

## Rother District Council

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 13 March 2023

**Title:** Recommendations of the Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group

**Report of:** Head of Service Neighbourhood Services

**Ward(s):** All

**Purpose of Report:** To summarise the work of the Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group since the last report in January 2022 and outline the Group's Final Recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### Officer

**Recommendation(s):** It be **RESOLVED**: That Cabinet be requested to consider that:

- 1) the formal response to East Sussex County Council, attached at Appendix A to the report, regarding the proposed changes to Civil Parking Enforcement across the district following their annual 'informal' consultation, be approved;
- 2) increased directional signage for the De La Warr Pavilion car park to Wainwright Road car park and Gibbet Marsh, Rye and Lower Market Battle car parks be pursued and installed in liaison with East Sussex County Council as appropriate;
- 3) officers investigate the issue of shared Houses of Multiple Occupation and whether there is anything that can be done to increase the number of parking permits permissible in these circumstances;

### AND

It be **RESOLVED**: That:

- 4) the outcome of the East Sussex County Council Parking Review and implementation date be confirmed to all Members as soon as possible; and
- 5) the Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group be disbanded as the Terms of Reference have been met.

---

### Introduction

1. This report summarises the work of the Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group (OSCPT&FG) since previously reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 24 January 2022 (Minute OSC21/45 refers).

## Background

2. Since the introduction of CPE in October 2020, the OSCPT&FG, which was established in October 2020, has reported twice to OSC (26 April 2021 and 24 January 2022) regarding the impact of CPE on the level of use of Council owned off-street car parks, and recommended changes to charges, hours of operation and permits, whilst taking into account the need to generate sufficient revenue to maintain the car parks. Various changes were recommended to Cabinet and agreed (Minute CB21/06 and CB21/91 refer).
3. The OSCPT&FG, which was initially established for six months and then extended to 12 months to take into account the changing use in car parks across both the summer and winter seasons, was also asked to provide a formal written response on behalf of the Council to be considered as part of ESCC's first annual review of CPE, which closed on 30 September 2021. Members also submitted individual responses to the review and, through the use of MyAlerts and social media, residents were encouraged to do likewise. ESCC reported that a total of nearly 1000 responses were received compared to a usual level of response expected of c300.
4. At their meeting of 24 January 2022, OSC agreed that the OSCPT&FG's original Terms of Reference had been met, but that the Terms of Reference be amended to allow OSCPT&FG to be reconvened at a later date to review usage of Manor Gardens car park and ESCC's response to the CPE annual review. This was subsequently agreed by Cabinet on 28 Feb 2022
5. Since February 2022, offices have met monthly on an informal basis with the Chair of the OSCPT&FG to review progress, and then with the OSCPT&FG on 26 September 2022.

## Review of Manor Gardens car park

6. The group reviewed Manor Gardens car park data and general update on revenue collected since the payment machine was installed in November 2021. Prior to the machine's installation, visitors were able to pay at site using RingGo or by walking to the nearby convenience store to use cash or card. The new payment machine enables users of the car park to pay on site by contactless, card or cash in addition to the RingGo App.
7. Income from customers paying to park from October 2020 to August 2022 inclusive was £41,908.
  - Income from permit sales during the same period was £8,113.
  - Income from fines to date is £860.
8. It was agreed that the payment machine has improved service and will prove a popular method of payment.
9. A moratorium remains in place for school 'drop offs' and 'pick ups' and local Doctors' surgery flu clinics.
10. It was agreed that further encouragement would be given to residents and the locally employed to apply for parking permits, including the Doctors' Surgery.

The Council has a duty to its council tax payers to ensure that assets pay for themselves and that users of services pay for them.

