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# Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Report for:</b>	Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Title of report:</b>	Draft Parking Solutions Policy
<b>Date:</b>	Monday 15 July 2024
<b>Report on behalf of:</b>	Councillor Bromham, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Operations
<b>Part:</b>	I
<b>If Part II, reason:</b>	N/A
<b>Appendices:</b>	Draft Parking Solutions Policy
<b>Background papers:</b>	Updates made to this committee at the meetings on 6 March and 11 June. Presentation made to this committee on 6 March
<b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b>	

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<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Purpose of the report:</b>	1. To present to the committee the draft Parking Solutions Policy for consideration and comment as part of the Governance process prior to adoption
<b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b>	1. That the committee notes this draft Parking Solutions Policy and supports its adoption

**Period for post policy/project review:**

Once adopted the Policy will run for a maximum period of 5 years or until such time the funding ends.

**1 Introduction/Background:**

- 1.1 Since 2011, a Verge Hardening Programme (now known as Parking Solutions), has been running in Dacorum borough. This was designed to increase parking spaces within the borough.
- 1.2 While various reports have been made since the programme commenced there is seemingly no formal adopted policy or agreed decision making process, which means progress and decision making could appear to have been ad-hoc.
- 1.3 From 2016 up until 2022, when the programme was suspended, 65 schemes were delivered at an average cost of £30.5k per scheme.
- 1.4 There is currently £1.21m with the Council Capital Programme for further schemes to be delivered; this is apportioned with 705k available in 2024/25; £250k in 2025/26 and £250k in 2026/27.
- 1.5 The Council is receiving an increasing number of complaints from residents, mainly via Councillors and MPs, relating to lack of parking within residential areas resulting in footways being blocked, concerns over access for emergency services and some incidences of anti-social behaviour.
- 1.6 At present the list of roads where a solution to the lack of parking areas is 81; 47 of these have been requested in 2023 and 2024 alone.
- 1.7 The majority of requests are for areas in Hemel Hempstead, providing a possible link between the lay-out of the new town and the growth in car ownership, which would not have been anticipated at the time the lay-out of the new town was adopted.
- 1.8 Officers are currently responding to Councillors, MPs, and residents with holding responses pending the adoption of a new policy, which will have a transparent approval process and will offer the most benefit to residents and value for money.
- 1.9 Officers have provided updates to the Strategic Planning and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 6 March and 11 June. A short presentation was made at the 6 March meeting outlining the principles behind the new policy, which were broadly supported by all present.
- 1.10 The budget for delivery of this policy is finite and consideration needs to be given as to what happens once the current budget allocation is used up, and whether future funds are allocated or whether it is made clear that this is one-off funding that once used will not be replenished.
- 1.11 The policy will not necessarily be able to deliver solutions to resolve all the issues that residents are seeking to be resolved due to pre-existing features e.g. trees, etc. that are protected under the policy.
- 1.12 It should also be noted that there is no right for anyone to park outside/near their property which is what a lot of those people contacting their local councillors/MP are seeking.

## **2 Key Issues and proposals:**

### **2.1 Why is a policy needed?**

2.1.1 The policy is needed to ensure where schemes are delivered, they meet a robust criteria in-line with the current constraints of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, the emerging Corporate Strategy that focusses on safeguarding the environment and fits with the Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Programme

### **2.2 Policy context:**

2.2.1 This policy aims to reflect and support wider relevant DBC and HCC policies. Appendix A1 within the proposed policy (Appendix one) summarises the existing policies, at the time of writing, that are particularly relevant to parking solutions. It is not an exhaustive list.

2.2.2 The decision-making factors for parking solutions, set out in steps within the proposed policy, aim to reflect these policy considerations and to allow for situations where there are trade-offs between potentially competing objectives.

### **2.3 Principles behind the proposed policy:**

2.3.1 Overall, the policy aims to secure best use of the available budget for parking solutions, in a way that is most cost-effective not only for solving the specific issues identified in requests but also in supporting DBC's overall aspirations and goals for the borough. This is particularly important when resources are scarce, and prioritisation is required.

To this end, the principles behind the policy are:

- Requests for parking solutions should be dealt with appropriately and consistently, following a defined process.
- The process should allow for existing requests to be considered as well as new requests that come in over time.
- Spend should be based on need and cost-effectiveness within the available budget, not first-come-first-served or 'who shouts loudest'. This involves selecting and prioritising appropriate locations as part of the process.
- It should be possible to prioritise the most promising sites easily and quickly for feasibility study, while recognising that more detailed investigation will provide firmer information on the viability of any location.
- The policy and prioritisation aim to balance the (sometimes competing) goals of meeting parking needs, maintaining, and enhancing environmental quality, and ensuring safety and transport access for all users.
- It should also reflect not only the specific needs and issues at that location but also DBC's wider aspirations and goals for the community, such as net zero goals and supporting travel behaviour change. Again, an appropriate balance is required.

- Parking solutions should be pursued if it is the right solution to the identified parking or environmental problems at a particular location. If another solution is preferable at that location (such as measures to restrict rather than accommodate parking), this should be pursued instead. For example, commuter parking demand is often better managed by other approaches such as parking controls or travel demand management measures, particularly in the policy context of seeking to nudge-down commuter travel by car.
- Additional spaces created under this policy will normally be managed as part of the overall parking supply in that location. They will not be reserved for individual users. As part of the management of the parking in an area, existing and new parking spaces may be designated (e.g. for loading or blue badge holders) if that is required. If nearby spaces are charged (e.g. as part of a pay-and-display scheme or resident-only parking zone), the new spaces will normally be charged as well.

