETT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council embarked on a full review of its current Parking Strategy (NHDC Parking Strategy 2009 – 2019), in 2017, following a review of the Council's off-street car park tariff structure.
- 1.2 Consultants were commissioned to review the current strategy focusing on wider parking provision and management issues across the district, taking into consideration technological changes, comments received from various consultation sessions and making recommendations on how the Council may wish to consider taking various initiatives forward as part of a revised parking strategy.
- 1.3 This report seeks approval of the Council's Parking Strategy 2019 - 2031, as well as agreement of the associated Strategic Action Plan attached at Appendix A and B respectively.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet adopt the North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Strategy 2019-2031 attached at Appendix A.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agree the Strategic Action Plan attached at Appendix B.

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| 2.3 | That Cabinet note the summary of comments on the draft Strategy and officer responses attached at Appendix C. |
| 2.4 | That Cabinet recommends that delegated authority is given to the Service Director - Regulatory to approve minor amendments and format changes to the NHDC Parking Strategy and to agree updates to its associated Strategic Action Plan as required in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise and Transport. |
| 2.5 | That officers proceed with the work associated with the key projects listed in the Strategic Action Plan including the preparation of the NHDC Operational Guidelines and the more detailed town-wide action plans to be agreed and prioritised with the Area Committees. |
| 2.6 | That Cabinet recommends that delegated authority is given to the Service Director - Regulatory to review and agree updates/amendments to the NHDC Parking Operational Guidelines as required in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise and Transport. |

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The revised Parking Strategy will provide the necessary policy framework for managing parking across the District in a most cost efficient way that accords with the Council's Corporate Objectives and its Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Strategic Action Plan identifies a number of key projects to deliver the objectives and various initiatives contained in the Strategy.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Given that the current parking strategy covers the period 2012 to 2019, that the Council is responsible for the management and enforcement of its off street car parks and for all on-street parking restrictions across the District, it is important for the Council to have an up to date strategy that sets out the Council's parking policies for the next 10 to 12 years. Thus not reviewing the current strategy was not considered a suitable alternative option.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Regular meetings have been held with the Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise and Transport to ensure that the Strategy, Action Plan and Evidence Base documents are representative of the Council. The Shadow Executive Members have also been kept informed on the development of the Strategy.

5.2 Two workshops and a briefing have been held during the preparation of the Strategy:

- An initial stakeholder workshop was held back in October 2016 to understand the key parking issues within each of the towns. This included consultation with Town Centre Managers, representatives from the BIDs, the Royston Town Council, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, NHDC and Herts County Council Officers and the then Executive Member responsible for Policy, Transport and Green Issues. This work informed both the Phase 1 (Feb 2017) and Phase 2 (April 2018) evidence reports prepared by consultants, Markides Associates, commissioned by the Council to assist with the review of the current parking strategy (see 18.1).
- An all Member and key Stakeholder workshop was held on 8 August 2018, to discuss four key topic areas arising from the consultants Parking Strategy Review Phase 2 Study Report. These included payment methods, on street parking and employee parking issues in town centres and commuter parking issues. Key stakeholders were those organisations that have a financial, administrative, operational and/or ownership interest in car parks as well as having an interest in the economic vitality of the town centres.
- A further all Member and key Stakeholder Briefing was held on 26 November 2018, where consultants and officers presented an overview of a draft revised Parking Strategy seeking comments on the objectives, policy framework and draft strategic action plan..

5.3 Following the above mentioned Briefing, members and the key stakeholders including Hertfordshire County Council were given the opportunity to make further comments on the draft strategy by 4 January 2019. Late responses were also received and considered.

5.4 Comments raised through the workshop and briefing sessions and received in writing , have been documented, summarised and incorporated into the revised draft Strategy where considered appropriate. The summary of comments is attached at Appendix C.