### **Assessment of ESCC's proposed changes to CPE first annual review**

11. Rother District Council wrote to ESCC CPE Team on 1 March 2022 in response to ESCC's on-street CPE first year public consultation. The letter set out the OSCPT&FG's observations on the first year's parking restrictions for ESCC's consideration as part of the annual review as shown in the letter attached at Appendix B.
12. The letter concluded that CPE was felt to have been well received in the town centres and feedback from the Police was positive. It was noted anecdotally that reduced levels of town centre congestion and parking issues were evident, with improved availability of short-term parking on central urban streets due to restricted waiting times. On-street tariffs were felt to be fair and reasonable.
13. Following the public consultation process above and having considered members of the public and Councillors' submissions, ESCC completed an informal public consultation (which ran from 22 July 2022 until 12 August 2022) on their proposed changes to the existing parking restrictions and the introduction of additional measures, such as double yellow lines where appropriate.
14. Members of the OSCPT&FG were encouraged to submit their responses to the proposed changes directly to the ESCC Rother Parking Review, and to the OSCPT&FG for discussion at their meeting on 26 September 2022.
15. Taking each of the points raised in the letter dated 1 March 2022 in turn, it was agreed by the OSCPT&FG that many of the items raised in the letter had been addressed and included in the proposed changes.
16. Concerns were raised by Councillors on some aspects- items 1 to 6 listed below - and which they referred individually to ESCC as part of the consultation process. (Officers have sought clarity from ESCC on items 1, 3 and 6 as shown in italics):
  1. Extending on-street parking restrictions from 6pm to 8pm might have an impact on the evening economy and catering businesses in the town centre– *ESCC state that feedback from residents suggests they are struggling to park when they return home from work. It is proposed to change the new and existing areas of zones C, W, N and the extension to zone E to 8pm. The section of zone E above Magdalen Road remains unchanged.*

It was noted that the charging period for Rother District Council charged car parks was from 8am until 7pm and this had been standardised across the three main towns (Battle, Bexhill and Rye) when the Parking Places Order was varied in September 2021.
  2. Belle Hill may experience displacement parking as not included in restrictions.

Zone E becoming Zone C – concerns raised regarding overspill from existing Zone C residents. *It is felt by ESCC that the changes to Zone C boundary, including extending the hours from 6pm to 8pm and changing some bays to permit holders only, will increase available spaces for residents.*

4. Request for more double yellow lines in various locations including Old Town.
5. Request to increase restrictions in Beeching Road.
6. Permits restricted to only two cars in each House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) resulting in some residents unable to obtain a permit. *ESCC use the Council Tax Register for permit eligibility, with a maximum of two permits per property. In an HMO, for each 'room' to be eligible for a permit each person would need to be registered on the council tax register.*
17. A letter has been drafted, as attached at Appendix A, in response to the ESCC changes and includes reference to the above areas of concern for their further consideration.
18. ESCC has confirmed that they received an overwhelming response of some 1300 submissions to the informal consultation which are being reviewed and these will then form the proposals for the formal consultation, and any unresolved objections will go to planning committee. ESCC confirm that the formal consultation process went live on 24 February 2023 for 21 days; objections, if any, will be addressed; planning committee submission is planned for June 2023, followed by implementation of the changes as soon as possible thereafter, allowing for legal processes, clear roads, weather conditions etc. It should be noted that the timescales are dependant largely on the nature and number of objections received to the proposed changes.

### **Off-Street Car Parks Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference**

19. Members considered their Terms of Reference and agreed that these had been fulfilled, with one further report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in early 2023. No further meetings were considered necessary and it is recommended that the OFCPT&FG be disbanded.
20. All other issues relating to the day-to-day operational management of car parks would be dealt with as “business as usual”, liaising with and responding to concerns of local Ward Members. The annual ‘fees and charges report’ that goes to cabinet in December each year provides a mechanism for the review of car park charges.

### **Conclusion**

21. Manor Garden car park payment machine has improved accessibility for contactless, card and cash payments in the car park.
22. The OSCPT&FG concluded that the majority of the changes proposed by ESCC to CPE have been well received by most residents and Councillors. Individuals have raised their concerns on certain aspects in 1 to 6 above

through the consultation process and await further confirmation from ESCC as to the final outcome.

## Legal Implications

23. There is no impact on Rother District Council (Off -Street) Parking Places Order 2020 (PPO) but the proposed name change of Manor Barn Gardens car park to Manor Gardens car park will need to form part of a future variation to the PPO.

## Environment

24. Local congestion is reduced, and the environment improved by a reduction in noise and air pollution in urban areas.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	No	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

Chief Executive:	Malcolm Johnston
Report Contact Officer:	Deborah Kenneally
e-mail address:	<a href="mailto:deborah.kenneally@rother.gov.uk">deborah.kenneally@rother.gov.uk</a>
Appendices:	Appendix A – Letter to ESCC Appendix B – Letter to ESCC dated 1 March 2022 Appendix C – Terms of Reference
Relevant previous Minutes:	OSC21/45 CB21/06 CB21/91
Background Papers:	N/A
Reference Documents:	N/A