## **2.4 What is covered and what is not covered by the proposed policy:**

### 2.4.1 Under the proposed policy, the following would be in-scope of the policy:

- Highway land within the DBC area (subject to agreement with HCC where applicable)
- Open land owned by DBC (whether in residential or non-residential areas)

### 2.4.2 Under the proposed policy, the following would not be in-scope of the policy:

- DBC's approach to pavement parking (that is, cars parked wholly or partly on footways). This is a separate issue and is also subject to potential legislative change following a government consultation in 2020. However, where the presence and impact of pavement parking is part of the context for a particular request, this will be considered. For example, the presence of pavement parking may be an indicator of parking stress.
- DBC's approach to parking for disabled people (blue badge parking), cycle parking, micromobility, off-street carparks or dedicated lorry parking. These too are separate issues. However, where they are relevant to a particular request as part of the problem or a potential part of the scheme, they will be considered and may form part of the management or designation of spaces within the overall area.
- Locations where landowners other than DBC are proposing parking solutions on their own land.
- Locations that require land owned by private landowners. These involve a more complicated process including landowner negotiation and therefore, even if pursued, would need to be progressed separately. Note that unadopted roads (i.e. roads that have not been adopted as public highway) come under this category. However, locations that require land owned by other public sector bodies (such as HCC non-highway land) may be considered.
- Locations that require existing developed or paved land, such as re-purposing existing car parks or garages.
- Parking provision for (or anticipated demand arising from) new developments; this is covered in planning policy.

- Parking provision for (or anticipated demand arising from) commuters. This is covered separately in transport and planning policies, and verge hardening is not an appropriate solution to this demand.
- Issues arising from school pick-up and drop-off. This is better addressed in a holistic manner taking account of safety and wider transport policy goals.
- Over-running of verges by larger vehicles, where carriageway geometry is the underlying issue. For example, if lorries are routinely running over verges at a tight corner, this is a highway design matter rather than a parking matter. However, if they are doing so because of obstructive parking, this would be within the scope of this policy.
- Installation of electric vehicle charge points (EVCPs). There is a separate strategy for this. However, where there is potential for installing EVCPs as part of the scheme, and this is consistent with the EVCP strategy, they may be included as part of the scheme design and implementation.

## **2.5 Decision making:**

- 2.5.1 Each scheme will be assessed for suitability for delivery under the policy and if it meets the criteria will be scored against a set criterion outlined in Step 4 of the policy. Schemes will be ranked for delivery based on the prioritisation score they receive within this process.
- 2.5.2 It is recommended that once adopted the authority for selecting schemes is delegated to the Strategic Director, Neighbourhood Operations through the Neighbourhood Operations Board and this will be done where required in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Operations.
- 2.5.3 It is recommended for schemes over £100,000 that additional feasibility and due diligence is carried out.

## **3 Options and alternatives considered:**

- 3.1 The Council had three options available to it in relation to this policy and its implementation:
- a. Continue as it prior to the scheme being suspended
  - b. Abandon the scheme and undertake no further schemes
  - c. Agree and adopt a new policy
- 3.2 The option chosen was option C.

## **4 Consultation:**

- 4.1 The draft Parking Solutions Policy was considered by the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at the meeting on 24 April 2024 and by SLT-Portfolio Holder Group on 13 June 2024, and any suggested amendments have been taken into account

## **5 Financial and value for money implications:**

- 5.1 There is an existing Capital Budget associated with the policy, which is detailed in paragraph 1.4.
- 5.2 There are no revenue budgets associated with this policy; any maintenance of new parking areas created will be absorbed by existing budgets and resources.
- 5.3 It is expected any works associated with this policy are procured and undertaken in accordance with Council Standing Orders to ensure value for money.

## **6 Legal Implications:**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.
- 6.2 Some legal implications may arise during the implementation of schemes taken forward e.g. requirement for Planning Consent, etc. but these will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

## **7 Risk implications:**

- 7.1 It is unlikely the Council is going to be able to deliver all the schemes where requests have been made, which could have a reputational risk for the Council.
- 7.2 It is anticipated that all schemes regardless of the stage they were at previously will be reassessed against the new criteria within this policy, which may mean some schemes that were at an advanced stage are no longer a priority for delivery.

## **8 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:**

- 8.1 As part of the next stage of work and prior to adoption, equalities and community impact assessments will be carried out along with an assessment of human rights.

## **9 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)**

- 9.1 This policy has been produced to support the Council's Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy along with other key strategies which are documented in 'Appendix A: Policy context' of the policy document.

## **10 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)**

- 10.1 Under the draft policy, schemes will only be implemented on land owned by Dacorum Borough Council or on land owned by Hertfordshire County Council where they consent to this.

## **11 Conclusions and next steps:**

- 11.1 Following the meeting of this committee, any comments made will be considered and amendments made as appropriate before re-presenting the report to SLT-Portfolio Holder Group prior to seeking the relevant sign-off and commencing implementation.
- 11.2 Anticipating that physical delivery of any projects in the current financial year will be minimal, it will be necessary to reprofile the projected spend of the current allocated within the Capital Programme – a reprofiled spend will need to be agreed with colleagues in Finance.

- 11.3 To deliver successful schemes, which this proposed policy underpins, will require staff resource. Within the current establishment is a project manager for implementing this policy (it is within the associated capital budget), officers need to ensure this position is filled so that once adopted work to implement the policy can commence without delay.
- 11.4 A marketing and communications plan will be developed to cover the policy including how engagement will be carried out especially when schemes are consulted on – this will allow further transparency on all aspects of the policy and its implementation. This could include how new schemes are nominated, possibly via an online form. The Council website will be updated accordingly.