

Report to:

**TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Relevant Officer:

Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications

Date of Meeting

18 November 2020

PARKING SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide information on the performance data of Council-owned and managed car parks, and on-street parking, both with regards to patronage and income in the full year ending 2019-20, and in the current year, April to September, with comparisons to the previous year. The report also provides an update on the launch of the new PayByPhone system introduced in May.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To consider the performance of parking services and to identify any further areas for scrutiny as appropriate.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure constructive and robust scrutiny of the report, which had been requested by the Committee.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is

- "The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool"

6.0 Background information

6.1 Introduction

There are two types of car parking: On Street, which relates to the parking bays along a street and Off Street, which relates to parking within a car park. There are approximately 900 pay and display On Street bays, mainly within the town centre and along the Promenade. There are 22 Council-owned car parks, plus two car parks which are managed by the Council although privately owned, with a combined total of more than 5,000 parking spaces.

6.2 Performance

Patronage can be affected by a number of different factors. Since early this year, the COVID-19 outbreak has had a very significant impact on car park performance.

The onset of the pandemic in the first quarter of the year culminating in the initial lockdown period in March had an immediate impact. Those key workers who were allowed to continue working were able to park for free for several months until the town centre and tourism economy began to reopen in June/July.

The patronage for 2019-20 had been running at similar levels to previous year until that first quarter when the pandemic started to take hold. In March alone the Council lost around 40,000 car park transactions compared to previous year.

While volumes of car park users grew over the summer months following the opening up of the town centre and tourism economy, the introduction of Tier 3 restrictions in October had an immediate and very substantial negative impact on visitor numbers, with a corresponding down turn in car park usage.

The car park data shown in Appendix 6(a) illustrates that impact.

6.3 PayByPhone

At the end of May, The Council launched our new PayByPhone parking app that allows customers to pay for their parking via their mobile phone either by using the downloadable app or by calling a designated number.

This allows the payment to be made without queuing, handling cash or touching payment machines. It also enables users to top up their parking session from a remote location.

Extensive signage has been installed around the car parks and along the Promenade to encourage people to download the app. The initial take-up has been extremely encouraging with more than 75,000 transactions over the first four months.

The Council is also actively exploring ways in which the technology can be utilised to offer discounted offers for specific times such as the run-up to Christmas, conferences and events.

The year-to-date performance is shown in Appendix 6(a).

6.4 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 6(a) - Parking Performance Data

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 The car parking service has made a surplus of income over expenditure every year as far back as records goes. Although the income target for 2019-20 wasn't met, the income generated continues to show strong growth over previous year up until the point of patronage being affected by COVID-19 in the final quarter of the financial year.

The current year-to-date performance has clearly been adversely affected by the pandemic, first by the national lockdown over April, May and part of June and latterly by the introduction of Tier 3 restrictions which has decimated visitor numbers over the crucial October half-term period.

Between July 4 (when the bulk of the tourism industry was allowed to reopen and the introduction of Tier 3 restrictions on October 16) car parking patronage had shown a much more stable performance with strong growth on some weeks during the summer.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 None

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.