

Report to Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board

1 May 2025

Subject:	Parking Review
Director:	Executive Director of Place Alan Lunt
Contact Officer:	Interim Assistant Director – Highway Services Mervyn Bartlett Mervyn_Bartlett@sandwell.gov.uk Parking Manager Susan Morris Susan_Morris@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon the existing Sandwell MBC Parking Services key datasets, as set out in appendices A and B.
- 1.2 That the Board considers the proposals to introduce small charges for long stays in the existing free car parks (see Appendix C) and to improve parking data analytical tools (proposal in Appendix D) that will help support a better data-led review of future parking provision and charges.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Council has a number of statutory duties related to undertaking parking enforcement in accordance with a number of pieces of legislation, but mainly the Traffic Management Act 2004.
- 2.2 The principal statutory duty imposed on Sandwell, is to keep traffic flowing, and in this regard parking enforcement activities are widely dispersed across the borough but with a focus on key locations, such as outside schools and in the six town centres – Oldbury, West Bromwich, Tipton, Wednesbury, Rowley Regis and Smethwick.
- 2.3 In addition to statutory duties, the Council also has duties to provide adequate parking spaces, both on street and in the off-street car parks. Parking charges and fees are regularly reviewed, and income is used to

support services and help ensure the highway network operates as efficiently as possible.

- 2.4 Penalty charge notice (PCN) values for enforcement activities are set by Government. Council parking charges were last benchmarked and reviewed in 2023, with increases approved at that time (see June 2023 Cabinet [report](#) for 2024 and 2025. The current parking and penalty charges are published and updated on the Council web site at www.sandwell.gov.uk (search for parking charges). Income for the last six years is set out in Appendix A where the impact of the covid pandemic can be clearly seen, although income has increased in more recent years in our car parks. The most recent benchmarking of Sandwell MBC parking charges against nearby local authorities is in Appendix B.
- 2.5 Approved increases in parking charges for 2025 were put on hold at the start of the year. It is therefore timely to consider a full review of parking charges, ideally one that is based on accurate analytical data to support decision making and consider the impacts of any changes. The existing equipment and systems used by the service produce limited datasets, and this paper discusses modernising and consolidating these with better technology, allowing an intelligence-led approach to underpin future cases for any changes in Sandwell MBC's parking charges.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Council Plan?

Growing Up in Sandwell	Improving car parking compliance through civil enforcement will increase safety, encourage active travel and contribute to improving residents' quality of life and air quality
Living in Sandwell	A connected and accessible Sandwell: The provision of a high quality, well managed highway network and parking is vital to enable Sandwell residents to access jobs, education and services both within and beyond the Borough's boundaries
Thriving Economy in Sandwell	The provision of a high quality, well managed highway network and car parks will reduce journey times and improve journey reliability for Sandwell business who rely on them to connect to their suppliers and customers
Healthy in Sandwell	The effective management of parking and traffic contribute to safe and efficient roads for local people

	and visitors, and to the health benefits of sustainable active travel
One Council One Team	Effective management of on-street parking will help allow all our place-based services to be efficiently delivered across the metropolitan borough, and help ensure council offices and facilities are accessible by the local community

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Given the importance of the income from Parking services to support the overall highway network and hence the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community, it is vital that Sandwell's parking services and facilities are well managed, equipment is well maintained, fees and charges are appropriately set and efficiently enforced.
- 4.2 In order to address the statutory duties set out in the previous section and effectively manage kerbside space and control parking, there is a Sandwell MBC Parking Strategy. This is set out in the approved 2017 Sandwell Parking and Traffic Enforcement Policy (<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/parking-permits/parking-services-enforcement-policy>), the key aims of which are:
- to contribute to the authority's transport objectives through enforcement of unsafe or restricted parking and the enforcement of bus lane contravention to achieve the objectives
 - to increase compliance with parking and traffic restrictions through clear, well designed, and legal controls
 - to raise awareness and promote positive parking policy through education.
- 4.3 The key driver of the Parking Enforcement service is through the existing contract with APCOA. The contract covers the full scope of parking enforcement services. These include on and off-street enforcement, first line maintenance, suspensions and dispensations, maintenance of signs and lines, blue badge and permit fraud investigations, special events, first stage notice processing, all back-office correspondence, payment and reconciliation, CCTV/Bus lane enforcement, processing of informal appeals, secondment of staff for formal appeals, traffic regulation order (TRO) making and reviews.