5.5 The consultation approach has been well received with good cross-party member representation and key stakeholder representation from the four towns at the above mentioned workshop and briefing sessions.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 The report contains recommendations on key decisions that were first notified to the public on the Forward Plan on 18 December 2018.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The Council's role with regard to on-street car parking is one of the management and enforcement of all on-street parking restrictions in the District. This management and enforcement role also includes the off-street car parks that the Council owns and/or manages. NHDC is also the local planning authority responsible for parking standards for new development.
- 7.2 In respect of on-street parking (public roads and streets) enforcement, the Council acts on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council (as the Highway Authority) under the terms of an agency agreement between the two authorities. The Council's agreement with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) does not include the implementation of other on-street parking controls that are intended to address safety or public amenity issues. Any parking initiatives that the Council may wish to introduce that may impact on the highway will require the agreement of HCC as the highway authority.
- 7.3 The Council's parking policies must comply with the law (particularly the Traffic Management Act 2004); and have regard to the Secretary of State's Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities on the Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions, issued in 2014. This Guidance states that enforcement authorities should design their parking policies with particular regard to:
- managing the traffic network to ensure expeditious movement of traffic, (including pedestrians and cyclists);
 - improving road safety;
 - improving the local environment;
 - improving the quality and accessibility of public transport;
 - meeting the needs of people with disabilities, some of whom will be unable to use public transport and depend entirely on the use of a car; and
 - managing and reconciling the competing demands for kerb space.
- 7.4 As well as being a stand-alone strategy the Parking Strategy should also be read alongside the County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP4), the NHDC Transport Strategy, the Local Development Framework and other relevant supporting documents such as the Town Centre Strategies, to provide the full picture on how a balance can be struck between making provision for parking and environmental protection, economic growth, accessibility, health improvement and social inclusion.

7.5 Work first commenced on a review of the current Parking Strategy (2009 – 2019) with the appointment of consultants (Marekides Associates) in late 2016. This work was to be undertaken in two phases.

- The first phase was to review and provide advice on parking tariffs to inform the Council's budget setting process for 2017/18. This included undertaking and analysing a range of car parking survey and attitudinal data across the District's four towns and Knebworth to understand current usage, demand and other parking issues facing both on and off street parking activity. This work provides a baseline against which future trends can be assessed. This study was completed with the publication of a Phase 1 Report in February 2017.
- The second phase sought to address and consider wider parking provision and management issues across the District and to review the Council's policies in the current Parking Strategy, together with suggested recommendations for the Council to consider in updating its Parking Strategy. This work was completed in April 2018 with the publication of a Phase 2 Report.

7.6 These two pieces of work provide the evidence base for the revised Parking Strategy and can be viewed on the Council's website at: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/parking/parking-strategy>

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

The Revised Draft Strategy

8.1 Parking management is a balance between three key aspects:

- The local economy– using parking measures to support town centres and other business locations (e.g. providing sufficient parking at appropriate pricing and duration),
- Travel Demand Management - using parking controls as a means of managing traffic and to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport, and
- Cost – the costs of car parking (e.g. providing, enforcing and maintaining car parking) and where available and appropriate to fund contributions towards other related transport services.

8.2 The proposed new Parking Strategy is designed to be a high level document, with clear objectives and more concise policy wording. It covers the period 2019 to 2031 to accompany the implementation period of the proposed submission Local Plan. It updates the current strategy and is based on:

- recommendations of the Phase 2 Study Report undertaken by consultants (See para 7.5 above);
- outputs from workshop and briefing sessions held with Members and key stakeholders in August and November 2018 (see section 5 above);
- written comments submitted as further feedback following the briefing session; and
- other known parking issues reported to the Council and operational matters associated with running the parking service.

8.3 Notes from the August workshop outlining the key issues raised and comments received from the briefing session are contained in Appendix C. A summary of the comments received to the draft strategy with officer responses explaining how the key points have been addressed in the strategy are set out in Part 2 at Appendix C. It is to be noted that the general principles of the strategy has been well received.

8.4 Some of the key issues raised though the consultation include:

- The need to embrace technological change in the way consumers find information and pay for parking services, both on and off street;
- Concern about the impact on the vitality of the town centres with regard the proposed policy allowing for the consideration of evening, Sunday and bank holiday charging;
- Clear guidance to be provided on how the policy framework will be applied with regard to the review of on street parking capacity within core town centre streets, addressing on street commuter parking issues and in dealing with wider parking issues in non town centre areas
- Having clear objectives and actions that are deliverable within agreed timescales, can be adequately resourced and financially sustainable; and
- Having a Strategy that is high level, responsive to change and provides a flexible approach to identify opportunities to review the actions and ensure that they become deliverable in the future in light of available resources.

- Having a strategy that encourages and takes into consideration alternative modes of sustainable transport as set out in HCC Local Transport Plan (LTP4) and other supporting documents.

