

Car Parking Charges Scrutiny Report – Parking 28th November 2017

1.0 Introduction

Parking Services has been the subject of a Budget Review Steering Group (BRSB) review in December 2015.

2.0 The Strategy and Policy Framework for Parking

Under the Traffic Management Act (TMA) 2004 the Council has a statutory duty to manage the highway network in a way to minimise congestion and reduce air pollution. Practically this translates into three key benefits of a clear and consistent policy approach to parking as follows:

- Economic viability – effective management and enforcement of on and off road parking increases the availability of parking spaces by ensuring the turnover of spaces (and thus shoppers or visitors)
- Safety – effective and consistent enforcement discourages motorists from stopping/parking at locations which could compromise the safety of pedestrians, cyclists or other motorists
- Congestion – Appropriate capacity and effective management/enforcement of parking will deter indiscriminate parking, tailbacks and queues in and around the city and district centres

The approach to parking strategy, policy and delivery in Swansea is in line with national, regional and local economic, planning and transport strategy and with that of other Local Authorities.

3.0 Parking Services background

Car parking revenue and expenditure for the current year is shown in Table One below where the budget is broken down into the three main income/expenditure streams of:

- Car Parks
- Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE)
- Park & Ride (P&R)

Table One – Parking Revenue account (£)

Item	Car Parks	CPE	P & R*	Total
Budgeted Service expenditure	982,200	1,273,600	625,800	2,881,600
Budgeted Service Income	3,778,400	1,332,200	646,500	5,757,100
Total	2,796,200	58,600	20,700	2,875,500

* - There has been a £400k efficiency saving allocated to the P & R budget. It is anticipated that not all these efficiency savings will be realised during the current financial year,

Parking services currently has 53 members of staff as follows:

- 29 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs), 4 Senior CEOs,
- 5 attendants based at Park and Ride sites
- 14 members of staff are office based (8 full time and 6 part time) and deal with Civil Parking Enforcement back office functions and Residents' Parking

4.0 Car Parks

The Council currently operates 62 public car parks in the City and County area and these provide 7234 parking spaces. This includes:

- 5 Multi Storey Car Parks (MSCPs)
- 18 City Centre car parks
- 13 suburban car parks
- 20 foreshore car parks
- 2 Park & Rides sites (Fforestfach P&R has now closed)
- 3 other car parks are operated by Culture and Tourism, but are being transferred over to Parking Services
- 1 temporary car park managed by Regeneration –St Marys Surface Car Park

The details of each car park are set out in the attached report as part of Appendix A.

BRSG confirmed at their December 2015 meeting that all Council owned car parks should be managed by Parking Services and this has been actioned. There are some complex relationships between car parks located at or near to visitor attractions (and which have been operated by Culture and Tourism to help support visitor numbers) and the ticketing/price regime. The focus for bringing these car parks under the umbrella of Parking Services will be to ensure that whilst they continue to support visitors to the attraction they are located near to, they are managed consistently with other car parks and do not generate less revenue than they cost to maintain and enforce (thus represent a drain on parking revenue).

It should be noted that there is one further car park which is not managed by Parking Services, the St Mary's temporary surface car park, which is managed by Regeneration, although parking services manage the day to day operations including cash collection. The car parking provision there is temporary pending development, however, it is proposed that the management of the car park moves to Parking Services, until the site is redeveloped.

The Knab Rock car park and the recreation ground are currently being assessed to determine how these will be managed by the parking team. There is currently a strong link between Knab Rock parking management and the launching activities and the recreation ground parking and events which needs to be considered prior to the handover.

The Council's car parks fall into three main categories as follows, each of which will be considered in turn:

- City Centre
- Suburban
- Foreshore/beach

5.0 Civil Parking Enforcement

Enforcing parking restrictions is a key element of parking services. It helps to prevent indiscriminate parking (such as that which blocks accesses, slows or stops moving traffic or creates hazards for other road users). It also ensures that short stay spaces or short stay car parks have the level of turnover required to promote access to nearby facilities and services. Finally it ensures the needs of those who rely on disabled parking and residents' parking spaces are being adequately met.

The effectiveness of the CEOs has been improved since 2008 through:

- The availability of new technology which facilitates record keeping such as vehicle and offence details
- The development of back office facilities
- The procurement of a camera car.

The camera car has been used around schools to enforce "Keep Clear" markings, to enforce parking in designated bus bays and at specific hot spots, where regular contravention of the regulations take place.

