



ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS

Post decision review of officer decision on replacement of multi-storey car park equipment

Report by the Director for Sustainability and Resources

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- A motion without notice was proposed by Cllr Kevin Jenkins at Worthing Full Council on 15th October which stated: *That this Council, listening tonight, acknowledges the concerns raised by the BID and the ITC Traders. This Council asks that the decision maker reviews their decision in light of these concerns and representations and whilst doing so considers whether continued implementation is appropriate taking into account the identified impact on the business community in our town, who as we know, are the lifeblood to a thriving town centre. Further, that JOSCs are asked as a matter of urgency to conduct a post decision review of this matter*
- The Members agreed for the decision ADforO&S/020/24-25 Worthing MSCP Equipment Replacement to be reviewed as per the motion.
- The decision maker has reviewed his decision in light of the concerns raised regarding the change in technology.
- The officer decision has also been revisited by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the Worthing Cabinet.
- This report sets out the rationale for the officer's decision and the outcome of the review.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The committee is asked to note the outcome of the review requested at Full Council on 15 October

3. Background

- 3.1 Worthing Borough Council owns and operates four multi-storey car parks (MSCPs): Buckingham Road, Grafton, High Street and The Civic Quarter. The car parks are chargeable. High Street and Grafton operate using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems. Buckingham Road switched to Pay on Arrival in October 2024 as part of the reopening.
- 3.2 The Automatic Number Plate (ANPR) technology reads car numberplates on entry, and prior to leaving the customer pays on foot. The amount due is dependent on the length of their stay. When the customer drives up to the barrier, their numberplate is read again and the system recognises that payment has been made, allowing the car to exit. Currently the charging hours are 6am to 10pm Monday to Sunday.
- 3.3 The system has been in place since the council took the car parks in-house from NCP in 2014 and it is now in need of replacement as it is end of life and starting to fail.

4. Current situation

- 4.1 The ANPR system is complex, relying on camera technology and the use of barriers to manage vehicles entering and exiting the car parks. The system is monitored by the car parks operations team from the control room in High Street MSCP.
- 4.2 The system is supplied by a company called Flowbird, and cost approximately £350,000 when installed in 2014. The equipment is now 10 years old and is reaching the end of its life. Replacement through the capital programme has been put on hold for the last three years, as it was still functional, and was a lower priority than other capital items of expenditure. The system is now lacking resilience and needs urgent replacement (e.g. cameras and intercoms are failing).
- 4.3 The current system has a significant maintenance liability which includes maintenance of the ANPR camera technology, the barriers and the payment machines. The contract also includes an annual charge for the back office software system. The annual maintenance costs for the system are £70,988 + VAT per year.

- 4.4 ANPR is resource-intensive from a staffing perspective. The systems for all three sites are monitored and managed by the car parks operations team from the High Street MSCP control room 7 days a week between 6am and 10pm.
- 4.5 The team's duties include:
- Responding to the intercom which drivers use if their numberplate is not read properly on entering or exiting the car park. Numberplates may not be read properly if they are dirty, damaged or as sometimes happens having a screw through one of the letters or numbers causing an error reading
 - Responding to customers at payment machines who are struggling with payment
 - Dealing with system outages, including internet outages which require human intervention
 - When the ANPR system fails, the parking services team have to refund town centre workers due to the system overcharging them, this is a regular occurrence. This results in poor customer experience and inefficient use of staff time. Under the new system, customers will purchase their town centre worker permit in advance and activate it as and when they need to, which will prevent any potential overcharging in the future
 - Failure of the ANPR system also results in loss of income due to the service not being able to collect payment.
- 4.6 There are currently at least two members of staff monitoring the system during peak times, which is not an effective use of staff time.
- 4.7 These duties are effectively dealing with failure demand of the system and do not add value to the experience of drivers using the car parks.
- 4.8 All ANPR systems have a percentage of numberplates that are not read correctly, requiring human intervention. The benchmark for our supplier is that at least 95% of plates should be read without the need for intervention. Whilst our system delivers above that, it is still a significant resource requirement based on the number of transactions.
- 4.9 Other duties of the team include more visible roles - opening and closing the sites, keeping the sites clean and carrying out inspections, including health and safety inspections. They also monitor the lifts and are trained to deal with any lift entrapments.

