

Bath & North East Somerset Council	
REPORT OF:	The Planning, Transportation, Environment and Sustainability (PTES) Overview & Scrutiny Panel
TITLE:	Parking Strategy Review
<p>List of Attachments to this report:</p> <p>Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Position Statement</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Detailed written responses from Contributors</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Notes of Contributor Session</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Summary all Contributors' Responses</p> <p>Note: Copies of presentations and written submissions referred to in Appendices 4 and 5 are available from Democratic Services and the Overview and Scrutiny Team</p>	

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report details the research and findings of the PTES O&S Panel into the provision of parking in Bath and North East Somerset in order to inform future strategy development.
- 1.2 Terms of reference for the review were agreed at the meeting of the Panel on 20th April 2004. Full details of these can be found at Appendix 1. In summary, the purpose of this review has been to
- review the overall range of Council controlled parking provision in Bath and North East Somerset
 - assess the adequacy of Parking provision in terms of volume, location and mix to determine whether it meets the needs of stakeholders, including those with a disability, and in terms of its effects on the local economy, tourism and residents
 - put forward appropriate conclusions that are relevant to short and medium term (1 to 3 years) objectives throughout the district
 - facilitate Executive Member decision making within the context of current and future Local Transport Plans and other related, longer term (5 years plus), national and/or sub regional Transportation Policies
 - identify other parking management issues of interest to the community that may benefit from further review and/or in depth study
- 1.3 At the meeting on 20th April, the Panel discussed a range of issues to be considered and researched by the Review Steering Group. The results of this research were presented to the panel in the form of a position statement (Appendix 2) which provides
- background information about current parking capacity

- the approach taken by the Steering Group to manage the review
- details of individuals and organisations who could contribute to the review

2 Acknowledgements

- 2.1 The Panel wishes to extend its thanks to all those who gave the time to participate

3 Submission of Evidence

- 3.1 A total of 213 direct enquiries were made to a range of individuals and organisations using a questionnaire. However, this research cascaded to a far wider population.
- 3.2 The questionnaire posed two following questions which elicited a variety of responses
- 1) What are your perceptions of the quality and quantity of Parking Provision in general and/or Bath & North East Somerset?
 - 2) What improvements would you like to see in the provision of Parking in general and /or Bath & North East Somerset?
- 3.3 A total of 33 responses were received (including 2 responses from invited contributors who were unable to attend. Full details of the responses can be found at Appendix 3. The following table summarises the distribution of questionnaires issued and responses

Organisation	Issued	Responses
National/Local Government Organisations	30	3
Employers and Traders (including traders organisations)	29	2
Ward Councillors, Parish & Town Councils	114	5 WC 13 T&PC
Parking Providers	5	
Motoring Organisations	3	1
Residents and Residents Associations	36	5
Local Strategic Partnership	12	2
Lobby Groups	4	2
Total	213	33 (15.5%)

- 3.4 In addition, 22 contributors, representing 17 out of 22 organisations invited, made presentations to the Panel on 28th June. Appendix 4 contains the minutes of the contributor session
- 3.5 The Panel felt that whilst the contributions made to the review were useful, the level and span of response was disappointing. The absence of any input from the Tourism and Leisure sector was particularly noted as was the general lack of strategic comment. A summary of all the responses and the key issues arising is contained at Appendix 5
- 3.6 The general thrust of responses indicated that parking provision in the towns and villages outside of Bath was adequate in terms of quality and

level of provision apart from some specifically local issues and these are noted as follows:

- Reports that the economic viability of Keynsham has been affected (8% downturn in trade) by the abolition of parking charges at Kingswood
 - Congestion at Bath Road Shops Salford Car Park. as a result of lack of management, could be resolved through the introduction of an enforced 2-4 hour time limit
 - A new car park is needed at Chew Magna
 - Better policing and enforcement of obstructive white lines, double parking and illegal parking, and of the time restrictions in Batheaston and in Bath.
- 3.7 At a more strategic level, however, it was noted that a number of towns and villages experience a high level of on and off street parking by commuters who either come from areas where there is insufficient public transport or a lack of employer developed travel plans for employees. This issue appears to be particularly acute to the west and east of Bath, notably at Keynsham and Batheaston, where commuters continue their journey's into Bath and Bristol by public transport
- 3.8 Most issues, unsurprisingly related to City Centre Parking, with a general perception that parking mix in the City is inappropriate at certain times. The issues highlighted have been themed as follows