8.5 The main focus of the Strategy is to provide the Council's policy framework for managing parking across the District. It sets out how parking issues are currently dealt with and identifies a number of objectives and proposed actions for which future investment may be required. The objectives are listed at paragraph 4.1 of the draft Parking Strategy attached at Appendix A. These objectives are reflected in the overall policy framework set out in section 2 of the Strategy. The policy framework covers four areas:

8.5.1 *Management and resources to deliver the strategy* - this includes enforcement of on and off street parking; the administration of the Parking Service and dealing with customer queries; managing and replacement of car park payment machines as well as reviewing and implementing existing and new traffic regulation orders, principally for Controlled Parking Zones. Being fully aware of the limitations on resources it is important for the Strategy to ensure that the Council's parking management and enforcement remains financially sustainable in accordance with the Council's Medium-term financial Strategy.

8.5.2 *Management of on and off street parking within town centres* – where some of the key policy issues include: - making provision for investigating appropriate off-street parking management systems and payment mechanisms (such as pay on foot and introducing cashless payment options); preparing and reviewing a programme of physical improvements for the Councils car parks; undertaking tariff reviews; reviewing the overall quantum and balance in duration of stay of on-street parking provision within the core town centre areas as well as including the option of considering charging for on-street parking to encourage turn over; considering the possibility of charging for evenings, Sundays and bank holidays; considering proposals for employee parking schemes; and addressing other types of parking within town centres such as servicing and loading, parking for disabled badge holders, taxis, emergency and electric vehicles.

8.5.3 *Management of parking within residential and non-town centre areas* – where some of the key policy issues include: - measures to manage commuter parking in proximity of the railway stations; publishing and updating guidance on identifying and managing on-street parking problems areas; reviewing existing controlled parking zones to see if they are operating in the most appropriate way; and giving consideration to the sale of permits to non-residents in controlled parking zones based on evidence of available spare capacity, which may be a way of addressing the on-street commuter and town centre employee parking issues within such areas.

- 8.5.4 *Management of parking at new developments* – where reference is made to the Council’s Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) guidance on parking policy and standards to be applied to new developments, in accordance with the Local Plan. This guidance will be reviewed to reflect changing development pressures and demand for parking through the lifetime of the Local Plan and the Parking Strategy. Consideration will also be given to the need for including residents of new developments in existing CPZs on a case by case basis. The Strategy also seeks to embrace new technologies in making provision for electric vehicle charging in new developments and the potential to install public on-street charging points.
- 8.6 The Strategy recognises the significance of partnership working and where the policies refer to consultation with “relevant stakeholders”, this will generally include: - the relevant ward and parish councillors; relevant organisations involved in town centre management such as but are not limited to the town centre managers, the BIDs, the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, Royston Town Council and private operators; Hertfordshire County Council; Hertfordshire Constabulary, Network Rail and other car park operators as considered appropriate.
- 8.7 The detail of how the Council proposes to implement the policy framework will be contained in a separate document, the ‘NHDC Parking Operational Guidelines’ setting out the necessary guidance and assessment criteria to be followed. Having these guidelines contained within a separate document will enable officers to review and update the guidelines as required throughout the life of the Strategy in consultation with the Executive Member for Transport to reflect changes in parking trends and ensure that these are aligned with the Council’s priorities. The intention is to seek Cabinet’s agreement to adopt the revised Parking Strategy first which will then set the policy framework from which these detailed guidelines can be prepared (See Next Steps, Section 9, below)

Draft Strategic Action Plan

- 8.8 The Strategy is to be supported by a Strategic Action Plan, attached at Appendix B. There are a number of key projects that have been identified through the preparation of the Strategy that could be taken forward in the short to medium term. These are listed in the Action Plan and were the subject of discussion and debate at the all Member and key stakeholder briefing session (see summary of comments at Appendix C).
- 8.9 The action plan is split into two categories: Short-term and Medium-term. The short-term projects are those that can be started and delivered within 1 to 3 years, whereas medium term projects have a longer timeframe and often require additional work to be completed before they can be commenced. One of the short term goals includes the preparation and prioritisation of a more detailed work programme setting out key projects from the action plan and to prioritise more local and district wide issues. This programme will be developed in consultation with the Executive Member for Transport and then presented to the Area Committees and relevant key stakeholders for consideration and agreement.