6.0 Residents' Parking

The key challenges with regard to this section of the service are:

- How to deal with the number of requests for new Residents' parking schemes across the Council and the growing cost
- How to reduce the cumbersome and resource draining administrative process through the use of technology
- The cost of providing the service and the impact that has on overall Parking Services income

Whilst the number of Residents' Parking permits varies from time to time there are currently more than 8,000 permits on issue, with approximately 1,800 second household permits. Key facts are as follows:

- There are 368 "Residents only" parking locations across Swansea and 20 of these have been implemented in 2015
- The number of permits issued in the 2013/14 financial year was 6,901, of which 2,437 were second permits
- The cost of managing the Residents' Parking scheme is currently £143,000 per annum
- A further 2,646 temporary permits (valid for one month) were issued over the same period
- There is no charge for annual or temporary Residents' Parking permits
- 16 out of 22 Local Authorities in Wales operate Residents' Parking schemes and of these all charge for the service with the exception of Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan

7.0 Park & Ride

The City and County of Swansea currently operates two Park and Ride sites at Landore, and Fabian Way. The Fforestfach site has been recently closed due to falling numbers of patrons.

Park & Ride usage and income has fluctuated over the last few years, in line with other car parking usage and income. This is for a range of reasons including:

- the financial downturn
- the retail and employment offer in the City Centre
- perceived (and actual) ease of parking in the City Centre
- cost comparisons between P&R and City Centre parking
- special offers from commercial parking sites in the City Centre
- congestion which impacts on P&R buses as well as general traffic
- Limited marketing and publicity

Generally the trend has been for a reduction in revenue from the Park & Ride sites over the last five years, whilst the cost of the sites (ongoing charges and maintenance), Park & Ride staff and contract costs have remained static or increased. As a result of this Park and Ride services do not currently cover their full costs.

It is important to note that there is already a cost reduction target of £400k in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17 for Park and Ride as part efficiency savings.

A large part of the costs of Park & Ride provision relates to the contract for the bus services between the Council and First Cymru which costs £648,900 per annum. The contract has a three month notice period on both sides.

All staff that were based there as Park & Ride attendants have transferred to the main parking office in the Quadrant MSCP. The P & R sites are now managed by an external security contractor due to the ongoing performance issues with the equipment brought in.

Park and Ride provision is an important part of the Council's transport strategy and the Parking "tool box" in that it provides low cost long stay parking provision for commuters and visitors to the City Centre. It is also a status symbol, as recognition of a viable and attractive City Centre. Finally, it also provides secure parking and City Centre bus access for those drivers who may be unfamiliar with the road layout and conventional parking locations in Swansea, or who do not wish to drive on the more congested network around the immediate City Centre area. Park & Ride services have also been seen as a way of supporting the Council's environmental credentials, by reducing the impact of greenhouse gas and other emissions from vehicles travelling to and from the City Centre.

There are good opportunities to increase income, particularly in terms of Fabian Way site where the University would like to block book a number of spaces for students attending the new Bay Campus. Also in future the new University of Wales Trinity St. Davids' campus proposed for SA1 would similarly like to block book spaces. Similarly, at the Landore site there is an appetite from some organisations with premises in the Enterprise Park or Swansea Vale to block book spaces for staff and then arrange private buses to take them to their work place locations.

There is currently no budget available to market Park and Ride. It is suggested that we use our Communication team and communicate via twitter and other social media outlets, plus enlist the assistance of BID to add into their publicity and marketing.

In the context of the overall cost of operating the Park & Ride services the service as a whole is set to lose approximately £230,000 in the current financial year.

Changes **already planned** include unmanning the sites. Arrangements have been made for the Park & Ride bus drivers to open/close the site gates and unlock the main buildings (where ticket validation machines are located). This is subject to the Parkare Pay on Foot reliability issues being resolved and us having confidence in the machinery operating correctly. There will still be some staff costs associated with managing the parking at Landore Site which is related to football fans who have pre-booked car parking spaces, but an assumption is that the employee costs of Park & Ride will reduce significantly

These changes have reduced the annual costs of Park & Ride services however these savings have already been captured through the spend to save initiative to purchase and install Pay on Foot Systems in our Multi Storey Car Parks and Park and Rides. This takes no account of the potential that existing Park & Ride customers may not continue to use the service if the onsite staff are no longer available and so income is likely to fall.

Looking more radically, Officers have had early stage discussions with First Cymru about alternatives to the way in which Park & Ride services are currently operated. One potential option would be for the contract for all dedicated P&R bus services to be re-negotiated. First Group would then make some adjustments to their commercial bus services (which operate close to the Park & Ride sites at Fabian Way and Landore) so that customers could still park at the sites and then travel on ordinary local bus services to the City Centre and beyond. There would be advantages and disbenefits to Park & Ride users, First Cymru, the Council and the general public.

What cannot be predicted at present is the impact on revenues this change may have. It is not clear how many current passengers having stuck with Park & Ride when the sites are no longer manned, would still use the service if the dedicated vehicles were then withdrawn and they were expected to use local bus services.

