

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S

REPORT TO

Cabinet
08 September 2021

Report Title: Car Parking Strategy 2019-2029 - Update

Submitted by: Executive Director - Commercial Development & Economic Growth

Portfolios: Finance, Town Centres and Growth

Ward(s) affected: All Wards within the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme

Purpose of the Report

To provide an update to Members on the Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Car Parking Strategy 2019 – 2029, which sets out the Council's plans and ambitions for our car parks for the next 10 years.

Recommendation

That Cabinet:

1. notes the update to the Council's Car Parking Strategy 2019-2019.
2. approves the recommendation for Christmas Car Parking charges including the Town Centre Covid Recovery free car parking on the Midway as noted within the report and delegate authority to the Executive Director – Commercial Development & Economic Growth, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centre's and Growth to implement these charges.

Reasons

The current car parking strategy was adopted in 2019 for a duration of ten years. It is considered an appropriate time to review and refresh the car parking strategy, to evaluate the current issues and to formulate strategic priorities.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The Council has a wide range of car parks in Newcastle town centre which are recognised to play an important role in the operation of the town centre for visitors and businesses. This strategy sets out how the Council will utilise these resources to balance the demands of the various users of car parks, support town centre businesses, and ensure operational costs are met.
- 1.2 Importantly the Council wants to work with partners including the Business Improvement District to ensure that our car parks meet the needs of local businesses. Equally the Council is committed to investing in our car parks to ensure that they meet the developing expectations of customers and maximise the use of developing technology.

1.3 Management of our car parks also relates to the use of cars in our town centre and through the Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions it is important that the car parks support good traffic / parking practices and the use of electric vehicles.

2. **Objectives**

2.1 The Car Parking Strategy 2019-29 has established three objectives, which are:

- To provide car parking which meets the current and future needs of the town centre for visitors, businesses and residents that will live in the town centre;
- Optimise the cost-efficiency of the car park assets;
- Minimise congestion and improve air quality.

2.2 The strategy covers a 10 year period, with actions analysed into Short (1year) medium (2-5 years) & long term (5-10years). Under these objectives, a number of priorities have been set:-

- Priority 1 - to provide good quality car parks
- Priority 2 – to improve the customer experience of parking in Newcastle
- Priority 3 – to support the economic development of Newcastle Town Centre

3. **Update**

3.1 The following will provide an update on these priorities and the activities that have taken place to achieve the targets set.

3.2 **Priority 1 - to provide good quality car parks**

- The Council's main multi-storey car park is the Midway, this provides considerable parking for many town centre users, however, this car park is now at a stage whereby it needs to be renewed.
- The decision has been made to replace the Midway with a new build multi-storey car park on the site of the Ryecroft.
- This will provide approximately 450 spaces with many EV charging points, good lighting and a safe modern environment to service the Town Centre.

3.3 **Priority 2 – to improve the customer experience of parking in Newcastle**

- Twelve new ticket machines were installed in the autumn of last year, with the facility to pay by card – either chip or contactless, as well as by cash. These new machines have proven very popular with an initial 30% take up of payment by card. Subject to future capital funds being available it is hoped to replace further older ticket machines that do not offer card methods of payment.
- The contract to pay for parking by phone was renewed last autumn too, however with a new provider. This service is now with one of the leading providers in the country, PaybyPhone. This also resulted in a reduction of the convenience charge to the customers from 20p to 7p.
- CCTV monitoring and surveillance requirements have been improved in the Midway with new cameras and monitoring provided by our CCTV contractor.
- Supporting the County Council's implementation of the new street signing as part of the Wayfinding Strategy. This has involved replacing older signage, updating directional information and showing capacity numbers for borough car parks.

