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**Meeting:** Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 11 June 2012  
**Subject:** Consultation on the development of the “Approach to Parking”  
**Report of:** Cllr Brian Spurr, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Services  
**Summary:** The report reviews extra research and consultation that was carried out on the “Approach to Parking” and the changes that are planned to the document as a result.

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**Advising Officer:** Basil Jackson, Assistant Director Highways and Transport  
**Contact Officer:** David Bowie, Head of Traffic Management  
**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Wards Affected:** All  
**Function of:** Highways and Transportation

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

1. The Central Bedfordshire priorities supported in this paper are:

- Creating safer communities.
- Managing growth effectively.

Central Bedfordshire’s vision is to be “globally connected, delivering sustainable growth to ensure a green, prosperous and ambitious place for the benefit of all”.

The context for this is growth, including 27,000 new jobs and 26,000 new homes by 2026. Our focus is to deliver a highly attractive, well-connected prime location for businesses, and ensure that a choice of transport is available to take people to employment, education, healthcare, shops. Car parking management is an integral part of realising the economic vitality of our town and village centres.

### **Financial:**

2. For parking and enforcement for 2012/13 the approved gross expenditure budget is £994K and gross income budget is £1,378K. This includes an efficiency target of £230K. There is a further efficiency target split over the next 3 financial years of £60k. The available capital budget is £200K, split equally over 2012/13 and 2013/14 . This report may result in adjustments to these figures through the Medium Term Financial Plan process

**Legal:**

3. Central Bedfordshire Council is the highway and traffic authority for the road network in area of Central Bedfordshire. An important function of the Authority is to manage on and off-street parking. To be legally enforceable, parking services must be compliant with the Traffic Management Act 2004

**Risk Management:**

4. Failure to deliver efficient and effective parking enforcement would be detrimental to the safe and expeditious use of the road network and could be damaging to economic growth. Failure to deliver a cost neutral parking enforcement service could have detrimental financial implications to the Authority. Failure to deliver an effective approach to parking may result in reputational damage to the Council.

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

5. N/A

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

6. Public authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Creating an attractive and accessible public realm has a part to play in getting people out and about. One objective of enforcing traffic restrictions is to ensure that the most vulnerable members of the community have fair access to the public realm. Disabled people, in particular, place a high priority on the provision and enforcement of disabled parking bays and the provision of dropped kerbs.

An efficiently managed parking system is therefore crucial for allowing equality of opportunity.

**Public Health:**

7. Not applicable.

**Community Safety:**

8. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory duty on the Council: without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it, it shall be the duty of each authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

Parking enforcement activities can support a reduction in crime and disorder through the use of CEOs to report key pieces of intelligence which can support and assist in the detection/investigation of crime and disorder, ensuring that sufficient, appropriate and safe parking areas are available and that appropriate parking enforcement services are in place.

The Traffic Management Act was introduced in 2004 to tackle congestion and disruption on the road network. The Act places a duty on local traffic authorities to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on their road network and those networks of surrounding authorities. The Act gives authorities additional tools to better manage parking policies, moving traffic enforcement and the coordination of street works which are all important components of community safety.

**Sustainability:**

9. The effective management of parking is a key part of accommodating Central Bedfordshire's growth agenda and ensuring that we are "open for business." A good, well-connected public transport network encourages patronage and provides the alternative to travel locally without using the private car.

We will also support the roll-out of infrastructure in car parks for electric vehicle charging in line with national initiatives such as 'Plugged in Places'.

**Procurement:**

10. Not applicable.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:-**

1. **Recommend to the Executive the inclusion of revised policy matters as indicated in the conclusion to this report.**

**Background**

11. On 12 July 2011 the Executive approved the proposal to consult the wider community on the draft "Approach to Parking", including seeking the views of Overview & Scrutiny, before reporting back to a future Executive meeting.
12. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 October 2011 endorsed the following recommendations and comments contained in a report from the Highways and Transportation Task Force setting out their conclusions in respect of the Council's draft "Approach to Parking".
- the draft "Approach to Parking" is supported as the basis for the development of parking services in Central Bedfordshire;
  - that controlled parking zones be used as a major measure for the management of car parking, provided that such zones are selectively introduced following proper evaluation and are sufficiently and adequately funded;

- that residents' parking zones as such should not be used by the Council in the future as a parking control measure and that any further requests should be considered in the context of controlled parking zones;
  - that the parking standards (as set out in Appendix C to the draft "Approach to Parking") are fair and reasonable.
13. The Executive noted the above recommendations at its meeting of 15 November 2011.