5. Rationale for Replacing ANPR with Pay on Arrival Technology

- 5.1 With the current technology needing to be replaced due to it being end of life, officers reviewed the two available options:
- Replacing the existing system with a new ANPR system, based on pay when you leave
 - Changing the technology to Pay on Arrival.
- 5.2 In coming to the decision to switch to Pay on Arrival the following factors were considered:
- It will provide a consistent approach to parking payment across council-run car parks. The systems in the multi-storey car parks will mirror those in surface car parks.
 - With Pay on Arrival drivers will have the option of using the MiPermit App, which is also available for surface car parks. Drivers using the app will have the flexibility to manage their length of stay when they are out and about. It will mean that they can avoid having to go to a payment machine if they choose this payment method.
 - Drivers not using the app will be able to pay with cash, by card or by phone.
 - Pay on Arrival machines are intuitive and easy to use.
 - Any business with the app can extend parking for any vehicle (eg hotels and restaurants can offer to pre-book or extend parking for their guests).
 - Pay on Arrival is more resilient than ANPR due to the technology being less complex
 - Pay on Arrival machines can be removed and sited in other locations including surface car parks. This is particularly key for Grafton. If ANPR technology was installed here we would not have an alternative use for it on closure of the site.
 - Pay on Arrival technology requires £196,241 less capital investment than ANPR. This reduces the pressure on the capital program, allowing investment in the maintenance of council owned assets like the High Street MSCP. It will also require less prudential borrowing and reduce the call on the revenue account for capital charges by £25k.
 - A revenue saving of approximately £185,330 at a time when council finances and services are under significant pressure..
- 5.3 Based on the benefits of the changes to technology, it was considered the right decision, particularly in light of the current financial climate. All surface car parks already operate Pay on Arrival technology, including High Street surface, Liverpool Gardens and Union Place (which is operated by NCP).

These town centre car parks are very popular (when the MSCPs often have spaces in them) showing many drivers already choose this payment system.

6. Evidence from Other Operators

6.1 Whilst most multi-storey car parks do operate pay on exit systems, there are examples of sites operating pay on arrival technology. These include:

- Norton Road in Hove was until recently a pay and display car park. Drivers can now only pay by app (there is no cash or contactless option).
- Mid Sussex District Council operate a multi-storey car park in Burgess Hill which has been pay and display (pay on arrival) since at least 2006. The council has stated that they have not receive complaints around this system or any negative feedback around pay on arrival. The council also offers payment by the MiPermit app as well as at the payment machines
- Buckinghamshire Council has changed from barrier multi-storey car parks to barrierless and to ticketless pay on arrival. The council state that the change has not resulted in less dwell time or affected trade within the town. The change has been positive for customers as they can extend their stay by phone either using the app or telephoning the payment provider. The car parks have over 1,000 spaces which is more than those in Worthing. Buckinghamshire council advises that customers are not staying less than previously. The changeover has seen fewer complaints about technology failing, resulting in customers not being able to exit the car park and the flexibility of customers being able to extend their stay by phone.
- Plymouth City Council tried ANPR and faced the same difficulties as Worthing, for example barriers not working, customers not being able to exit, numberplates being misread and it being resource intensive, as well as the cost of the system and maintenance. In 2020 Plymouth removed the barriers and changed to a barrierless, ticketless system like the one proposed by Worthing Borough Council. Plymouth went one stage further and removed the option to pay by cash and now only offers pay by phone or app.
- Plymouth has four multi-storey car parks, the largest with 850 spaces and the smallest 360 spaces all of which are Pay on Arrival ticketless and barrierless. Plymouth advises that its BID was supportive of the change and that it has not seen any decline in dwell time in the town or any reduction in income. Pay on arrival offers flexibility on how to pay as well as savings on staff, tickets and maintenance, while also providing

better resilience and a better customer experience. Plymouth no longer receives the complaints it did when using an ANPR system.

- Whilst Crawley Borough Council operates an ANPR system, they are experiencing the same issues as Worthing Council and are looking to potentially remove ANPR and change to a different system.

7. Review of Buckingham Road data since reopening

- 7.1 The total number of transactions for the period of 15.10-17.11.2024 was 3,300
- 9% were cash payments
 - 71% were card/contactless payments
 - 20% were MiPermit phone/app payments.
- 7.2 The percentage of payments by app has increased since the reopening of the car park, as people are becoming aware of it as an option.

Length of stay	Buckingham Road MSCP (Period 15.10-17.11.24)	Buckingham Road MSCP pre-closure (Period 15.10-17.11.21)
1 hour	36%	37%
2 hours	36%	37%
3 hours	16%	16%
4 hours	6%	5%
5 hours	2%	2%
5 hours / all day	4%	3%
	100%	100%

- 7.3 The table above shows that the length of stay chosen by drivers is virtually identical to before the car park closed for refurbishment. This suggests the change in technology does not have an impact on dwell time.