8.10 Other key projects include:

- Addressing technological change and investigating alternative payment methods such as cashless payment primarily for specific circumstances and pay on foot;
- Preparing and publishing the NHDC Operational Guidelines to support the strategy;
- Reviewing on-street parking within core town centre streets;
- Preparing work for a commuter parking strategy;
- Completing the town wide parking reviews in Letchworth and Royston and reviewing the approach to such reviews for the future;
- Investigating physical improvements to the council multi-storey car parks to encourage usage; and
- Reviewing the off-street Traffic regulation orders to accord with the policies in the Strategy.

8.11 The delivery of the Strategy, associated Action Plan and the Parking Service are very much reliant on the efficient use of available resources. In delivering this Strategy the Council will face the challenge of delivering value for money while maintaining and developing the parking function/service so that it remains, and is seen to be, fair, efficient, effective and responsive to change and where possible should cover the cost of providing the service. Opportunities for third party funding (directly or through grants) must also be explored where considered appropriate, for example as a part of investigating improvements to the Council's multi-storey car parks, there may be opportunities for some joint funding from town centre management as part of the BIDs and other relevant stakeholders (See Financial Implications Section 11 below).

8.12 It will therefore be important that this Strategy remains a living document which adapts to emerging issues and provides a flexible approach to identify opportunities to review the actions and ensure that they become deliverable in the future in the light of the available resources (both financial and staffing). To this end it is recommended that Cabinet adopts the revised Parking Strategy and its associated Strategic Action Plan and that delegated authority is given to the Service Director - Regulatory to review and agree updates/amendments to the Operational Guidelines and Strategic Action Plan as required in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise and Transport.

9. NEXT STEPS

- 9.1 The Strategy sets the objectives and policy framework for the parking management and provision across the District. The Strategic Action Plan lists the key projects to be taken forward in the short to medium term in accordance with available resources. The adoption of the Strategy will enable officers to proceed with the necessary work and recruitment of resources to deliver the strategy.
- 9.2 A key priority will be for officers to complete the work on the Parking Operational Guidelines and present these to the Area Committees for input and agreement at the first available opportunity, as well as proceeding with the more detailed work programme as referenced in paragraph 8.9 above. These two projects will seek to address some of the concerns raised by Members and stakeholders to the apparent lack of guidance within the Strategy on how the policies would be implemented.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet Paragraph 5.6.1 of the Constitution states that the Cabinet can prepare and agree to implement policies and strategies other than those reserved to Council.
- 10.2 Under the Responsibilities for Functions-Summary Paragraph 14.3 of the Constitution states that decisions about executive functions may be taken by Officers.
- 10.3 Specific legal implications of the policies within the Strategy and projects on the Action Plan will need to be considered as the projects commence, such as the requirement for any new and revised Traffic Regulation Orders to implement changes to on and off street parking arrangements. Any parking initiatives that are likely to impact on the highway will need to be undertaken in consultation with Hertfordshire County Council as the Highway Authority and other relevant statutory undertakers as required in the Traffic Management Act 1984 (and subsequent revisions).
- 10.4 Should on-street charging proposals come forward then the requirements of the Traffic Management Act 1984 (and subsequent revisions) will need to be considered. This may require a review of the agreement between the Council and Hertfordshire County Council regarding Decriminalised Parking Enforcement.

11 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The consultant costs for undertaking the assessment studies and completing the Strategies have been funded from agreed budgets. The management of the consultants and consultation with Members and key stakeholders in preparing the revised Strategy has been undertaken by officers in Strategic Planning and has been funded through existing budgets.

11.2 The main financial commitments arising from the Strategic Action Plan at Appendix B for the current and next financial year are as follows (subject to Corporate Business planning considerations):

