

Test Valley Borough Council Annual Parking Report



2021 – 2022

Test Valley Borough Council

Annual Parking Statement 2021 – 2022

1 Introduction

- 1.1 All public car parks and roads in Test Valley, excluding motorways and trunk roads, are designated as a Civil Enforcement Area.
- 1.2 During the period covered by this Annual Parking Statement, 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022, the Council was responsible for the enforcement of the Council's off-street car parks. The Council's Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs), under the Traffic Management Act 2004, enforce parking restrictions in the off-street car parks. Prior to the 1st April 2020 the Council also enforced on-street parking restrictions on behalf of Hampshire County Council under an agency agreement between the two authorities. This agency agreement, and the Borough Council's involvement in on-street parking enforcement, terminated on 31st March 2020.
- 1.3 This is the fourteenth Annual Parking Statement published by the Council in respect of its management of parking, in accordance with the guidance published by the Department of Transport. It is intended to provide the public with information about its policies, procedures and key statistics relating to its parking activities.

Policy Aims and Objectives

- 1.4 The Council, in carrying out its management of the Borough's car parks, has identified a number of objectives. A summary of those objectives is set out below. The Council seeks to:
- assist in allowing the free flow of traffic by minimising the use of vehicles in the busiest and most congested areas;
 - improve traffic conditions and reduce the risk of accidents;
 - provide sufficient shopper and visitor parking facilities to support shops/commercial organisations and leisure activities; thereby underpinning the Borough's social and economic life, to manage the use of spaces by price to encourage retail vitality and match long term provision to the availability of long-term spaces;
 - safeguard the needs and requirements of businesses/organisations and visitors;
 - control the supply of off-street spaces by taking a long-term view of transport and transport strategies as they relate to the settlements within Test Valley;
 - regularly review parking tariffs which provide revenue to sustain the Council's integrated transport aims;
 - ensure that parking controls are observed and enforced in a fair, accurate and consistent manner;
 - provide a high standard of customer care;
 - provide well-maintained car parks that are easy for customers to use, with particular regard to disabled customers;

2 Parking Policy

- 2.1 The Council believes that the making and enforcing of parking regulations should be carried out in a transparent, legal and comprehensive manner. It considers that the preparation and implementation is about being fair to all users of the Council's public car parks.
- 2.2 The parking service website www.testvalley.gov.uk/parking contains details of the Council's enforcement policy and the appeal process. It explains our procedures for handling appeals both on the statutory grounds and the exercising of discretion in the case of mitigating circumstances.
- 2.3 The enforcement procedure for parking contraventions forms the framework for maintaining compliance with traffic regulations in a consistent manner.
- 2.4 The Transport, Parking and Streets pages on the Council's website are regularly reviewed and updated to provide easy access to information on car park locations and charges.

3 Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 The provision of parking enforcement in the Council's car parks is delivered by an in-house team. The only external elements are cash collection from ticket machines, the operation of cashless parking (currently via RingGo) and enforcement agents (bailiffs) for the recovery of unpaid penalty charge debts.
- 3.2 The Council operates 15 Pay and Display car parks in Andover and 8 Pay and Display car parks in Romsey, plus a number of dedicated Season ticket car parks and limited stay recreation car parks. The total capacity this equates to is 2177 parking spaces in Andover and 979 spaces in Romsey. In addition to this, most of our car parks contain motorcycle parking bays, where single motorcycles can park for free when parked in a marked motorcycle bay, and there are a small number of designated coach parking bays in each town.
- 3.3 CEO's are the public face of civil parking enforcement and the way they perform their functions is crucial to the success, and public perception, of the Council's Civil Parking Enforcement operation. CEO's are expected to perform their duties in a professional and efficient manner at all times. They should apply consistency, firmness, sensitivity and tact coupled with common sense and patience, and be able to think clearly and react sensibly under pressure.

