

Test Valley Borough Council

Annual Parking Statement 2019 – 2020

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. During the period covered by this Annual Parking Statement, 1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020, the Council enforced on-street traffic regulation orders (TROs) within this Civil Enforcement Area under an agency agreement with Hampshire County Council.¹ Test Valley Borough Council also manages its own public off-street car parks. The Council's Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs), under the Traffic Management Act 2004, have the authority to enforce on-street restrictions in addition to enforcing parking restrictions in Council car parks.
- 1.2 This is the twelfth Annual Report published by the Council in respect of its management of on and off-street 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

- 1.3 The Council, in carrying out its management of the Borough's road network and 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;
 - to safeguard the needs and requirements of residents and, where appropriate, to give them priority over commuter parking in residential streets close to the town centres of Andover and Romsey;
 - 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;

¹ The agency agreement with Hampshire County Council for the enforcement of on-street parking restrictions terminates on 31st March 2020 after which Hampshire County Council will be responsible for the enforcement of on-street parking restrictions.

- 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;
- improve transport infrastructure and the general environment, and to ensure that design standards accord with community safety, operational safety and visual amenity.

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 highway and the public car parks, to ensure the safety of the public and manage the use of the road network by minimising the impact of inappropriate parking.
- 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 exercise 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 and Parking pages on the Council's website are regularly reviewed and updated to provide easy access to information on car park locations and charges, together with information for residents regarding permits and traffic regulation orders.
- 2.5 Up until 31st July 2019, the Council was responsible for the periodic review of on-street traffic regulation orders and parking restrictions across the Borough taking into account concerns raised by the public since the last review of that area. The objective of reviews was to:
- maintain the vitality and viability of town centres
 - manage the traffic network to ensure expeditious movement of traffic (including pedestrians and cyclists);
 - improve road safety;
 - improve the local environment;
 - promote the use of and improve the quality and accessibility of public transport;
 - meet the needs of people with disabilities, some of whom will be unable to use public transport and are dependant entirely on the use of a car; and
 - manage and reconcile the competing demands for kerb space.

- 2.6 On 1st August 2019 following the ending of the Traffic Management Agency Agreement between Hampshire County Council and Test Valley Borough Council, responsibility for reviewing on street traffic regulations transferred back to the County Council (who are the Highway Authority).

3 Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 The provision of parking enforcement in Test Valley 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 2186 parking spaces in Andover and 982 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.
- 3.3 CEOs 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. CEOs 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 CEOs 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. The rounds are made up of a mixture of off-street car parks and on-street parking restrictions. These rounds are covered in rotation by the available staff. The rounds are regularly reviewed to ensure that all restrictions are covered, with extra attention given to problem or high risk areas. 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 CEOs. 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

The Council introduced the use of Body Worn Cameras by its Parking CEOs in April 2019. The cameras have now been in use for a year, and the Parking management team have undertaken the first annual review of their use, together with a review of the policy and procedures. This is a summary of the findings.

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

Prior to the introduction of the cameras, in 2018/19, there were nine formally logged reports of aggressive behaviour/abuse. Following the introduction of the cameras in April 2019, 2019/20 has seen no increase in the number of reports logged and the figure has remained at nine formally logged reports of aggressive behaviour/abuse. The hope is that these will now start to decrease.

Given the continued abuse and aggression towards our officers, it is clear that the need for the CEO's to wear the cameras remains present. The enforcement officers recognise their benefits and feel them to be beneficial. Whilst the cameras may not deter all verbal abuse, on the seven occasions that the cameras have been activated during their first year of use, the activation of the camera appeared to have acted as an effective deterrent to any escalation of the incident.

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.

In light of the above, continued use of the Body Worn cameras is deemed to be justified.

Following a review of the Council's policy & procedure relating to use of the cameras, a couple of amendments/additions have now been incorporated into Revision 1 of the policy. The amendments/additions to the policy relate to:

- Positioning/wearing of the camera so that it most effectively collects evidence
- What actions must be taken if the officer becomes aware that the camera has accidentally activated
- What action must be taken if a recording is mistakenly marked as evidential by the CEO

For more information regards use of the Body Worn Cameras, the privacy notice can be found at www.testvalley.gov.uk/gdpr - follow the link to "GDPR 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 results, published in the Annual Parking Report, 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					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	
				Friday	Saturday
Ultra Short & Short	74%	60%	64%	67%	70%
Medium Stay	63%	55%	55%	64%	56%
Long Stay	44%	63%	59%	54%	20%
Total	64%	58%	58%	63%	56%
Average Total				60%	
Romsey					
Percentages are average peak occupancy of three snapshot surveys in May, August and October					
	2016	2017	2018	2019	
				Friday	Saturday
Ultra Short & Short	79%	81%	67%	76%	76%
Medium Stay	82%	88%	94%	79%	82%
Long Stay	74%	86%	82%	78%	72%
Total	77%	86%	83%	78%	75%
Average Total				77%	

Car Park Charges

- 5.5 During 2019 a review of parking charges took place and a new charging structure was agreed. This new structure will be introduced from 1st April 2020. The charges for 2019/20 had remained unchanged from the previous year.
- 5.6 The Council has continued to provide free parking after 4pm, and all day on Sundays and bank holidays.

