

Central Bedfordshire Council

Executive

10 October 2017

Parking Strategy

Report of: Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Executive Member for Community Services
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This report relates to a decision that is Key

Purpose of this report

1. Following the end of the Parking Strategy public consultation, the report sets out a proposal to develop a Parking Strategy for Central Bedfordshire using a phased approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to:

1. **agree the proposal to develop a Parking Strategy for Central Bedfordshire using a phased approach:**
 - **Phase One: Develop and agree a three year Parking Management Strategy (2018- 2021)**
 - **Phase Two: Develop and agree a broader Central Bedfordshire Parking Strategy (2021-2035) aligned to the Local Plan and revised Planning Design Guide.**

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

2. The report was considered at Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 September 2017. The Committee recommended that the Committee support the proposal to develop a Parking Strategy for Central Bedfordshire using a phased approach as follows:-
 1. Phase One: Develop and agree a three-year Parking Management Strategy (2018- 2021)
 2. Phase Two: Planning Design Guide Review, Local Plan and LTP (4) completed

3. Phase Three: Develop and agree a broader Central Bedfordshire Parking Strategy (2021-2035) aligned to the Local Plan and revised Planning Design Guide

Consultation

3. Central Bedfordshire completed a consultation on developing a Parking Strategy in June 2017. 447 responses were received. The results are set out in Appendix A.
4. The results from the consultation show that there is support for the broad objectives the Council consulted residents about. However direct feedback from comments made by residents during the consultation has highlighted a number of concerns that they want the Council to address including:
 - Schools parking
 - Emergency vehicles access
 - Residents Parking Zones
 - Enforcement of existing restrictions
 - Provide sufficient parking for new developments
 - Free parking – short stay
 - Use green space in residential areas to provide more parking
 - Manage verge parking problem
 - Resolve inconsiderate/obstructive parking
 - Too many disabled bays in car parks
 - Parking charges
 - On street charging for parking
5. Many of these issues are about how we manage parking using an enforcement approach rather than about the longer term planning for parking in Central Bedfordshire.

Area assessments

6. In addition to the consultation area assessments have been carried out for Dunstable, Flitwick, Harlington and Sandy to add to assessments already completed for Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard.
7. The most recent area assessments have made very similar recommendations for Dunstable, Flitwick and Sandy. For Harlington the assessment sets out that there is sufficient parking at this time.
8. Area assessment for Biggleswade, Leighton Buzzard, Arlesey and Houghton Regis were carried out between 2014 and 2015 and Dunstable had an assessment as part of the Dunstable Town Centre Master Plan in 2010. Appendix B sets out the recommendations/ options from the area assessments completed.

Strategy landscape

9. The area assessments identify a range of recommendations and conclusions that helped inform the Councils approach to developing a Council Parking Strategy for Central Bedfordshire. Whilst it is the case that a strategy is needed it must be developed in a way that ensures it is fully integrated with the draft Local Plan which in turn is supported by the Planning Design Guide (PDG) and Local Transport Plans (LTP).
10. At this time there does appear to be a dis-connect between planning for future parking needs as Central Bedfordshire grows and the operational delivery and management of parking to ensure the effective and safe operation of our roads.
11. Although technical aspects of the PDG are currently being reviewed this will not have an impact on the wider planning issues in relation to parking management. A broader PDG review is planned once the Local Plan is agreed.
12. The Council also has 10 published Local Area Transport Plans (LATPs) and a Local Transport Plan (LTP) (3). LTP (3) has a supporting Parking Strategy covering April 2011 to March 2026 within it albeit that the document is marked as a draft and was not adopted. The LATPs are now out of date and currently there is no on-going work to develop a Local Transport Plan (4).
13. Local authorities have a statutory duty to have a LTP and central government has used it as a framework to allocate funding for local transport schemes. When the work on the Parking Strategy began the plan was for it to act as a supporting strategy for the LTP(4). In April 2016 the Executive agreed the development of LTP (4) however work has not progressed to a stage where the LTP(4) provides a strategic framework for a Parking Strategy.
14. To develop a broad parking strategy at this time without key plans and guides in place would potentially lead to a dis-jointed approach that does not truly address or reflect the parking needs for Central Bedfordshire until 2035.

Proposal

15. Without doubt the Council must have a clearly defined Parking Strategy that is integrated with the developing plans and strategies that set out the Councils vision for Central Bedfordshire by 2035. Timings for the Local Plan approval and the broader review of the Planning Design Guide as well as the need to develop LTP (4) do not support the delivery of a Central Bedfordshire Parking Strategy in the immediate future.