3.9 Sustainability and Modal Choice

- 3.9.1 Presentations from the Government Office of the South West (GOSW) and from Council Officers indicated that parking should be and is being used as a tool to influence modal choice (i.e. the choice of which form of transport to use). Central and Local Government Policy is to reduce the use of the private car in favour of public transport.
- 3.9.2 Parking policies within this Authority, particularly around the implementation of Resident's Parking schemes, increasing parking charges and the implementation of Planning Policy Guidance designed to minimise parking availability on brownfield sites and thus stimulate demand for public transport have resulted in a limited change in habit with increasing usage of park and ride by commuters.
- 3.9.3 However, the extent of this change is not as great as anticipated in the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP). A number of suggestions were made by contributors as to why this might be the case
- That Parking is not fully accounted for in Employers Travel Plans and, hence the cost of parking to employers and employees is not fully recognised when comparing journey costs with, say, public transport (GOSW)
 - That there is a lack of integration between parking provision and public transport, i.e. there is insufficient demand for public transport routes to give drivers a choice of mode of travel (B&NES/GOSW/Stowey Sutton PC/Ubley PC)

- That reducing the availability of spaces does not necessarily result in modal shift (The AA)

3.10 Impact on the Economy

- 3.10.1 Contributors recognised the role that parking plays in maintaining the local economy. The Head of Property and Legal Services noted that, as landlord to many shops in Bath City Centre, the Council has an obligation to ensure the availability of parking at a reasonable cost to maintain and stimulate the economy and thus derive rental income.
- 3.10.2 Many traders expressed concern about the impacts of parking charges on the competitiveness of local shopping centres. Keynsham was cited as a case in point. Its “competitors”, notably Cribbs Causeway (free parking) and Kingswood (where parking charges have been abolished) are claimed to be placing increasing pressure on the profitability of businesses in the town. The introduction of parking charges is claimed to be linked to an 8% reduction in trade.
- 3.10.3 Norton/Radstock Chamber of Commerce expressed deep concern that parking charges may be introduced in the Norton Radstock area given that free parking is perceived as being a key attraction to the towns outside of Bath. The Chamber offered to provide the panel with the results of a parking study for the local area by the end of September 2004 along with the results of a “Langport” pilot study which highlighted that free parking (on every sign into the town) had a positive impact on the local economy.
- 3.10.4 Interestingly, the Norton/Radstock Chamber pointed out that high street trading conditions were already very difficult and around 20 local traders were reported to be considering their future in the town. This indicates that parking charges alone may not be the sole cause of any reduction in trade as intimated at Keynsham
- 3.10.5 The Panel noted, from a presentation from the Federation of Small Businesses, that trades-people in the City appear to be unaware of parking concessions that may be obtained from the Council to permit parking in controlled areas of the City Centre while they are conducting their business.
- 3.10.6 It was the opinion of traders that, whilst parking control is required, some of the parking policies adopted by the Council served to deter rather than welcome visitors. The Federation of Small Businesses, for example, expressed concern over the apparent overzealousness and inflexibility of parking attendants.
- 3.10.7 A number of contributors indicated that there is a need to identify the needs of various users of parking and to work out solutions and improvements that best fit their needs. It was also stressed that Planners need to bear in mind the impacts of car park provision on the local economy and not view car parks merely as development sites

3.11 Access and Accessibility

- 3.11.1 Accessibility to the right sort of parking for the right sort of user was perceived by contributors as being of paramount importance. It was

generally agreed that there is insufficient on and off street parking capacity, particularly short stay and at weekends and that there is a need for car and coach parking to the east of the City where there is little provision at present.

3.11.2 It was also noted that car park access and egress is difficult due to location and road layout and that there is a lack of clear signage directing visitors to the most appropriate parking facility to meet their needs. Investment in real time signage should be considered which should include, as a priority, real time bus signage to encourage the use of public transport

3.11.2.1 The Panel acknowledged that the Council have recognised the need to improve signage in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and that investigation is also underway with regard to addressing a lack of car and coach parking/park & ride to the East of the City Centre. However, the Panel were informed that wider accessibility issues exist.

3.11.2.2 The Panel expressed concern over comments by the West of England Coalition for Disabled people (WECODP) about an apparent decline in the number of disabled parking bays available and that these are often abused by delivery vehicles and others. WECODP also highlighted that British Standards BS8300 "Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people code of practice" indicates that the number of designated disabled parking bays should be 6% of total capacity. This volume of spaces is advocated by both the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Centre for Accessible Environment as being good practice

3.11.3 The Panel also heard that measures taken to prevent abuse of the blue badge scheme had resulted in some carers of disabled people becoming ineligible. A further concern about disabled parking bays is that insufficient thought is given to siting these close to facilities used by disabled people, e.g. doctors' surgeries.

