

Report to:

**TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Relevant Officer:

Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications

Date of Decision/ Meeting

8 December 2021

CAR 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 2020-21, and in the current year, April to October, with comparisons to the previous year.
- 1.2 The report also provides an update on the growth of the new PayByPhone system introduced in May 2020. Detailed performance figures are shown in the appendix to this report.

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 20 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. Note that during this past year we have lost both Tower Street and Wimbourne Place, the former is being developed as part of the Houndshill extension, the latter has been acquired to create an extension to the Hampton By Hilton Hotel at South Beach.

6.2 Performance (see also Appendix 9(a))

Patronage can be affected by a number of different factors. Over the past 18 months, the COVID-19 pandemic with repeated lockdowns and restrictions has clearly impacted on car park usage at certain times.

As we moved into this new financial year at the start of April large parts of the tourism and hospitality sector remained in lockdown, which meant a significant downturn in visitor numbers at Easter and the early May Bank Holiday.

However, as the Government roadmap out of lockdown unfolded there was a dramatic recovery in visitor numbers from late May onwards, illustrated by high levels of footfall and parking usage during the summer and autumn season.

In the 24 weeks between May 17 (when most of the tourism and hospitality industry was allowed to reopen) and the end of October, patronage on our car parks was higher than the 2019 figure on all but four weeks.

That strong performance appears to be continuing into the winter months on the back of an extended Illuminations season and very strong Christmas offer.

6.3 PayByPhone

At the end of May 2020, we 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 attached report illustrates the dramatic growth since its launch with more than 150,000 transactions April to October this year compared to 63,000 last year.

Given the extremely high usage of our car parks at certain times over the past few months the app has been particularly useful in giving people an alternative method of payment rather than queuing at pay machines.

It has also provided a “COVID-safe” method of payment in that transactions can be made without any contact with pay machines and from the comfort of your own vehicle.

We are actively exploring ways in which we can utilize the technology to offer discounted offers for specific times as well as conferences and events. For example, this year’s Christmas offer of £1 to park for a three-hour period is only accessible via the app.

We have also introduced a “pay as you go” offer on the app for Council staff who have not yet returned to office working on a full-time basis and therefore do not require a permanent pass.

The year-to-date performance and comparison against last year is shown in the attached report.

6.4 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix 9(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. However, the overall performance for 2020-21 was clearly affected significantly by COVID restrictions and lockdowns, some of which fell in peak trading periods including Easter and October half-term.

Those restrictions continued into the start of this new financial year which meant that from a tourism perspective we again lost Easter and the early May Bank Holiday.

However, as stated earlier in this report, there has been an exceptionally strong recovery from mid-May onwards this year enabling us to recoup losses incurred over the first few weeks.

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