- 3.4 The success of civil parking enforcement depends on the dedication and quality of the staff that deliver it. It is essential to give staff at all levels the skills and training to do their jobs effectively, in order that the Council can command public confidence and respect. This should also improve the self-esteem and job satisfaction of staff, resulting in higher retention rates. Training is seen as an important aspect of civil parking enforcement running costs.
- 3.5 The main objective of CEO's is to ensure that parking controls are observed and enforced in a fair, accurate and consistent manner.
- 3.6 CEOs duties also include related activities such as:
- inspecting parking equipment;
 - checking and reporting defective signs and road markings;
 - issuing information leaflets or warning notices;
 - providing witness statements;
 - where appropriate, appearing before a parking adjudicator;
 - informing the police of criminal parking activity;
 - reporting suspected abandoned vehicles;
 - putting in place and removing notices about the suspension of parking places;
 - reporting on changes in parking patterns; and
 - assisting with surveys.
- 3.7 CEOs are allocated daily rounds to enforce. Any requests for enforcement or reports of parking in contravention of restrictions are logged and where appropriate extra enforcement is organised.
- 3.8 The office processes involved in civil parking enforcement are an integral part of the enforcement regime and staff carrying them out need similar levels of skill, training and professionalism as CEO's. It is important to ensure that staff have the skills, training, authority and resources to give the public a high quality, professional, efficient, timely and user-friendly service. Time and quality targets are set for dealing with parking queries.

4 Review of Body Worn Cameras

- 4.1 The Council introduced the use of Body Worn Cameras by its Parking Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO's) in April 2019. The cameras have now been in use for three years, and in June 2022 the Parking management team undertook the second annual review of their use, together with a review of the policy, procedures and Privacy Impact Assessment. This is a summary of the findings:

4.2 The cameras were originally introduced with the following aims:

- to reduce the number of incidents of aggressive behaviour and abuse aimed at our officers
- to reduce protracted complaint investigations by providing impartial, accurate evidence
- to enhance opportunities for high quality evidence-capture to enable internal or police investigation following incidents
- to give greater insight into service delivery and identifying opportunities for improvement in the interests of protecting the health & safety of Parking Civil Enforcement Officers

4.3 Prior to the introduction of the cameras, in 2018/19, there were 9 formally logged reports of aggressive behaviour/abuse. Following the introduction of the cameras in April 2019, in 2020/21 there were also 9 formally logged reports of aggressive behaviour/abuse. In 2020/21 there were zero logged reports of aggressive behaviour/abuse, and the cameras were not activated at all. This significant reduction in reported incidents may have largely been because our parking charges were suspended for a substantial part of that financial year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021/22 there were 3 logged reports of aggressive & threatening behaviour. Given this reduction in the number of incidents reported, the use of the cameras appears to be working effectively as a deterrent.

4.4 The enforcement officers continue to recognise their benefits and feel them to be beneficial. The cameras appear to be beneficial both in our aim to keep our officers safe by acting as a deterrent, as well as to provide high quality evidence should the need ever arise to call upon evidence following any incident of abuse.

4.5 During the last year, there have been no identified GDPR issues with the cameras, and no complaints from the public about their use. The benefits / aims of using the cameras remain valid and unchanged.

4.6 In light of the above, continued use of the Body Worn cameras by our parking enforcement officers is deemed to be justified.

4.7 The Privacy Impact Assessment and Body Worn Camera Policy & Procedure have been reviewed and both remain unchanged. In order to ensure they remain familiar with the policy, the Council's enforcement officers undertake refresher training in the policy and procedure every 12 months.

4.8 For more information regarding use of the Body Worn Cameras, the privacy notice can be found at www.testvalley.gov.uk/gdpr, follow the link to privacy notices for each service, and then use of Body Worn Video Cameras.