3.11.4 Councillors and Action for Pensioners pointed out that the Royal Victoria Park is regarded as a free parking zone for commuters. As a result, those who would like to use the park during week days, e.g. the elderly and parents with young children are prevented from doing so

3.11.5 Both Sustrans and the British Motorcyclists Federation remarked that Bath City Centre has well placed and accessible facilities for two-wheeled parking and that this goes a long way toward encouraging the use of (motor)cycles as a viable alternative form of transport to the car. It was also noted, however, that these facilities were often oversubscribed and could also benefit from the provision of changing rooms and storage facilities. The Panel suggested that disused public conveniences could be refurbished for such a purpose.

3.11.6 The Administrator of Bath Abbey highlighted the impact of parking restrictions on the churches and voluntary organisations without their

own parking facilities, with particular emphasis being placed on the needs of charitable volunteers and Sunday worshippers (with the advent of Sunday Trading)

3.11.7 Action for Pensioners stressed the need for older people, who rely on cars, to have access to parking close to their final destination, particularly doctors and dentists, and that time limits on such provision takes account of their more limited personal mobility.

3.12 Charges and Enforcement

3.12.1 Many contributors expressed concern that parking charges in Bath were too high and that current arrangements for charging for parking should be reviewed. A number of suggestions were made in this regard

- Tariffs and restrictions need to be reviewed to ensure that these are achieving expected results (The AA)
- The introduction of more free parking, particularly very short stay parking to enable visits to banks or single item purchases.
- Variable charging schemes should be introduced that recognise the differing needs of car park users (Association of British Drivers)
- That charges should be made up to 7pm and on Sundays (Circus Area Residents Association)
- “Pay on foot” or pay on exit should be introduced to increase “dwell times” and flexibility as well as deter vehicle crime,
- That increased payment flexibility would encourage dwell times and that payment by debit/credit card and the provision of pre-bookable parking spaces should be considered

3.12.2 Concern was also expressed about the Decriminalised Parking enforcement regime in that it appears to be of variable quality and lacks consistency (Federation of Small Businesses/Batheaston Parish Council)

3.13 Safety and Security

3.13.1 Correspondents felt that off street car parks need to be made more secure and to feel less remote. It was suggested that this may be achieved through the installation of additional CCTV and regular patrols by parking attendants (particularly at weekends where car crime is at its highest), and the inclusion of other activities close to the car parks i.e. so that they are connected to a facility thus attracting greater pedestrian throughput.

3.13.2 A further suggestion by Avon and Somerset Police would be to introduce the free use of secure car parks out of hours. This would improve vehicle security by moving them off the streets, where there is a higher incidence of vehicle crime and would, again, increase pedestrian throughput.

3.13.3 Living Streets and Action for Pensioners expressed concern about illegal activities such as pavement parking which restricts pedestrian access.

3.14 On Street and Residential Parking

3.14.1 Some contributors were particularly critical of the Residents Parking Scheme. They felt that it had merely moved parking problems to other parts of the city. Others noted that the rules of the scheme appeared to vary from area to area resulting in differing treatment of residential streets. The Royal Crescent Residents Association, for example, reported an anomaly whereby they felt that it would be more appropriate for the Crescent to be in Zone 7 rather than the Central Zone

3.14.2 A range of concerns were voiced by Contributors about the use and availability of on-street parking. Traders in Bath feel that the resident's parking scheme has had a detrimental affect on trade in that customers are restricted to parking in only certain, metered areas on-street and that residents are also parking in these spaces.

3.14.3 A number of contributors commented that more could be done to implement short-stay on-street day time parking in residents parking zones. It was particularly felt that restrictions should be relaxed around doctors and dental surgeries. On the other hand some residents believe that there is already too much meter controlled (i.e. non resident) parking in resident's parking zones.

3.14.4 The Federation of Bath Residents Associations suggested that, to provide additional residents parking, capacity people within residents parking zones who do not use garages should be charged for non use.

- 3.14.5 Another issue raised was the prevalence of commuter parking – both off street (Chew Magna) or on-street (Keynsham/Bath) where drivers try to avoid parking charges. The effect of this, though, is to cause congestion and to reduce parking capacity for shoppers and other service users
- 3.14.6 The Panel were disappointed about the lack of evidence provided about residential parking outside of the city centre in the suburban areas and the surrounding towns and villages. Several Panel Members had noted that, with increased car ownership, there was an increasing lack of availability of residential parking in these areas resulting in an increasing volume of on-street parking and subsequent congestion especially around housing estates. The comments from GOSW were particularly noteworthy in this context in that Local Planning Guidance aims to reduce car parking capacity, still further, particularly in brownfield developments so as to generate sufficient demand for public transport, thus driving modal shift. The Panel expressed grave concern about the viability of such a policy in rural areas.
- 3.14.7 The Widombe Residents Association also raised concerns about on street parking in the City. They were particularly concerned about the effects of a perceived lack of planning foresight whereby insufficient parking capacity at both the University and the RUH has resulted in overspill parking on to residential streets which limits capacity for residents. They felt that there is a need for improved signage so that motorists could be directed to more appropriate parking to suit their needs

