

Agenda item 4

For decision – Car Parking

Author: Jane Llewellyn, Planning & Development Manager

Summary

This paper provides a summary of the work being carried out by Frome Town Council in response to the Mendip Car Parking Strategy and the wider issue of car parking within the town. Approval is sought for the development of a toolbox of resources that local residents can use to address parking and highway safety issues on their streets. It also seeks ratification of our response to the District Council on proposed changes to car parking charges.

Car Parking and highway safety in residential streets

The Town Council has noticed a rise in complaints about residential parking, with requests for double yellow lines and parking restrictions. This was recently highlighted by the residents of Weymouth Road. As car parking is within the remit of Somerset County Council, County Cllr John Clarke together with a resident of Weymouth Road organised a residents' meeting which Frome Town Council facilitated. It was clear from this meeting that there was not a general understanding or agreement of what the problems are relating to Weymouth Road. It was also recognised that any parking restrictions on Weymouth Road would have a knock-on effect by displacing cars to the adjoining roads.

As a result, a second meeting took place on 16th April to look more closely at the issues and included residents from the adjoining roads. Steve Deakin, Parking Services Manager, Somerset County Council attended the meeting. It was highlighted that the issues are not just about parking but also highway safety. Steve Deakin was clear that residents parking schemes where permits are introduced is only one option and in some cases not the best option. However, the aim of the process is to establish what the best solution will be for the majority of residents. In some cases, this could be to do nothing.

Before the concerns are identified and any options formally considered by the County Council 60% of households in one street would need to agree that something needs to be done. If this happens, the impact on all neighbouring streets would also be taken into account as changes in one street will impact on others close by.

It seems likely that at least one of the streets invited to this meeting will request a formal survey to identify concerns and look into whether changes can be made. The meeting with residents has highlighted the need to provide clear information to all residents in the town on how parking and traffic management schemes can be requested. As a result, information is now available on the Frome Town Council website.

Whilst the Weymouth Road consultation was beneficial to the residents of Weymouth Road and the surrounding roads, it will not be possible for the Town Council to replicate this throughout

the town as we do not have the time or resources available. Ultimately any schemes or works that could be implemented are dependent on Somerset County Council. However, we recognise that the town expects the Town Council to highlight and where possible deal with the parking issues.

We will be holding a town event in a similar format to the 'Plastic Free Frome' event. Attendees will have the opportunity to discuss different parking and highway safety issues affecting not just residents but also businesses. The event is planned for mid-May and will be advertised a month in advance. The aim of the event is to get an overview of parking and highway safety issues throughout the town, including the outlying housing estates and the trading estates.

It will be made clear that the Town Council cannot resolve the parking and highway safety issues but will take the feedback from the event and use it to produce a list of recommendations that will be used to lobby Somerset County Council and Mendip District Council. It is recommended that we develop a toolbox of solutions that will include details of car sharing schemes and other initiatives in line with the Town Council's Sustainable Transport Strategy. It is also suggested that a web based "how to guide" is published to include information on how to approach the introduction of new schemes.

Mendip District Council Car Park Strategy

Mendip District Council have issued a new car parking strategy. The strategy was scheduled to go to Mendip's Cabinet meeting on 9th April for approval. The strategy was pulled from this meeting to allow for amendments to the strategy and a period of consultation. The revised strategy was issued to stakeholders on 10th April with a consultation deadline of 20th April. The strategy will now go to Mendip's Cabinet meeting on 21st May.

The main issues for Frome in the strategy are:

- Introduction of parking charges on a Sunday at the same rate as the rest of the week
- Increased car parking charges rounded up to the nearest 10p. For the Cattle Market, Cork Street and Merchants Barton this would mean: -

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| 1 hr | £1.10 | up 10p |
| 2 hrs | £1.50 | up 10p |
| 3 hrs | £2.00 | up 20p |
| 4 hrs | £3.60 | up 20p |
| 9 hrs | £5.90 | up 30p |
- Proposed 60% increase in season ticket prices to £708 per year for the Cattle Market and Merchant's Barton and a 67% increase to £372 per year for North Parade, South Parade, Rook Lane and Wine Street. These increases will be phased over three years.
- Lack of transparency regarding the costs of car park operations and how any surplus revenue will be invested.
- The review identifies the opportunity for the development of Market Yard and North Parade car parks but doesn't identify replacement car parking.