3.4 **Priority 3 – to support the economic development of Newcastle Town Centre**

- A shoppers discount of £1 after 1pm was a proposed trial for 8 months, however due to the covid19 pandemic this has continued to the present day. From November 2018 to the penultimate week of March 2019, a total of 73,567 tickets were purchased for the Midway car park. BID parking proposals around the control of the Goose Street car park is now not being taken forward.
- Offer free parking for 5 event days per year where there is a clear business engagement plan to demonstrate economic impact – there is insufficient data due to COVID-19.
- Supported Christmas retail and town centre shoppers in the run up to Christmas with free parking from 5pm for Christmas late night shopping.
- To support business owners and workers in the town centre the council simplified the quarter permit scheme based on £2.00 per day for all day parking, which equates to £130 (excl VAT) per quarter. Permit income for 2019/20 was in line with the previous financial year. In comparison to the £183,000 generated during 2019/20, the income in 2020/21 for permits drastically reduced to £24,000. This was due to the restrictions put in place due to COVID-19.

3.5 Priority 4 – to ensure that car parks meet the future demands of car users

- The Parking Service is working with colleagues from Environmental Health to establish electric charging points for taxis as part of the Clean Air project. These proposals are reaching the final stages of design with colleagues from Stoke City & Stafford Borough Council in partnership with the chosen contractor Swarco. It is proposed to install electric chargers initially at 3 sites within the town, sited on council car parks. These chargers will be available for the public to use, as well as the taxi service providers.
- Experience will be gained from this initial trial of electric charging points to enable the council to establish a funding model to achieve the provision of electric charging points on all council car parks.

4.

Proposals

- 4.1 Free Parking for the run up to Christmas including the Town Centre Covid Recovery free car parking on the Midway Car Park from 9am to 1pm, thereafter the £1 after 1pm will continue, to generate increased footfall into the Town Centre. This will commence on the 1st October 2021 unto the 5th January 2022. This will cover the following: Castle Artisan Markets; Vegan Market; and Festive events on the market in conjunction with the BID.
- 4.2 The Council has written to the Secretary of State to request Business Rate Relief for Car Parks in the Borough to promote the back to business following the effects of the COVID pandemic and the Government's initiative to get the high streets and retailers back to normal and cover the costs of the free parking. (see appendix).

5. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal or statutory issues arising directly from the recommendations in this report, which simply ask Cabinet to note a strategy update and delegate authority to implement Christmas car parking charges. There will be statutory/legal

implications when individual actions considered take place. Full and proper regard will be had to these at the relevant time.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 It is not envisaged that these proposals will have an adverse impact of the users of the Town Centre car parks as the proposals are aimed at increasing footfall into the Town Centre for a more vibrant centre for all.

7. **Financial and Resource Implications**

7.1 Income for parking in 2021/22 is forecast to be £376,319 less than budgeted. This does not include the potential impact of proposed free parking before 1pm as detailed in 7.4.

7.2 Overall parking income, including penalty charge notices and season tickets, amounts to £153,139 for the first four months of 2021/22. This equates to a reduction of 47% compared with the same period in 2019/20, prior to COVID-19. It is also £167,253 less than budgeted for this period in 2021/22.

7.3 Between March and June 2021, the monthly income from off street parking has risen c.30% month on month. However between June and July 2021 this plateaued at a 10% increase, with monthly income for July reaching £36,922. This is a 26% decrease on the average monthly off street income received during 2019/20.

7.4 The cost of proposed free before 1pm parking from 1st October 2021 to 5th January 2022 is estimated to be in the region of £53,600, this is an in year pressure for which funding will need to be identified. The pressure is based on a 26% reduction on the 2019/20 income level of £148,000 for the same period, with 49% of ticket sales being purchased before 1pm (based on cashless ticket sale data). This would also potentially have a knock on effect of reducing both season ticket sales and penalty charge notices issued.

8. **Major Risks**

8.1 There are not considered to be major risks to this update or proposal as the aim is to increase the number of visitors into the Town Centre.

9. **UN Sustainable Development Goals and Climate Change Implications**

9.1 The car park strategy is aiming to support the following UNSG and Climate Change objectives in a number of ways.



10. **Key Decision Information**

10.1 Not Applicable.

11. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

11.1 Cabinet 16th October 2019

12. **List of Appendices**

12.1 None.

13. **Background Papers**

13.1 Car Parking Strategy 2019 – 2029.