5 Performance Monitoring

Car Park Occupancy

- 5.1 Government guidance highlights that the availability of car parking has a major influence on the choice of means of transport. It is therefore important that the parking stock in the Borough is managed to provide a balance between encouraging use of alternative modes of transport whilst ensuring that the vitality of both Andover and Romsey is not compromised.
- 5.2 The Council monitors parking demand through ticket sales data and all car parks are surveyed for occupancy three times a year (May, August and October). The car park occupancy results (published below) are reviewed annually and consideration is given to reallocating spaces from one category of stay to another, to maintain optimum occupancy levels.
- 5.3 The Reallocation Policy was reviewed in 2012 as part of the review of the Council's Parking Strategy. The Council aims to operate the short and medium stay car parks within a maximum average occupancy rate of 90% based on peak day surveys. This indicator would mean that on a typical busy shopping day, on average across the short and medium stay car parks, one in nine spaces or more would be vacant, with the exception of Christmas shopping periods.
- 5.4 Since 2012 applying the reallocation policy has resulted in the reallocation of spaces in both towns to ensure that sufficient parking spaces are available for shoppers in the car parks closest to the town centres. The reallocation has meant that spaces for long stay parking have been located further out from the town centre. In the case of Romsey this includes the construction of additional parking at Romsey Rapids where long stay parking was introduced in 2015.

Summary of Average Peak Demand in Andover and Romsey (Public off-street car parks)

Andover						
Percentages are average peak occupancy of three snapshot surveys in May, August and October *in 2020 surveys were only carried out in August and October						
	2019		2020*		2021	
	Friday	Saturday	Friday	Saturday	Friday	Saturday
Short Stay	67%	70%	25%	29%	41%	45%
Medium Stay	64%	56%	36%	43%	43%	49%
Long Stay	54%	20%	11%	8%	22%	17%
Total	63%	56%	28%	32%	39%	42%
Average Total	60%		30%		41%	

Romsey						
Percentages are average peak occupancy of three snapshot surveys in May, August and October *in 2020 surveys were only carried out in August and October						
	2019		2020*		2021	
	Friday	Saturday	Friday	Saturday	Friday	Saturday
Short Stay	76%	76%	71%	71%	74%	76%
Medium Stay	79%	82%	78%	78%	77%	86%
Long Stay	78%	72%	53%	47%	64%	66%
Total	78%	75%	63%	59%	69%	73%
Average Total	77%		61%		71%	

Car Park Charges

- 5.5 During 2019 a review of parking charges took place, and a new charging structure was agreed. This new structure was introduced from 1st April 2020. As part of the Council's plans to rejuvenate its town centres, these new tariffs included the introduction of free parking for up to two hours in Andover's Shepherds Spring Lane Car Park, as well as a significant reduction in the cost of up to two hours parking across all other pay & display car parks in the Borough, now offering this for just £1. It is hoped that this charging structure will encourage those parking not to rush and instead enjoy a little more time in our town centres.
- 5.6 The Council made no increase to its car park charges in 2021-22 retaining those tariffs which came into force on 1st April 2020.
- 5.7 The Council has continued to provide free parking after 4pm, and all day on Sundays and bank holidays.

Customer Satisfaction

- 5.8 The Council is committed to providing a high level of customer satisfaction in its car parks. To enable us to achieve and maintain our target, a questionnaire regarding car park facilities and environment is handed to car park users in all our car parks during one week in October each year.
- 5.9 In 2021, 871 questionnaires were handed out by the car park patrol officers and 242 replies were received. Customers were asked whether they would agree that the quality of eight key facilities including ticket machines and lighting were satisfactory. The responses provided a customer satisfaction indicator of 87.91%
- 5.10 The Parking Administration survey is a questionnaire enclosed with all Parking Permit and Parking Appeal correspondence processed during one week each October to provide a random cross sample. In this survey we request feedback regarding the service provided by the Parking Administration staff.
- 5.11 Of the 100 parking administration questionnaires sent out, 6 replies were received in respect of the service received by the Parking Administration Team. Customers were asked to rate the efficiency and standard of service from poor through to excellent. The responses rating average to excellent provided a customer satisfaction indicator of 100%.