### **Format of Consultation**

14. The consultation on the "Approach to Parking" was conducted in 2 phases. Two workshops were held with stakeholders and a questionnaire was made available to the public for 12 weeks on the Council's website which could be answered online or returned by post.

### **Results of Workshops**

15. Two stakeholder workshops were held to provide stakeholders with a forum to discuss the salient issues around parking in Central Bedfordshire and to help the Council understand these issues. The workshops were held in Dunstable (30<sup>th</sup> November 2011) and Chicksands (9<sup>th</sup> December 2011) between 1400 and 1830. The report on the Workshops is included at **Appendix A**.
16. A wide range of organisations were invited to attend including local businesses, developers, homebuilders, architects, planners, public transport service providers, taxi associations, emergency services, Chambers of Commerce and local councillors (town, parish and CBC). A total of 61 people attended the workshops but apart from local authority officers and local councillors of all levels only 6 others (police, fire service, 3 bus operators and one business) attended.
17. The workshops were led and facilitated by Amey and were structured around 4 key discussion topics:
- On - street parking (non-residential)
  - Public off - street parking
  - Private off - street parking
  - Residential parking (rural / urban)

For each topic a number of discussion points were suggested including pricing and enforcement, parking standards and supply and demand.

18. The key problems which were identified at the workshops were a shortage of all types of parking, inconsistent charging across the authority and a lack of enforcement where this was possible. Specific problem areas identified were outside schools at drop off and pick up times, outside post offices ./ cash machines where there is a need for short term convenience parking, in residential areas, even those where the houses have garages / drives because people use their garages for storage, on double yellow lines and close to junctions.

19. A number of solutions were put forward, many of them specific to a particular area as it was recognised that the problems vary across the authority and between rural and urban areas. Many of the solutions were to do with finding additional space for parking, either from utilising existing areas (village hall car parks, business car parks) or from converting areas such as verges / disused green land or front gardens of houses. On the enforcement front, as well as suggesting more resources in ANPR and CEOs, it was proposed that a 'Park Watch' scheme be set up where local people could act together as a self-enforcement agency. Alternatively enforcement powers could be devolved to town / parish councils.

Other ideas to come out of the workshop were to do with making parking easier by allowing tickets to be used more flexibly, for example by allowing them to be passed on if not totally utilised.

It would also be possible to decrease the parking problem away from the home if people were encouraged to travel by other modes though this might increase the residential parking problem as kerbside spaces would then not be available for daytime parking by non-residents visiting for other purposes.

### **Results of Public Consultation**

20. There were 65 responses to the questionnaire which was published on the CBC website. The majority of responses were from residents or councils with only one coming from a business. It is possible to identify the area from which 51 of the responses came (14 had no indication): 35% of those came from Dunstable, 14% from each of Amphill and Linslade and the rest scattered around the authority. Where answered, 65% of the responses were from women and 80% came from people between 30 and 65. Over 90% of those who responded to the question classified themselves as white british and only 7% were disabled. A summary of the responses is included at **Appendix B**.
21. During the consultation period upgraded pay and display parking machines were installed in some Dunstable town centre car parks. This generated discussion from Dunstable residents on the Council's Facebook page and other pages hosted by Dunstable groups. Over this time there was a considerable increase in the level of responses to the consultation survey, and from reviewing the responses it appears that a sizeable portion of these may have been triggered by the installation of the new parking machines.
22. Overall only a small majority of respondents felt that the Draft Parking Strategy met or partially met the needs of the various groups, and on average about 45% felt it did not. In particular the needs of commuters were not being met, though those of the disabled were being better provided for. There were 46 comments from people in relation to this and the most common comments were around the following themes:
- More / cheaper town centre car parking needed to ensure that towns continue to prosper – a lot of comments about the new scheme in Dunstable and problems in Amphill since Waitrose opened
  - Too much commuter parking (often inconsiderate) in residential areas – particularly around Flitwick and Leighton Buzzard stations

- Cost of residential permits is too high
  - Better parking provision needed for businesses, commuters, workers
  - Increased parking pressure from housing growth / developments needs to be managed / catered for
  - Better enforcement needed of resident parking zones / unauthorised parking
23. On the subject of enforcement the priority was for persistent offenders to be targeted followed by town centres and residential areas although less than half of the respondents answered these questions.
24. Respondents were asked how far they agreed or disagreed with the proposed approach for the various aspects set out in the Draft Parking Strategy.