- Completing the Letchworth and Royston Parking Reviews (Action Ref PS7) and addressing issues relating to existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO), such as the review of the off-street TRO (Action Ref PS9) and any associated implementation of lines and signs. There is an existing Town Wide Parking review budget of £344k and an additional £95k in the lines and signs maintenance budget for this work. The town wide budget is an annual budget of £65k, this has been offered a saving for 2019/20 given the current level of reserve.
- Preparing the NHDC Parking Operational Guidelines, preparing a work programme and reviewing the future approach to town wide parking reviews, will be covered by officers within existing budgets (Actions Referenced PS1, PS2 and PS8).
- Undertaking necessary reviews and feasibility work associated with the wider actions (Actions Referenced PS3, PS4, PS5, PS6, and PS10). At present there is £53k of Growth Area Funding within the revenue budget and £285K of funds available within the capital budget for parking initiatives relating to the current parking strategy. Subject to Cabinet adopting the revised Parking Strategy and agreeing the associated Strategic Action Plan, these funds subject to Council approval could be redirected to the projects identified in the Action Plan that will require further investigation, feasibility studies and funding for implementation such as the pay-on-foot trial. Outside of these budgets future actions will require capital/revenue bids as part of the annual budget setting process, unless third party funding, either through grants or direct funding, can be secured.

11.3 Feasibility and review works are intended to help identify efficiencies or where investments can be justified to improve the service to the customer and be financially justified. Identifying financial and risk implications will form part of the feasibility/review works.

11.4 It is the intention for the Strategy to ensure that the costs of car parking (e.g. providing, enforcing and maintaining car parking) is efficient and covers the cost of the service and where available and appropriate to fund contributions towards other related parking initiatives and transport services identified through the Parking Strategy and the NHDC Transport Strategy

12. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Adoption of the revised Strategy and agreement of the Strategic Action Plan provides the Council with the opportunity to proceed with short-term and mid-term projects to improve parking across the district within the context of a new policy framework.
- 12.2 “The Parking Service” and “Implementation of Parking Strategy” are already identified as risks on the Council’s Risk Register, although these risks will be reviewed comprehensively and reassessed to reflect the revised Strategy following its adoption. Currently, officers have assessed “Implementation of Parking Strategy” as a Medium risk in terms of both Impact and Likelihood.
- 12.3 Some of the main risks associated with the action plan include:
- The management of member and customer expectations in terms of delivery of the actions;
 - Income estimates or costs associated with new payment methods are significantly different from those estimated;
 - Improvements to multi-storey car parks do not improve usage and contribute to the vibrancy of the town centres;
 - Budget constraints mean that suggested priorities cannot be progressed in line with the Strategic Action Plan; and
 - There will be insufficient staff resource to deliver the action plan either on time or to the quality required.
- 12.4 The review of risk implications associated with each specific action and the related approach to managing these risks, will form part of the delivery process and officers will update the Risk Register accordingly.
- 12.5 There will be a number of ongoing budgetary and parking challenges facing the Council over the lifetime of the Strategy, and it will therefore be important that the Strategy remains a living document which adapts to emerging issues and provides a flexible approach to identify opportunities to review the actions and associated risks to ensure that they become deliverable in the future in accordance with available resources.

13. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 13.2 There are not considered to be any direct equality issues arising from this report although individual schemes or considerations as proposed at Appendix B, hereafter will be subject to appropriate review to ensure they comply with latest equality legislative need.

14. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at Section 13.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are limited resources available within the Regulatory Service to be able to deliver the Strategy and Action Plan. Therefore, there is a need for additional resource. This has been identified through the recent restructure of the Service Director for Regulatory Services where provision has been made for the recruitment of a Transport Policy Officer and a Parking Project Officer who will work together with the Parking Enforcement and Parking Service administrative teams. It is to be noted that the Parking function now falls within Regulatory Services making for a more efficient and co-ordinated Service under the management of the Strategic Infrastructure & Projects Manager. Funding has been set aside for the appointment of a Transport Policy Officer and a Parking Projects Officer.
- 15.2 Arrangements for appointment of the Transport Officer and the Parking Projects Officer will be progressed following adoption of the Strategy.
- 15.3 Resourcing and training requirements will need to be considered for any changes in parking enforcement including the introduction of any technological changes. It is noted that the intention is for the service to be self financing with the revenue received from on and off street parking.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Strategy (2019-2031) – Revised Draft
- 16.2 Appendix B – NHDC Parking Strategy Draft Strategic Action Plan.
- 16.3 Appendix C – NHDC Parking Strategy Summary of Comments and Officer Responses

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Strategy Review – Phase 1 Report (Feb 2017) prepared by Markides Associates.
- 18.2 North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Strategy Review – Phase 2 Report (April 2018) prepared by Markides Associates.

These two reports can be viewed on the Council's website at: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/parking/parking-strategy>