8. Engagement on Pay on Arrival

- 8.1 The proposals for the changes in technology were discussed with the relevant Executive Members and with Worthing Cabinet members on 19 February 2024. As part of those briefings the rationale for the proposed changes was set out.

8.2 Officers met with a representative from the Business Improvement District (BID) and from the Chamber of Commerce on 19 July 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to share proposals on the tariff review for car parks and share the proposals for changes to parking technology. This was followed up with an email dated 21 August (attached as Appendix 1).

9. Officer Decision

9.1 The Officer Decision was published on 19 August 2024. Details are available here: <https://democracy.adur-worthing.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=1080> Following the call-in period, the decision was effective from 28 August 2024 and officers commenced implementation at Buckingham Road car park, which opened with the new technology on 15th October 2024.

9.2 It was the intention to implement the new technology in High Street MSCP and Grafton MSCP in the first half of November. This roll-out has been paused following a request at Full Council for the decision regarding the change in technology to be reviewed.

10. Feedback Following Go-Live

10.1 The change in technology at Buckingham Road was expedited to coincide with the opening of the site to avoid a technology change a few months after opening. It also addressed concerns about the reliability of the old technology which had not been used for a number of years.

10.2 Following the go-live at Buckingham Road, concerns were raised by members of the BID. Officers met with representatives of the BID on two occasions to discuss their feedback. The concerns raised by the BID and the officer responses are summarised below.

10.3 *Moving away from ANPR will reduce dwell time as drivers will need to pre-determine their length of stay*

- People paying by app will be able to extend their stay at any point, and it is anticipated that more people will adopt the technology once all car parks operate on the same system
- Businesses, (eg hotels, restaurants, venues) can extend customer parking on their behalf, anyone with the app can pay for any vehicle. With support from businesses a campaign could be developed to make visitors aware of this option.

- The car parks are in close proximity to our retail areas and customers can go back to top up payment if they do not use the app. They do not need a ticket, and therefore do not need to return to their vehicle.

10.4 *The proposals disproportionately affect the elderly and digitally-excluded*

- The current technology is not very user-friendly, particularly for the elderly or those who struggle with technology. Customers regularly call the control room for assistance because they are struggling and a member of staff then talks them through the payment process.
- The new payment machines installed in Buckingham Road MSCP take cards, cash or contactless and are very simple to use. Customers can alternatively use a telephone to book their parking session, this can be done by telephoning the MiPermit contact centre and an app is not required to be used.

10.5 *Town centre workers will need to log on to the app to activate their reduced price parking*

- Town centre workers will access their discounted parking in the same way that residents in the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) purchase and use visitor permits. Permits can be purchased in bulk, and they can be activated in bulk, up to 10 at a time. They can also be cancelled at any point if plans change (before they are activated). Once activated drivers can come and go as they please - the permit is valid for the whole day and is cheaper than the current town centre worker permit system as there will not be an additional charge to exit and re-enter on the same day.
- It is not a particularly onerous process to access reduced rate parking.

10.6 *The BID would prefer charges to be put up to cover ANPR costs rather than switch to pay on arrival*

- Parking tariffs are reviewed annually to ensure they are fair and provide good value. As part of this process they are benchmarked against comparable towns, the price of on-street parking and inflation.
- Parking tariff would need to rise significantly to cover the cost of ANPR technology, which would not provide good value, and also raise charges above and beyond on street charges.

10.7 *Implementation should be delayed until after Christmas*

- In light of the review of this decision the roll-out of the technology has been paused until after Christmas.

10.8 Ahead of the Full Council meeting on 15 October, Councillor Carl Walker shared a petition with Councillor Rita Garner, the Executive Member for Regeneration. The petition stated:

The council has announced they will be changing the payment method for town centre car parks from number plate technology currently in use, to new payment machines. This means visitors will have to pay for their parking when they get to the car park rather than just before they leave.

10.9 It was signed by 609 individuals, with over 95% of respondents answering 'No' to the question as to whether they agreed with the proposed changes.

10.10 It should be noted that the survey did not set out details of the scheme (including the option to pay by app with the ability to extend payment at any time), the rationale or the financial implications. It also did not reference that the Town Centre Workers Scheme would continue to operate under the new technology.