Customer Satisfaction

- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 In 2019, 765 questionnaires were handed out by the CEOs and 257 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 89.11%
- 5.9 A questionnaire is also enclosed with all Parking Permit and Parking Appeal correspondence processed during one week each October to provide a random cross sample, requesting feedback regarding the service provided by the Parking Administration staff.
- 5.10 In 2019, 150 questionnaires were sent out by the administration team with parking correspondence and 22 replies were received. 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 96.6%.

Administration Efficiency

- 5.11 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 2019/20 the team processed 1683 appeals and achieved 77.9% compliance against this 20 day target for the year. There was a drop in performance in the final quarter of the year as a result of a vacant post within the administration team.

- 5.12 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 2019/20 the team processed 908 new permit applications (87.3% within 5 working days) and 546 permit renewals (99.3% within the target time scale).

6 Key Projects, Challenges and Areas of Improvement during 2019/2020

- 6.1 Following ongoing issues of anti-social behaviour and physical assaults on our CEOs, in 2018/19 the Council completed a review into the use of Body Worn Video Cameras. The outcome of this review was the issuing of body worn video cameras to the CEOs in April 2019, and the implementation of policies and procedures to ensure the use of the cameras and all data that is recorded complies with current legislation, including the new General Data Protection Regulations. An annual review of the cameras and associated policy / procedures will be undertaken each year and published in this report. Details of the review after the first year of use of the cameras can be found in Section 4 of this report.

Off-Street Car Parks

- 6.2 With the ever-growing increase in the use of debit / credit cards and other contactless methods of payment, investigations into alternative ways of enabling customers to pay for their car parking were carried out during 2018/19. In November 2019 new Pay & Display ticket machines capable of accepting payment by cash, debit and credit card, as well as contactless payment options were installed in the Council's car parks across the Borough. These new Pay & Display machines were installed as a direct replacement of the old machines which only accepted cash. Since their introduction a steady week-by-week rise in the number of pay & display transactions made by card has been seen – by the last week of March 2020 27.4% of pay & display transactions were made by debit / credit card or contactless payment.
- 6.3 The new Andover Leisure Centre opened in April 2019, enabling the partial re-opening of the West Street Car Park on 9th April 2019, the car park having been used as a site compound for the works. The remaining part of the car park re-opened on 5th October 2019 following the demolition of the old Leisure Centre building. Whilst the Leisure Centre building works were undertaken, a temporary swimming pool was provided on part of Shepherds Spring Lane car park occupying 59 spaces. Following the reopening of the Leisure Centre swimming pool, the temporary pool was removed and the 59 spaces reinstated.

- 6.4 The use of the RingGo cashless parking service continues to grow. For the period 2019-20 there were 253,193 transactions using the RingGo service, representing £423,761 net car park income. In context this is just over 20.9% of our total car park income.
- 6.5 Parking at the Woodley Cemetery has now been included in the Council's Off Street Parking Places Order to deter all-day use of the car park by motorists who are not visiting the cemetery.
- 6.6 The Council supports the use of low emission vehicles and recognises that the availability of public charge points is an important factor in the viability of electric vehicles. Between November 2019 and February 2020 the Council installed eighteen 22-kWh fast electric vehicle charge points in the Council's car parks in Andover and Romsey. This is in addition to the existing rapid charger at Romsey Rapids car park. Electric vehicle charging points are now available in:

Andover

- Shepherds Spring Lane Car Park x 2
- Chantry Centre Car Park x 4
- George Yard Car Park x 2
- South Street Car Park x 2
- Borden Gates Car Par x 2

Romsey

- Alma Road Car Park x 2
- Lortemore Place Car Park x 2
- Princes Road Car Park x 2
- Romsey Rapids Car Park (twin unit)

In addition to benefiting worker and visitors to Andover or 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 at home. As a result the Council was able to secure a Government grant from the Office of Low Emission Vehicles to partly fund the charge points.

- 6.7 Following the Prime Minister's announcement of the Covid-19 lockdown on the evening of 23rd March 2020, the Council temporarily suspended all parking charges in its car parks from 25th March 2020. This was introduced to assist key workers and volunteers collecting from or doing deliveries in the town centres. The suspension of parking charges also assisted local residents who were furloughed or working from home and having difficulty finding parking in their residential street. The suspension also affected season ticket holders, and the Council agreed that they should not be disadvantaged by having paid in advance. Season Ticket holders whose season tickets are valid during the period of suspended parking charges will have an extension applied to their season ticket, equivalent to the period of free parking during which their season ticket was valid.

