

Rother District Council

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	10 February 2020
Report of the	-	Executive Director
Subject	-	Camber Western Car Park Management

Recommendation to COUNCIL: That the proposal to operate Camber Western Car Park, using in-house Rother District Council officers through the use of pay and display machines as described within Proposal 1 within the report, be adopted.

Head of Service: Joe Powell

Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Mrs Earl-Williams

Background & Introduction

1. Camber Western car park is located on the outskirts of Camber village. During the summer months the car park provides up to 1500 parking spaces and was historically operated by staff in kiosks taking money from visitors upon entry. Following a traffic management consultant's report (Cabinet Minute CB17/60 refers) it was concluded that the kiosk system contributed to the congestion on the Camber Road on peak visitor days.
2. In order to reduce congestion on peak visitor days the traffic management report of October 2017 suggested using an automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) system, to improve speed of access into and out of the car park. As a result of the report recommendations, SmartParking, was commissioned to manage the car park on a trial basis. This trial has now ended and the decision has been taken that the system is not a suitable option in the longer-term. The principle reason being that the ANPR system did not prove to reduce congestion; it only led to the car park becoming full more quickly.
3. There is therefore no operating process in place for the management and enforcement of Camber Western Car Park for the summer season 2020/21. The scale of the operation at Camber Western Car Park is significant, it is estimated that there were over 100,000 visitors to the car park in 2018/19.
4. The objectives for the management of Camber Western Car Park are to:
 - Ensure a steady flow of traffic in and out of the car park to minimise congestion locally
 - Advise and assist the public and communicate relevant information
 - Ensure cars are stacked efficiently to maximise capacity
 - Ensure adherence to the Parking Places Order
 - Ensure the safety of visitors using the car park and accessing the beach
5. The two options proposed in this report are considered to be the only options that are operationally viable to deliver at this time. A number of different

options were initially considered for the management of Camber Western Car Park, in addition to the two proposals within this report.

6. The first of these proposals was to revert back to the kiosk system used at Camber Western Car Park historically and which is still used at the smaller Camber Central Car Park. Under the kiosk system visitors stop at the kiosk and pay for a ticket on arrival, adding to queueing times for visitors. The kiosks system would require the Council to pay for additional staff to operate the kiosk, fulfilling the same function as a payment machine, adding to costs. The option was considered too financially and operationally inefficient to consider further.
7. The second option considered at an early stage was to outsource the enforcement and management functions of the car park to a contractor. It was felt that this option may well be something to keep open for consideration in the future; however, the procurement process to achieve this option would not be deliverable by the summer season. In addition, the Council is very experienced at managing this car park and it was felt that outsourcing its management may jeopardise the Council's control of the quality of the management of the car park as well as the visitor experience.

Proposal 1: in house management using pay and display

8. A SWOT analysis has been completed for this option which is included at Appendix A.
9. In the winter season (October to April) a small hardstanding area of the car park already operates as a 'Pay & Display' car park, in line with all other car parks in the District. This allows the rest of the car park surface to recover from the previous summer season, in readiness for next summer.
10. The proposal is to extend the 'Pay & Display' operation throughout the whole car park for the summer season and then revert back to the hardstanding area for the winter season.
11. The benefits of the system are:
 - There would be no extra revenue cost to this option: the enforcement function would be carried out from within existing resources with car park attendants focussing on 'stacking' cars in the mornings and enforcement activity in the afternoons.
 - There would be no barriers on entry or exit to the car park minimising queueing times.
 - Compliance with the Parking Places Order would be achieved through enforcement.
 - The payment machines would allow for cash, credit card, mobile phone and contactless payment options.
12. The disadvantages of the system are:
 - It requires officer enforcement (although the cost can be met from within existing resources)

- There will be an increased administrative burden on the Neighbourhood Services Team to process notices etc.; however, this cost can also be met from within existing resources.

13. Capital cost implications:

- Ten solar powered payment machines would need to be installed at an approximate cost of £55,000 for the machines and the cost of their installation

Total capital cost: £55,000

14. Annual revenue cost implications:

- Existing staff would need to be present to stack cars, liaise with the public and ensure compliance and enforce the Parking Places Order at a cost of £25,000.
- From year two onwards maintenance costs will form part of the current Rother District service contract, which is currently being procured: £4,500
- Based on the existing contract service agreement the annual maintenance costs for the ten new machines would be approximately £5,500 per annum.