3.15 Park & Ride

- 3.15.1 Park and Ride has seen a tremendous increase in patronage and all sites have reached or are nearing their ceiling capacity. In addition to urging the Council to expand existing sites and to seek a new site to the east of the City, contributors made the following suggestions to improve park and ride
- That park & ride needs to be seen to be a safe environment for vehicles and drivers (Association of British Drivers/Avon & Somerset Police)
 - That dedicated bus lanes should be reintroduced between Odd Down and the City Centre
 - That opening hours and fares (particularly for family groups) should be reviewed to make Park and Ride a more attractive alternative to on-street parking. At the same time, long stay city centre parking charges could be increased.
 - That Park and Ride sites remain open at night to facilitate “Park & Taxi”
 - To introduce smaller buses that will better navigate the streets of Bath
 - That Commuters be given preferential treatment through fare reductions

- That Park & Ride be integrated into regular bus service routes so as to increase the frequency of bus services and the choice of destination
- That more buses run from the Park & Ride sites direct to the Royal United Hospital
- That support facilities such as shelters, WC provision and customer information need to be given greater attention

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 This review has sought to obtain the views of people and organisations that make use of or have a view on parking provision in the Bath and North East Somerset area in order to ascertain the effectiveness of current parking management policies and to inform any future parking strategy.
- 4.2 The level of response to the enquiries made by Councillors and Officers undertaking this review has been rather disappointing. However, evidence based conclusions have still been to be drawn resulting in the Panel formulating a series of recommendations for urgent consideration.
- 4.3 On the basis of the information received the Panel has concluded that the general position of the Council in terms of its understanding and management of strategic parking issues within the context of the geography, transport infrastructure of the area is largely appropriate. The review has highlighted that, within the confines of legislative, planning and budgetary constraints, the Council has developed an adequate approach to parking management.
- 4.4 This conclusion is reflected in that many of the issues and concerns voiced by the contributors to this review were either specific and local or were issues that the Council is already aware of and is taking action to address within the timescale of the Local Transport Plan, e.g. expansion of Park & Ride and city centre car parks, improvements to car park security and pay on foot/exit

5 Recommendations

5.1 Whilst the Panel commends the Council for steps it has taken to manage parking, there were a range of recurring themes and issues raised by the Contributors and the Panel asks that the Executive Member to respond to the following recommendations that are designed to support existing or evolving traffic management policies and strategies

5.2 Strategic Issues

5.2.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that

5.2.1.1 Action is taken when developing a parking strategy to consider the impacts on the ex Avon sub region and bordering local authorities as a whole in harmony with Government Guidance to avoid wasteful competition between locations and encourage a positive modal shift in travel patterns

5.2.1.2 Employers be strongly encouraged to develop and implement travel plans for their employees that identify the true cost of parking provision (i.e. not just parking charges but the commercial value of the parking space) in the overall cost of travel to work

5.2.1.3 Consideration is given to the full impact on the local economy of varying parking charges in terms of both the effects of different charging regimes in the City and any variation in these and the wider effects of variations in charging regimes across the district.

5.2.1.4 Greater emphasis be placed on supplying suitable public transport of high quality to encourage modal shift rather than relying on the evolution of service routes as a result of increased demand. This may be achieved through a review of subsidies and subsidised services

5.2.1.5 Consideration be given to working with a private sector parking provider whose expertise may be employed to better meet the parking needs of service users who may be encouraged to stay longer if a different parking regime was introduced

5.2.1.6 An appropriate contribution from income generated from parking be hypothecated to undertake a full parking survey of Bath & North East Somerset so as to better inform a new parking strategy for the district, the sub region and other bordering areas.

5.3 Park & Ride Enhancements

5.3.1 The Panel is fully aware that Park and Ride Sites are nearing or have reached their ceiling capacity and that Officers are actively seeking a new Park and Ride site to the East of the City. However, it is the Panel's strongly held view that a radical approach needs to be taken in respect of park and Ride

5.3.2 To this end it is **RECOMMENDED** that the following enhancements to the whole Park & Ride service be explored

5.3.2.1 That, in addition to seeking a new site to the East of the City, consideration is given to identifying new park and ride sites in the

area to serve the growing parking needs of the City. The panel further recommends that the Council works in Partnership with neighbouring Authorities, particularly Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Wiltshire County Council in order to locate suitable land (possibly outside of this district) which could be used jointly by both Authorities.