10.11 Sixteen statements were also submitted by Paul O'Brien from the BID, raising concerns about the proposed changes.

10.12 These concerns are summarised in the table below. The majority of the concerns identify a lack of understanding of how the new system will work:

- Three respondents were concerned drivers will have to walk back to their car after payment to display their ticket. This is not the case - the system is ticketless.
- Two respondents were concerned about there only being one payment machine per car park. This is not the case - the number of payment machines will be the same as the current provision. There will also be less demand for the machines as a proportion of people will pay by app, not needing to access a machine at all.
- Four respondents were concerned about the impact on town centre workers, that they will either have to find alternative parking, or that they will not have the flexibility to come and go as they currently do. This is not the case - town centre worker permits will remain in place, drivers will just need to register their stay on the app, the same way residents do for visitor permits. They can do this in bulk to avoid doing it daily. Businesses can also buy season tickets to avoid using the app, but the Town Centre Workers Permit provides better value and flexibility - drivers only need to pay when they park.

Concern	No of times raised	Response /Mitigation
People will have to leave appointments (eg when visiting optician)	1	People using the app will be able to extend their stay from any location, at any point. A business can offer to extend the stay for customers, and officers can discuss how this would work with businesses - it is straightforward.
Drivers have to go back to their vehicles to place a ticket in the window.	3	The pay on arrival system is ticketless - it is not pay and display. The system records people have paid, it does not issue tickets. People not paying by app will pay at the pedestrian exits. They will not have to visit a machine on their return.
Proposals will reduce dwell time	4	People using the app will be able to extend their stay from any location, at any point. A business can offer to extend the stay for customers, and officers can discuss how this would work with businesses - it is straightforward)
Only one parking machine per site will cause issues	2	The number of payment machines will be the same as the current number. Demand for the machines will also be lower as a proportion of people will pay by app and not need to go to a machine at all.
Town centre workers can't come and go during the day - needing a new ticket each time/ will need to find alternative locations	4	As part of the new technology, town centre workers will still be able to access discounted parking, and will be able to come and go during the day. They will purchase permits through the app. Permits can be bought and activated easily. Drivers not wishing to access the app on a daily basis are able to purchase and activate permits in bulk at any time. The new system will also be cheaper for customers as they will be able to come and go on the same day without incurring additional transaction costs. Season tickets are also available for businesses.
Unspecified concern - pay on arrival is a retrograde step	1	There are a number of councils moving away from ANPR and are implementing pay on arrival in their multi-storey car parks
Money should be used on machines and lifts.	1	The council has a finite capital program, from which car park technology and maintenance is funded. By saving on parking technology, it frees up funding for other capital works, including maintenance to

The feedback highlights a lack of understanding of the changes, including the fact that:

- The new system is ticketless, there is no need to return to vehicles after payment
- Town centre workers will still benefit from discounted parking
- The new payment machines take cash, card and contactless. We are maintaining the full range of payment options.
- The financial benefits of Pay on Arrival versus ANPR.

11. Further Engagement

11.1 In terms of engagement to date, information about the changes was shared with the BID and the Chamber of Commerce. On-site signage will advise the public of the changes at Buckingham Road, where the technology is in place. There is a higher visibility of staff on site to answer any questions from car park users. However the feedback has highlighted the need for wider engagement to address some of the misinformation and concerns raised.

11.2 At the Full Council meeting on 15 October, the Executive Member for Regeneration made a commitment to develop an engagement plan. Components of this plan will include:

- FAQs about the new technology on our website, addressing some of the mis-information and concerns identified as part of this review before Pay on Arrival goes live at the two remaining sites. Our social media channels will be used to draw attention to the FAQs.
- Press releases prior to the technology going live.
- Articles in the staff newsletter advising our staff who also use the car parks of the changes
- Communication to all registered town centre workers (where they have provided their contact details) to advise them of the changes and how they can access reduced cost parking in future.
- Clear signage in the car parks advising people of the changes. The signage in Buckingham Road car park is being reviewed and any lessons from that will be applied to High Street and Grafton
- Visible staff presence following the change in technology to answer any questions from members of the public.

- 11.3 Officers are keen to work with the BID and other stakeholders to share data on issues like footfall and dwell time, which provide indicators for the economy of the town. We are committed to jointly work on a shared plan to help the town thrive, and a framework for this improved joint working has been agreed with the BID.
- 11.4 In January the council will also be hosting a Business Leaders Forum, similar to the Community Leaders Forum, to bring together business leaders from across Adur and Worthing to develop a better shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities the Councils and the business sector face.

12. Conclusion & Implementation Plan

- 12.1 The review has identified a number of concerns raised by businesses and car park users associated with the move to Pay on Arrival technology. A number of these concerns are based on lack of information (eg regarding the need to place tickets in the windscreen, the new technology not working for town centre workers), and where there are mitigations, eg in relation to dwell time.
- 12.2 In light of these findings and mitigations, and the budgetary implications of the switch to Pay on Arrival (both in terms of the annual £185,330 revenue and the one-off £196,241 capital saving), Grafton and High Street MSCPs will move to the new technology by the end of February, allowing time for the engagement plan to be put in place.