Total annual revenue cost: £35,000

Proposal 2: in-house management using automatic entry and exit barriers

15. A SWOT analysis has been completed for this option which is included at Appendix A.

16. The proposal is to use an automatic barrier system on both entry and exit to the car park. To enter the car park the driver approaches the barrier, the vehicle number plate is then recorded by a camera and the driver must then take a ticket before the barrier opens.

17. Before leaving the car park the driver enters the vehicle registration number at a payment machine, pays the amount due, drives to the exit barrier which opens automatically upon recognising that the fee has been paid.

18. The benefits of the system are:

- There is no need for enforcement as drivers are unable to exit the car park without paying.
- The payment machines would allow for cash, credit card, mobile telephone and contactless payment options.
- Fewer payment machines would be required as there is no need to purchase a ticket on arrival, but to pay at a machine before leaving the car park.

19. The disadvantages of the system are:

- The barrier mechanism will need maintaining and require replacement over time.

- The barrier mechanism will add to queueing times for those entering and leaving the car park.
- A back-office management system would be required 24 hours, during the summer season (April to October) to monitor the machines and assist car park users if the automatic barriers fail to operate.

20. Capital cost implications:

- Purchase and install four payment machines: £48,000
- Purchase and install four automatic barriers: £8,500
- Provision of electricity supply where needed: £7,500

Total capital cost: £64,000 + electrical cabling works as required

21. Annual revenue cost implications:

- An 'out of hours' call handling system would be required during the summer season to respond to barrier issues: £8,400
- Existing staff would need to be present to stack cars and liaise with the public: £25,000
- Annual maintenance costs for the barriers: £1,400
- Annual maintenance costs for the machines: £2,100
- Annual maintenance costs for barrier cameras: £1,600
- Annual back office costs: £3,400

Total annual revenue cost: £41,900

Conclusion

22. Both proposals 1 and 2 meet the objectives for managing Camber Western Car Park effectively, as described at paragraph 4 of this report. Proposal 1 is the preferred option and is recommended for adoption.
23. Proposal 1 requires less capital investment and will cost less to operate annually as it can be delivered from within existing staffing budgets. There is also less risk of mechanical failure with a barrier free system and the flow of traffic will be smoother without a barrier to navigate. The Council is able to maximise income by having an enforcement presence on the ground while also being able to advise and assist the public as required.

Malcolm Johnston
Executive Director

Risk Assessment Statement

A SWOT analysis has completed for both proposals presented to Members for consideration.

There is a risk of verbal abuse and assault of Council staff enforcing parking regulations at the car park. The Council has many years of car park enforcement experience and all officers will be trained and provided with processes and procedures to minimise any risk to their personal safety.

There is the risk that the Council will lose revenue income if it fails to adopt an effective management operation at Camber Western Car Park.

SWOT Analysis – Camber Western Car Park Management Options

Proposal 1 Pay and Display	
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free flow of traffic into and out of car park • One back office system for all car parks • One maintenance contract for all machines • Less equipment – no need for cameras/barriers • Should payment machines no longer be needed at Camber they can be re-deployed easily elsewhere in the district • Solar-powered machines – no cabling required 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires enforcement (although cost can be met from within existing resources) • Increased RDC back office time to process Notices, chase for payments etc.
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system could also be extended into Camber Central car park, reducing staffing costs by eliminating manned kiosks 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of switching all car parks to an alternative solution in the future may be prohibitive due to number of machines needing replacement • Maintains emphasis on “enforcement” – reputationally better to eliminate need for enforcement
Proposal 2: Barrier System	
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers unable to leave car park without complying with conditions of the PPO • No / little enforcement required as cannot overstay • No need for visitors to display ticket in their vehicle • Customers can pay at exit barrier if they have forgotten to pay 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal environment could lead to barrier breakdown • No free flow into or out of car park – increased queueing times • Increased revenue costs as requires the operation of two back office systems – one for Camber, one for the rest of RDC car parks • Separate maintenance contract required • If barrier is damaged, RDC would be unable to enforce payment for parking • Machines require cabling and due to location of electricity supply this will increase set up costs •
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System could be introduced into other RDC car parks at a later date • Opportunity to work with Canterbury City Council – shared services could lead to increased value for money 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vandalism of barrier if car park unmanned and visitors cannot leave (this happens with gate at Central car park presently) • Risk of reputational damage due to increased queueing times.