For the majority of the aspects the proportion who neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposed approach was between 25% and 35%. If you ignore these responses and just examine those who agreed or disagreed then:

The sections where the approach was most strongly disagreed with were:

Parking Charges	71%
Workplace Parking Levy	62%
Residents' Parking Zones	59%

While a majority of respondents said they disagreed with the approach to the Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) it is evident that in fact they disagreed with the idea of a WPL rather than the approach we have proposed which acknowledges that it would have a detrimental effect on the future growth and economy of the area and says we will keep it under review.

In addition, in December 2011, the Department for Transport, as part of the announcement on the Red Tape Challenge announced that Local Authorities will now have to ensure business interests are properly considered as part of any future proposed Workplace Parking Levy scheme. They must show they have properly and effectively consulted local businesses, have addressed any proper concerns raised and secured support from the local business community.

The issue around Residents' Parking Zones (RPZs) appears, from the comments received, to be more concerned with the cost of the permits rather than the principle as there is a lot of dissatisfaction with the prevalence of commuters' cars parking on residential roads near stations which would be solved by the implementation of RPZs.

The sections which were most strongly supported were:

Visitor Attractions	63%
Improving Access and Use	61%
Park and Ride	61%

## Review of Parking Standards

25. A review of the Parking Standards included in the draft “Approach to Parking” was carried out by Transportation Planning (International) Ltd, a member of the Amey Group.

Their review concluded that revised parking standards for several of the business land uses should be adopted which reflect a balance between meeting parking demand in the varied locations in the Authority and respecting the sustainability policies set out in the Local Transport Plan.

For B1 Business use it is recommended that different standards should apply for urban and rural areas - the urban one should stay at a maximum of 1 per 30m<sup>2</sup> in urban zones but should be 1 per 25m<sup>2</sup> in rural zones. In addition in the case of business parks the standard should be increased from 1 per 35m<sup>2</sup> to 1 per 25m<sup>2</sup> owing to a higher employment density.

For B2, General Industry, which has a significantly lower employment density and B8, Warehousing and Distribution, which has a very low density then the standards should be in the order of 1 per 100m<sup>2</sup> (over 500m<sup>2</sup>) for B2 and 1 per 150 to 200m<sup>2</sup> (over 500m<sup>2</sup>) for B8 while still retaining 1 per 30m<sup>2</sup> for smaller sites.

The advice regarding households is to adopt minimum standards that reflect current levels of car ownership, however a garage should be counted as a parking space and be large enough to accommodate general storage and cycles. However, increasing the use of garages for vehicle storage is still likely to be difficult unless there is extreme pressure on the adjacent public roads. The suggested parking standards for residential schemes are:

- 1 bedroom 1 per unit minimum
- 2-3 bedrooms 2 per unit minimum
- 4+ bedrooms 3 per unit minimum

A copy of the report is provided at **Appendix C**.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

26. As a result of the consultation a number of changes are proposed to be made to the draft document and a number of additional policy elements are recommended for inclusion.
27. The following areas will be the subject of additional policies:
- **Localism** – exploring ways of involving the local community in the delivery of parking services
  - **Verge / footway parking** – to permit only in streets where no other parking provision can practicably be provided

- **Overnight HGV parking in lay-bys** – to time restrict parking in lay-bys to four hours only during the period 9.00pm to 7.00am.
- **Dealing with Persistent Evaders** – to clamp and remove to a safe storage location any illegally parked vehicle with 5 or more unpaid Penalty Charge Notices

In addition, Members are requested to reconsider their position on Residents Parking Zones in light of the public consultation results. It is advised that Residents Parking Zones can be provided in locations where commuter parking creates difficulties for residents as long as the financial implications to the residents and council are minimised to a fair and equitable level commensurate to resolving the problem.

Further, it is recommended that the council accepts the minor modifications to the Parking Standards as presented in the Transportation Planning (International) Ltd report.

#### **Appendices:**

Appendix A: “Approach to Parking” Engagement Workshops Report

Appendix B: Summary of responses to Questionnaire

Appendix C: Transportation Planning (International) Ltd review of Parking Standards

#### **Background papers:**