In response to the strategy, meetings and discussions have taken place with Chamber of Commerce, Frome Independent Market, Cheese & Grain, The Canoe Club, Westway and other interested parties. The purpose of the meetings was to ensure that our response was representative of all the issues affecting the key stakeholders.

The focus of our response is on the impact that the increased charges and the introduction of Sunday charging will have on the viability of events in the town and the visitor economy. The Frome Independent Market and Cheese & Grain will be particularly affected by these proposals. The increase in season tickets prices and the knock-on impact on residential parking are also of concern.

To help develop our response we commissioned Moss Naylor Young, parking and transport specialists to prepare a report which will be available on our website by the time the committee meets. Due to the deadline for responses, this report will have been sent to Mendip together with a covering letter ahead of the committee meeting. However, ratification is sought for the main points that were raised. These are as follows:

1. The parking strategy is actually a parking tariff strategy. The increases proposed are stated to be in line with CPI, but in practice for Merchant's Barton, Frome they are an increase of up to 64%.
2. The increases are claimed to be justified by increased operating costs but no figures are quoted for these costs nor are examples of increased costs given. The costs quoted, such as re-lining the car parks, are ongoing maintenance that should already be accounted for. Any surplus revenue should be invested in parking and transport measures. There is no strategy for such investment.
3. Comparisons that Mendip has made with other authorities are unrealistic as these authorities do not have a monopoly on local parking and the locations chosen are not realistic alternatives to Frome Town Centre.
4. The proposed imposition of Sunday charges has not been adequately justified and will damage what little trade does occur on a non-market Sunday as well as the non-commercial uses that take place e.g. worship. Should the introduction of Sunday charging result in The Frome Independent having to pay for car parking spaces, this will threaten the market's viability.
5. The Cheese & Grain estimate the potential loss of their turnover would be in the region of £70K to £80K pa if Sunday hires are cancelled and their own Sunday events have to be cancelled. One of the bigger annual events (South African Day) that brings 3,000 people into the town is already looking for a venue somewhere else as a result of the proposed Sunday charging. If the C&G stopped running big events on Sundays other businesses that will lose money include hotels, B&B's, taxi firms, food and drink suppliers & printers. Lost wages would mean less money spent in the local economy.
6. The season ticket increases are steep even if justified, and if implemented should be phased in over several years. The comparators used are unrealistic and when more realistic ones are used the increases appear excessive.

7. Development on car parks when Frome is virtually at capacity is non-sensical so long as there is no means identified of providing additional capacity. The review does not address this issue in any detail.
8. The strategy appears to be about increasing revenue from parking and from development on car parks. There is little of substance other than this. The strategy does not address the service provided to the town centre by the provision of car parking.
9. In short, what is needed is a strategy for on and off-street parking that looks at realistic pricing and investment in extra capacity and other modes of transport that will support the sustainable development of the town.
10. In response to the above summary and the attached report, we would ask that the proposals outlined in the Mendip District Council Car Park Strategy 2018 – 2022 are reconsidered and that a new consultation exercise is carried out.
11. We request dialogue with Mendip about the particular needs of the town. In its Economic Development Strategy, the District Council has suggested the establishment of town fora to explore how town economies can be developed – this would be a suitable mechanism for addressing the issues around car parking.

Recommendations

1. To support local residents that wish to address parking and highway safety issues on their streets, we develop:
 - a. a toolbox of solutions that will include details of car sharing schemes and other initiatives in line with the Town Council's Sustainable Transport Strategy;
 - b. a web based "how to guide" to include information on how to approach the introduction of new on-road parking restrictions through the County Council and residents' parking schemes.
2. To ratify the points already raised with Mendip District Council regarding their Car Park Strategy