5.3.2.2 That the current fare structure be overhauled with serious consideration being given to providing the service without charge so as to make it more attractive to commuters and visitors thus boosting the local economy and reducing traffic congestion in the City Centre.

5.3.2.3 That urgent consideration be given to expanding the physical capacity of all existing Park & Ride sites

5.3.2.4 That the opening hours of park and ride sites be extended up to 24 hours to better accommodate the needs of a wider range of user, e.g. early morning or later afternoon/evening commuters, schools, major employers and users and employees of higher/further education institutions and hospitals, and those people who may be using rail services. An extension of opening times may also enable the development of new services, such as

- Park & Taxi which may be of benefit to shift workers and disabled people who cannot access buses or others who wish to travel to a specific site either away from the City Centre or where parking may be difficult
- Park and fly which, in partnership with coach, bus and rail operators, could provide a link service for business people and holidaymakers to Bristol International Airport

5.3.2.5 The inclusion of Park and Ride sites as regular “service route” bus stops to provide a greater frequency bus services to a wider variety of destinations

5.4 Access to On Street Parking

5.4.1 Many contributors stressed the importance of the provision of controlled, short stay on street parking. Three issues were highlighted.

1) That uncontrolled on street parking is often monopolised by commuters (e.g. Victoria Park and Keynsham),

2) the occupation of metered pay and display spaces by residents in Residents Parking Zones,

3) a lack of sufficient dedicated spaces near to relevant final destinations for the disabled and other user groups.

5.4.2 It is **RECOMMENDED** that consideration be given to the following:

5.4.2.1 That on street parking in key “honey-pot” locations including Royal Victoria Park is made time limited so as to become short stay only

and thus encourage commuters to use park and ride or public transport.

5.4.2.2 That this Panel undertake an in-depth investigation into parking provision for those with specialist needs. Issues to consider would include

- The provision of more disabled parking bays. It is particularly important, particularly in the context of the Disability Discrimination Act, that these are sited in locations that are close to common final destinations for disabled people such as doctors or dental surgeries. Consultation with disabled people about the siting of such spaces should be a priority.
- The provision and effective advertising of dedicated or concessionary parking spaces for specific groups of users of parking services, e.g. Trades-people, the elderly, volunteer workers, carers etc

- 5.4.2.3 That schemes to provide access to relevant facilities for specific users, e.g. families at parks (perhaps through a family parking pass) be examined.
- 5.4.2.4 That attention is given to providing safe and secure changing and storage facilities for users of two-wheeled vehicles. Consideration could be given to the conversion disused public conveniences or other disused buildings for this purpose which could be funded, in part at least, through private sector sponsorship.
- 5.4.2.5 That issues raised by contributors and individual panel members around coach parking in the City Centre and Parking at the Royal United Hospital be topics for future in depth investigation by this Panel

5.5 Off Street Parking

5.5.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that

- 5.5.1.1 Increased security including greater use of CCTV and “Automatic Numberplate Recognition” be introduced at all car parks.
- 5.5.1.2 Pay on Foot/Pay on Exit be implemented so as to increase dwell times and car park security.
- 5.5.1.3 Consideration be given to the use of variable charges to affect the behaviours of varying parking users at different times.

5.6 Residents Parking

5.6.1 Residents Parking was created to enable residents to park on street close to their homes by displacing commuters and other on street parking users into car-parks, park and ride or an alternative mode of transport. This review has revealed, however, that there is a need to constantly monitor the use of Residents Parking so as to maintain the economic viability of key shopping destinations in the City.

5.6.2 It is **RECOMMENDED** that greater flexibility be introduced into the Residents Parking Scheme through

- 5.6.2.1 A review of the Residents Parking Scheme to assess whether it could better address the needs of residents and other highway users, especially those wishing to access local shopping areas.
- 5.6.2.2 Greater provision of on street short term metered parking for shoppers and other non residents
- 5.6.2.3 Taking enforcement action against residents who park in metered spaces during the day
- 5.6.3 In order to accommodate any increased competition for parking spaces in residents parking zones as a result of the recommendations made above, residents should be permitted to park in any street within their zone

5.7 Enforcement

5.7.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that:

5.7.1.1 The scope, capacity and effectiveness of the current decriminalised parking strategy particularly outside of the city centre be reviewed

5.7.1.2 Consideration be given to devolving some parking powers, e.g. setting of time limits to Town and Parish Councils so as to enable better local control

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