Administration Efficiency

- 5.12 All appeals against Penalty Charge Notices received by the Council are acknowledged within five working days of their receipt. To allow for thorough investigation of the circumstances surrounding an appeal against a Penalty Charge Notice, consideration of the merits of the case including an appeals panel meeting if deemed appropriate, and the drafting of a detailed response; the target for issuing a decision is 20 working days from receipt of the appeal. In 2021/22 the team processed 934 appeals and achieved 99.79% compliance against this 20-day target for the year.
- 5.13 Time taken to process new permit applications and renewals is also monitored. The objective is for the permit application to be processed within 5 working days of a 'complete' application being received by the parking administration office or; where an application is made to renew a permit, a minimum of five days before the old permit expires. In 2021/22 the team processed 108 new permit applications (99.1% within 5 working days) and 127 permit renewals (100% within the target time scale).

6 Key Projects, Challenges and Areas of Improvement during 2021/22

COVID-19

- 6.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to bring about challenges and changes to the way the Council's car parks have operated during the last year, as well as to the way in which the officers in the parking team deliver the service.
- 6.2 Following the decision taken by Council Members in 2020 to suspend parking charges in all of the Council's car parks for the duration of the national and Test Valley local lockdowns, during 2020/21 parking charges were suspended between 1st April 2021 and 11th April 2021. This was to ensure those collecting essential supplies for themselves or others could do so speedily and safely, and to ensure adequate parking for those that live in the town centre that were confined to their homes. So that those people who had paid for parking in advance were not unfairly disadvantaged, Council Members also agreed that Season Tickets valid throughout any period of free parking, would be extended by the period of days or weeks that car parking charges are free. The Parking Administration Team have manually calculated the extended duration of each permit upon receipt of applications to renew.
- 6.3 Risk assessments have been completed and reviewed to make the Council's workplaces and public car parks 'COVID-19 safe', in accordance with the changing government guidance. This has involved significant changes to the way in which our Officers carry out their work, including setting them up so that they are able to carry out as much work as possible from home, and for those officers whose work cannot be carried out from home, changes have been made to the way in which they carry out their work in terms of social distancing and cleaning and hygiene measures in order to comply with the governments changing COVID-19 restrictions.
- 6.4 To build on the positive experiences and opportunities which have arisen as a result of the pandemic, in March 2022 the Council introduced a New Ways of Working programme, enabling Council officers (including our Parking administration team) the option to work permanently in an agile way; with some time spent working from home and some time spent working from their principal workplace (where the nature of their work permits this). This supports the organisation's ongoing modernisation.
- 6.5 The Council has continued to make space available in a number of its car parks for use by the local NHS Trust to support efforts to combat COVID-19. Part of Shepherds Spring Lane Car Park in Andover has continued to be provided for use as a COVID-19 Testing Centre, and our Crosfield Hall, Romsey car park has an area of reserved parking on days where there are COVID vaccination clinics being held.
- 6.6 The impact of the pandemic has changed the way many people currently live and work, resulting in a significant reduction in car park income to the Council in 2021/22.

Off-Street Car Parks

- 6.7 A review of the Council's Cashless Parking contract was carried out in 2021. The winning supplier of this tender was RingGo, who were already the Council's current supplier. The new contract with RingGo commenced in September 2021.
- 6.8 For the period 2021-22 there were 215,942 transactions using the RingGo service, representing £297,498 net car park income. In context this is just over 19% of our total net car park income.
- 6.9 The Chantry Centre Service Yards have been included in the Council's Off-Street Parking Places Order enabling enforcement of these service yards to deter the parking of unauthorised vehicles.
- 6.10 Use of the Electric Vehicle Charging points installed across various car parks in the Borough has increased since eighteen additional points were installed in the Spring of 2020, however usage has fluctuated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summary of Electric Vehicle Charge Point Usage