It is worth noting that Worcester City Council Park and Ride car parks and services closed in September 2014 following an attempt to reduce costs by utilising service buses instead of dedicated services. The usage of Park and Ride slumped from a maximum of 450,000 users per annum to 274,000 users per annum and eventually the sites were closed altogether.

Fforestfach Park and Ride had the lowest level of use and brings in the lowest income out of all three sites., consequently the site has been closed, the bus contract for the two remaining Park and Ride sites was re-negotiated, and as such the bus operator payments for the entire operation has reduced by a third generating a full year saving of £216,300.

8.0 Queries from Scrutiny

It is understood that the Scrutiny Committee has some specific questions that were raised in advance of the Scrutiny meeting and these are contained below.

1. *What future developments are planned for new and improved parking in Swansea and particularly the City Centre?*

- Upgrading the 'pay on foot' parking equipment in the three Multi Storey Car parks and two Park and Ride sites. Since the installation in 2013/14, there have been ongoing performance issues with the equipment which resulted in a legal dispute with the manufacturer. After a series of meetings with the company and legal representatives, they submitted a proposal to replace all the current stock with their more recent equipment. A succession of visits and due diligence checks was carried on the equipment at different sites around the UK, which concluded that the equipment, including management software was performing well. It is hoped the company will commence installation early on in the New Year and all sites will be completed by April 2018.
- As with numerous other authorities and parking providers we are planning to introduce a cashless parking system, called MiPermit. This system will enhance the current traditional methods of payment, i.e. cash and card which will enable visitors to pay for their parking via a Smart Phone application, pay over the phone, pay by text and by web page. We will not be replacing the traditional methods. This will provide seven ways of paying for parking. i.e cash and card at the machine, over the phone to parking services, via text message, app, web page and over the phone (automated service).
- Increase the sale of parking season tickets to businesses within the City Centre and the consider options for out of town parking. We currently have 1186 season tickets to local companies. We provide two types of season ticket – Pay as You Go, i.e. a reduced all day tariff or a whole year season ticket. The companies either provide the season ticket as part of an employee incentive scheme or pass on the cost to the employee as part of a salary sacrifice scheme
- Working closely with Commercial team colleagues and introducing third party companies into the car parks to trade. E.G. In the Quadrant MSCP 'EcoDrift' will be providing a waterless car wash system to visitors to that car park. It is hoped we can extend similar partners to the wider car parks sites together with refreshment concessions (coffee and pastry vendor at Landore P & R on match days).

2. *How are we factoring in parking as part of the new developments planned for the City Centre and, for example, will we be looking to negotiate operating costs and maintenance with those developers in the City Centre?*

- Parking is integral to any development within the City Centre especially with six sites currently used as car parks are redevelopment sites. With the loss of any parking spaces as part of the regeneration, it is imperative that alternative parking arrangements are fit for purpose in a modern city, balancing the needs to park close to the shops and businesses and the impact on air quality / pollution.
- St David's MSCP and the Waterfront/LC2 surface car park and part of the overall regeneration plans for the City Centre. Together, they have a capacity of maximum 460 & 385 respectively.

- There is an expectation that the new parking provisions planned for the St David's MSCP and Waterfront/LC2 sites to be managed by the councils parking services department.
- We also considering how we support business within the city centre with the potential loss of surface car parks sites which are considered for redevelopment
- As part of the city centre regeneration, a strategic car parking review has been commissioned to assess the impact of planned major developments e.g. the area on parking needs and provision.

3. *A breakdown of maintenance and operational costs for car parking in Swansea including breakdown of charges (itemised, preferable into City Centre, beach/Gower parking, other), could the cost of traffic wardens be separated also?*

	Parking	CPE	Park & Ride
Operating	£785,800	£1,217,600	£583,400
Maintenance	£196,400	£56,000	£42,400
Income	£3,778,400	£1,332,200	£646,500

NB the maintenance and operating budgets for car parks are recorded as whole and cannot be broken down into city centre, foreshore, suburban etc.

4. *Do we have information about who uses our cars parks? For example do we do any research on who uses our car parks to ensure that when charges increase/decrease it does not detrimentally affect say tourism or footfall? Do we do any user surveys?*

- We do not carry out surveys on who uses the car parks. However, the majority of our customers are the visitors (for leisure activities and shopping) and employees of city centre companies.
- National research carried out by the BPA shows that reducing prices does not show an increase in customers to the car parks or footfall for the shopping areas. There are seasonal impacts on usage of the car parks i.e. Summer season sees an increase in foreshore carparks which then reduces through the Autumn and into Winter and the increases through Spring. The lowest usage for e.g. Mumbles is late January into February where parking incentives could be used to increase visitors during these quieter periods.
- In the city centre visits during school holidays increases to cultural and leisure venues with increases. There is lull during Autumn and this increases towards Christmas, from the end of November through to January.