- 4.4 The contract with APCOA provides us with 14 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO's); in 2011 this was 24 and was reduced to 19 in 2012 and to 2020 to 14. Hours of enforcement are usually Monday to Saturday 07.00 to 21.30 and Sunday and bank holidays 07.45 to 17.15. Deployment is usually two CCTV camera car drivers, one Bus Lane and CCTV reviewer of files and 11 walking or mobile CEOs on Street spread across Mondays to Saturday and four CEOs on Sundays and bank holidays.
- 4.5 Bus Lane Enforcement is undertaken by Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras mounted on street lighting columns which detect unauthorised vehicles illegally driving in the bus lanes and record the footage. This data is securely transmitted and uploaded onto the Councils systems.
- 4.6 The footage is reviewed by authorised personnel who identify each contravention recorded on the system and issue a PCN to the registered keeper/owner/hirer of the vehicle. If a contravention occurred, a PCN will be sent to the registered keeper/owner/hirer of the vehicle, by post, within 28 days of the date of the alleged contravention. The PCN will be accompanied by photographic evidence of the contravention.
- 4.7 Sandwell currently has three bus lanes in force. These are located in New Street, West Bromwich, introduced January 2016; Hagley Road West, Oldbury, introduced June 2019; and Walsall Road, West Bromwich, introduced in June 2019. We are expecting the introduction of bus lane enforcement at a further site near the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital in June 2025. Also planned to be introduced during 2025-26 are six approved locations in Sandwell where camera enforcement will be introduced to address Moving Traffic Contraventions, such as blocking a yellow box junction, making a banned turn etc.
- 4.8 Sandwell MBC provides several parking facilities throughout the borough, including 62 Car Parks. These comprise 11 Free Car Parks (see Appendix C), 41 pay and display (P&D) car parks (see Appendix B) and nine Sandwell Valley Car Parks. These car parks provide 169 free spaces, 2,514 P&D spaces, 162 Disabled bays, six Electric Vehicle charging bays and 13 Motorcycle bays.
- 4.9 Car Park usage reviews have previously been carried out on site by the CEO's (manual counts and observations) and the information provided to ticket suppliers when selling advertising on the reverse of the tickets. Visual checks and photographs are the only way to benchmark car park usage at present. Technical solutions would be able to advise us of the number of parkers, how long they stay, on what days they park and how

much they pay. This would involve setting up and utilising back-office software within the machines and integrating pay by phone into the existing software provider rather than a standalone service.

- 4.10 There have been concerns that some charges have encouraged drivers to seek to park on-street, thus adding to parking congestion and road safety issues. Moreover, there is concern that charges may have had an impact on economic activity in the six town centres, although it is difficult to disaggregate any impacts from other factors such as the cost-of-living crisis, impact of more shopping being done online etc. However, it is clear in Appendix A income has not increased in line with rises in charges.
- 4.11 Analytical data of car park users is not currently available to Sandwell MBC due to the age of the P&D machines. A capital investment of some £400,000 with additional maintenance costs will be required to replace all the P&D machines, and a full business case for this is part of our 2025-26 work programme. This will provide payment options for the customers by cash, contactless or pay by phone options. This would also incorporate back-office software that would provide analytical data of what days of the week and how long each customer parks with us and allow analysis of any impacts of price increases to be carried out.
- 4.12 While the above is being developed an interim technical solution to our existing P&D machines has been investigated and is available to provide analytical data of customer transactions. The back-office data then available to us will be able to tell us how many are parking with us, what days, for how long, what they are paying, and we can build profiles of our car parks from there including occupancy levels etc.
- 4.13 Car Park comparisons with neighbouring authorities (see Appendix B) show Sandwell MBC to be comparable, although further consideration should be given to the offer within each area that attracts drivers to park at that location. Without analytical data of who parks, when they park with us and for how long we are unable to make informed decisions on what to review or amend and we are merely making assumptions of why customers park with us and impacts of any pricing or disposal strategy.
- 4.14 Sandwell MBC currently has 11 Free Car Parks – see Appendix C. Consideration should be given as to whether we introduce a small charge for long stay parking in these car parks as an initial measure, something which Wolverhampton do (see Appendix A). This will also then be able to provide us with some analytical data for the use of these car parks.

5 Implications

Resources:	<p>The cost to implement the proposed changes to our parking systems to provide us with analytical data would be in the order of £4,750, and then £3,000 per annum thereafter. This could be funded from the parking account.</p> <p>The cost of integrating back-office software in all P&D machines is £7,750. The system is called Oppidatim and details can be found in Appendix D</p>
Legal and Governance:	<p>Traffic Regulation Orders are made by the Highway Authority under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.</p> <p>The Council has powers under the Road Traffic (Permitted Parking Area and Special Parking Area) (Metropolitan Borough of Sandwell) order 2000, to carry out enforcement activities relating to parking contraventions within the Borough.</p> <p>The Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 and the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, applies for parking in car parks and on street parking</p>
Risk:	<p>There are no direct risk implications resulting from the course of action recommended in this report</p>
Equality:	<p>There are no specific equality issues regarding the proposals contained in this report. The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are included in associated Framework Agreement Documentation to draw attention to the detail of, and the need to comply with, the Act</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>The Highway environment plays an important role in the life of the community, particularly the positive opportunities that they can bring from social inclusion and interaction. Good highway infrastructure discourages criminal and anti-social activity, reducing the fear of crime, supporting the increased use of public transport, delivery of carbon reduction savings and the associated benefits outlined in the Corporate Plan</p>
Social Value:	<p>Highways are the arteries of our communities. They connect our residents to employment, education, local services and indeed the wider world. They enable</p>

	economic growth, social mobility and are vital in ensuring good health outcomes
Climate Change:	Well maintained highways support climate change objectives through the supporting more active travel choices, delivery of carbon reduction savings and associated benefits outlined in the Corporate Plan
Corporate Parenting:	Good, well maintained highway infrastructure promotes improved physical and mental health and the well-being of children and young people through more walking and cycling, improving road safety and promoting cleaner air quality

6 Appendices

Appendix A - Car Parking Income 2019 – 2025
Appendix B - Benchmarking of Parking Charges
Appendix C - Free car parks
Appendix D - Oppidatim Proposal

7. Background Papers

Sandwell Parking and Traffic Enforcement Policy
(<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/parking-permits/parking-services-enforcement-policy>)

June 2023 Cabinet report on Parking Charges
<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?Ild=10821&Opt=3>