On-Street

- 6.8 On the 31st July 2019 the agency agreement whereby Test Valley Borough Council reviewed on-street parking restrictions and implement new or amended restrictions ended. From 1st August 2019 all requests for new on-street parking restrictions or changes to existing restrictions are the responsibility of Hampshire County Council, as Highway Authority.
- 6.9 On the 31st March 2020, a second agency agreement with Hampshire County Council ended. From 1st April 2020, Test Valley Borough Council is no longer involved with the enforcement of on-street parking restrictions or the administration of on-street resident permits. These functions have now transferred back to Hampshire County Council. The Borough Council is now only responsible for the management and enforcement of its off-street car parks.

7 Enforcement & Other Parking Statistics

- 7.1 In the financial year 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, 7634 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) were issued. During this period 1683 appeals were processed, of which 770 were upheld on technical or mitigatory grounds. Further parking statistics can be found in the table below:

Test Valley Borough Council Summary of Parking 2019/20

	2019/20
Parking Statistics	
Volume of on street car parking spaces (marked bays)	1393
Volume of off street car parking spaces	3173
Total car parking spaces	4,566
Volume of higher level PCNs issued	2,734
Volume of lower level PCNs issued	4900
Total PCNs issued	7634

of which: Attached to windscreen	7607
Served to keeper by post	27
PCN's Paid	
Volume of 2019-20 PCNs paid	5844
Volume of 2019-20 PCNs paid at the discounted rate	4779
Volume of 2019-20 PCNs paid before Charge Certificate (within 56 days)	5501
Volume of 2019-20 PCNs paid after a Charge Certificate served	343
Recovery of unpaid PCNs	
Volume of 2019-20 PCNs where Charge Certificates registered at Traffic Enforcement Centre (TEC)	87
Volume of Warrants of Execution issued to an Enforcement Agent during 2019-20	370
Other PCN statistics:	
Volume of 2019-20 PCNs written off	270
Volume of 2019-20 PCNs resulting in an informal challenge	1744
Volume of 2019-20 PCN informal challenges which resulted in cancellation of the PCN	890
Volume of 2019-20 PCNs resulting in a formal representation	197
Volume of 2019-20 formal representations which resulted in cancellation of the PCN	43
Volume of 2019-20 formal representations which resulted in a Notice of Rejection	79
Volume of vehicles removed	0
Volume of vehicles immobilised	0
Volume of appeals at the Traffic Penalty Tribunal processed during 2019-20	3
Of which were allowed:	1
Of which were dismissed	1
Of which were not contested by the Council	1

8 Financial - Parking Account

Test Valley Borough Council Summary of Parking 2019/20

	2019/20 £	2018/19 £
On-Street Parking Income		
On-Street parking income		0
On-Street residents permit fees	37,762	39,760
On-street Penalty Charge Notice income	98,279	100,076
Blue Badge application fees	0	0
On-Street parking waivers fees	2,636	3,100
Total on street parking income	138,677	142,936
On Street parking direct costs	194,129 <small>**In 19/20 there have been changes to how the Council calculates internal recharges.</small>	145,942
On Street parking surplus / (deficit)	(55,452)	(£3,006)
Off Street Parking Income		
Off street parking income	2,177,020	2,174,671
Off street PCN income	135,774	151,119
Other off street parking income	3,850	3,850
Total off street parking income	2,317,553	2,329,640
Off street parking direct costs	1,478,271 <small>**In 19/20 there have been changes to how the Council calculates internal recharges.</small>	1,372,176
Off Street parking surplus / (deficit)	839,282	957,464

**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 2020/21

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 As a result, the Council are bringing forward proposals for the regeneration and re-development of Andover and Romsey town centres. This will include producing a masterplan for each town centre which will help identify and support the future demand for business, leisure, retail and residential opportunities. A crucial element of this is to ensure that sufficient public car parking is provided to meet the needs of the residents of the two growing towns, as well as attracting visitors.
- 9.3 The Council's suspension of parking charges which commenced on March 25th 2020 in response to the Governments Covid -19 lockdown restrictions continues until Monday 22nd June 2020; one week after non-essential shops were permitted to open. For the first month (22nd June 2020 – 21st July 2020 inclusive) the Council is providing free parking for motorists wishing to park for up to 2 hours. Normal parking charges apply for parking stays in excess of 2 hours.

On-Street

- 9.4 Following the ending of the agency agreements between Test Valley Borough Council and Hampshire County Council for the reviewing of on-street parking restrictions and their enforcement, from 1st April 2020 Test Valley Borough Council is no longer involved in the management and control of on-street parking. This function is now the full responsibility of Hampshire County Council who are the Highway Authority for all highway roads other than motorways and trunk roads.

For more information, please contact:

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