Month	No. of charging events	% of KWH used*
Apr-21	97	5.56%
May-21	94	5.31%
Jun-21	104	6.29%
Jul-21	164	8.02%
Aug-21	134	6.97%
Sep-21	200	12.96%
Oct-21	260	15.80%
Nov-21	292	19.61%
Dec-21	335	18.61%
Jan-22	311	18.21%
Feb-22	337	24.74%
Mar-22	419	18.84%

*Based on optimum usage

In addition to benefitting workers and visitors to Andover and Romsey town centres, the charge points will also benefit those residents who may not have off-road parking and therefore don't have the ability to charge their vehicle at home. During car park charging hours (Monday to Saturday 8:30am to 4pm) motorists must pay to park in addition to the Electric Vehicle charging costs, and they must also abide by any maximum permitted stay as detailed on the adjacent signage.

7 Enforcement & Other Parking Statistics

7.1 In the financial year 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, 4159 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) were issued. During this period 934 appeals were processed, of which 609 were upheld on technical or mitigatory grounds. Further parking statistics can be found in the table below:

Test Valley Borough Council Summary of Parking

	2021/22
Parking Statistics (as at 22.8.2022)	
Volume of off-street car parking spaces	3156
PCNs issued	
Volume of higher level PCNs issued	525
Volume of lower level PCNs issued	3634
of which: Attached to windscreen/handed to driver	4158
Served to keeper by post	1
PCN's Paid	
Volume of 2021-22 PCNs paid	3190
Volume of 2021-22 PCNs paid at the discounted rate	2556
Volume of 2021-22 PCNs paid before Charge Certificate (within 56 days)	2976
Volume of 2021-22 PCNs paid after a Charge Certificate served	214
Recovery of unpaid PCNs	
Volume of 2021-22 PCNs where Charge Certificates registered at Traffic Enforcement Centre (TEC)	235
Volume of Warrants of Execution issued to an Enforcement Agent during 2021-22	214
Other PCN statistics:	
Volume of 2021-22 PCNs written off	122
Volume of 2021-22 PCNs resulting in an informal challenge	978
Volume of 2021-22 PCN informal challenges which resulted in cancellation of the PCN	644
Volume of 2021-22 PCNs resulting in a formal representation	66
Volume of 2021-22 formal representations which resulted in cancellation of the PCN	18

8 Financial - Parking Account

Test Valley Borough Council Summary of Parking 2021/22

Off Street Parking Income	2021-22 £	2020-21 £
Off street parking income	1,648,446	628,179
Off street PCN income	113,109	78,869
Other off street parking income	4,834	11,252
Total off street parking income	1,766,389	718,300
Off street parking direct costs	1,506,312	1,466,961
Off Street parking surplus / (deficit)	260,077	(748,661)

**The income and expenditure of local authorities in connection with their on-street charging and their on-street and off-street enforcement activities are governed by Section 55 (as amended) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

9 Future Plans 2022/23

Off-Street Car Parks

- 9.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 'Growing our Potential' 2019-2023 identifies key strategic challenges that will be faced over the next four years and beyond. One of these challenges is encouraging inclusive growth within our town centres. To help understand and address this challenge the Council has identified 'Town Centres' as one of its four key priorities. What this means is that we will look to grow the potential of Andover and Romsey town centres to be attractive, vibrant and prosperous places which are capable of adapting to change.
- 9.2 The Council has adopted two masterplans for Andover and Romsey Town Centres. These masterplans will help strengthen the towns as they adapt and evolve in light of changing habits and demands and ensure they support business, leisure, retail and residential opportunities to help make our town centres more resilient. A crucial element of this is to ensure that sufficient public car parking is provided to meet the needs of the residents as well as attracting visitors and be able to adapt to any future change in demands.

For more information, please contact:

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