16. Developing a broad Parking Strategy ahead of those key decisions and plans would potentially undermine success of our long term aspirations. However at the same time residents need the Council to provide them with clarity about what we can and cannot do to manage our current parking provision.
17. It is also crucial that we manage our current parking provision effectively and do not promise or agree to deliver parking management schemes that are not affordable, deliverable or effective. The Council must set out where we will enforce and how and also when we want. This will help to inform residents, Councillors and Town and Parish Councils.
18. Resident feedback from the consultation supports the broad objectives the Council consulted on, but it also evidenced that there are some key operational issues that the Council needs to look at. In view of this it is proposed that the Council agrees a revised phased approach to delivering a Parking Strategy for Central Bedfordshire:

Phase One:	Develop and agree a three year Parking Management Strategy (2018- 2021)
Phase Two:	Develop and agree a broader Central Bedfordshire Parking Strategy (2021-2035) aligned to the Local Plan, revised Planning Design Guide and LTP (4)

19. Rationale
 - The Parking Strategy must be integrated with key plans and guidance to provide an effective approach
 - Key plans and guides that will inform a wider Central Bedfordshire Parking Strategy are being developed/reviewed.
 - Residents and internal/external partners need clarity on our local operational approach to managing parking.

Town and Parish Councils

20. A number of the Town and Parish Councils have, or are, developing their own local plans which include managing parking. The PMS will set out how the Council will work with Town and Parish Councils on parking issues which will help to manage expectations.
21. In developing the PMS the Council will engage with Town and Parish Councils about the key issues affecting them and how a PMS may support them in developing their own plans for their areas.

Parking Management Strategy (PMS)

22. A PMS will differ from a broader Parking Strategy in that it will be focused on the 'here and now' rather than aspirational planning for future need linked to growth in Central Bedfordshire.

23. The PMS would set out how the Council will manage its roads infrastructure effectively and safely. It will look at current practices and what the Council will do in the short term (3 years). It will be about our delivery at a local level and will look at the issues that concern residents the most, for example verge/kerb parking and level of enforcement.
24. There may be some short term work based on the area assessments recommendations that can be incorporated into the PMS where it links to feedback from the public consultation.
25. As a broader parking strategy develops it may become a supporting document for the strategy.
26. Indicative issues that a PMS would cover are:
 - Enforcement of restrictions on verge and footway parking. The Council has 'tolerated' pavement parking which has meant the issue is now 'chronic' in many streets.
 - Policy guidance setting out when Residents Parking Zones are an appropriate solution and how they will be managed including reviews.
 - Area-based approaches to introducing waiting restrictions. Planning restrictions across an area introducing them on a phased basis as pressures become apparent.
 - Opportunities to create additional off-street parking through change of use of amenity green space to parking (change of use).
 - Management of parking enforcement restrictions and enforcement – ensuring capacity is linked to restrictions and vice versa.

Timescales

27. There are no defined timescales for the review of the PDG or LTP(4) other than the review of the PDG is planned for after the Local Plan is finalised.
28. As the proposed PMS will be drafted as an interim 'stand alone' document it is anticipated that it will be implemented from 1 April 2018.

Corporate Implications

Council Priorities

- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire:
- Great resident services

The approach set out in the report will support the growth agenda for Central Bedfordshire through safe, well managed roads and in so doing supports the delivery of services to residents.

Legal Implications

29. The Traffic Management Act (TMA) 2004. This act was introduced to tackle congestion and disruption on the road network. The TMA places a duty on local authorities to make sure traffic moves freely and quickly on their roads and the roads of nearby authorities.

Financial and Risk Implications

30. There are no direct financial implications in terms of the proposed phased approach. However developing a Parking Management Strategy may identify additional investment in the roads infrastructure that is not currently identified in either revenue or capital budgets.
31. There is already significant pressure from residents, members and Town and Parish Councils to improve our approach to parking management. If the Council does not develop an approach that can be delivered it the Council faces both reputational and financial risk with regard to the councils long term aspirations.

Equalities Implications

32. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
33. An 'Equality Impact Assessment Relevance Test' as part of the initial approach to developing the Parking Strategy was completed which showed that there would be no negative impact upon vulnerable groups within our communities at this stage.
34. A full Equalities Impact Assessment of a Parking Management Strategy will be completed if the proposed approach is agreed.

Conclusion and next Steps

35. Key policies and documents that are needed to developing a broad Parking Strategy for Central Bedfordshire are not in place. The approach outlined in the report suggests a pragmatic approach to delivering an interim strategy to allow time for the wider strategic documents and plans to be completed.

36. Executive will receive a report in October outlining the proposals for a phased approach to the development of a parking Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

Appendices

Appendix A: Parking Strategy Consultation Results

Appendix B: Area Assessments Summary

Background Papers

None

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