13. Financial Implications

- 13.1 The decision to move to a pay on arrival system reduces the capital cost to the council of the replacement system, which will be funded through prudential borrowing. The lower borrowing requirement will mean a lesser cost impact on the revenue account of the cost of financing through interest charges and minimum revenue provision.
- 13.2 In addition, a pay on arrival system will reduce the staffing requirement and has a cheaper maintenance commitment.
- 13.3 Overall Savings from moving to a Pay on Arrival system from an Automatic Number Plate Recognition system in 4 Worthing Multi Storey Car Parks are summarised below;

	£,000
Capital replacement cost	196
<u>Revenue savings</u>	
Capital charges	25
Maintenance	69
Staffing	117
Total Revenue savings	211

14. Legal Implications

- 14.1 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 14.2 s1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the Council to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation
- 14.3 Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 14.4 s1 Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 confers power on the Council to enter into a contract for the provision of making available assets or services for the purposes of, or in connection with, the discharge of the function by the Council.
- 14.5 All decisions of the Council including its Officers under the Scheme of Delegations are to be made in accordance with the principles of decision making found at Article 12 of the Council's Constitutions.

Officer Contact Details:-

Jan Jonker

Assistant Director Operations & Sustainability

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Sustainability & Risk Assessment

- A Sustainability and Risk Assessment must be completed for all reports.
- Identify Positive or negative implications, and how we may address to leverage these implications.
- If no issues are identified under a heading then it should read "Matter considered and no issues identified."

1. Economic

- The existing technology is end of life, lacks resilience and is not offering good customer experience. The new technology is easy to use for drivers and mitigations for the concerns raised as part of this process are set out in the report. The new technology will result in an annual revenue saving of £185,330 which will help reduce the impact of the current financial pressures on frontline services like street cleansing and parks.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

- What impact does the proposal/issues raised have on our communities or specific groups within our communities?

2.2 Equality Issues

- An equality impact assessment has been undertaken. The technology is easier to use than the current ANPR system and all payment types are accepted, including cash, card, contactless and by App.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

- Freeing up staff from dealing with failure demand of the ANPR system will free them up to be more visible in the car parks, increasing surveillance. The option to pay by App means that people do not have to use the payment machines and can enter and leave the car park without delay, which can increase the sense of security, particularly during quiet times.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

The proposals do not have any impacts on human rights

3. Environmental

- No issues identified

4. Governance

- The decision to replace the technology has been made with consideration for the Council's priorities and taking into account the current financial pressures.
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Appendix 1

From: Jan Jonker <jan.jonker@adur-worthing.gov.uk>

Date: Wed, 21 Aug 2024 at 18:49

Subject: Changes to parking Technology

To: <xxxx@worthingandadurchamber.co.uk>, <xxxx@worthingtowncentre.co.uk>

Cc: Jason Passfield <jason.passfield@adur-worthing.gov.uk>

Hi xxxx and xxxx

I hope you are well. Following our meetings a few weeks back we will shortly be publicising the changes to our MSCP car park payment technology (as discussed we are moving from ANPR to pay on arrival).

Please see below the rationale for the change. Please do treat the cost data in there as confidential but feel free to share the rest with your members.

If you have any questions please do let Jason or I know.

Many thanks

Jan

With the current technology in need of replacement, a new, pay on arrival operating model is being introduced to the MSCP car parks. The technology will largely work in the same way as surface car parks:

- ***Drivers enter the site and find a place to park (there will be no entry barriers).***
- ***They make payment for their intended duration, either on the MiPermit App or at payment machines using cash, card or phone. In order to make payment they will need to enter their vehicle registration number.***
- ***The machines will be located near the pedestrian exits of the sites (where the current payment machines are located).***
- ***They will not be required to place a ticket in their car (they can request a ticket to be printed, if they would like one as a reminder of their length of stay).***

Drivers who use the MiPermit app will be able to extend their stay without returning to the car park (as they can when using surface car parks).

The new operating model delivers a number of significant benefits:

- ***Car drivers will have a consistent approach to paying for parking whatever council owned car park they are in.***
- ***For those drivers using the App they have flexibility to manage the length of stay while they are out and about***
- ***Reduced congestion after events (eg Bonfire Night) when everyone leaving at the same time causes significant delays at the parking machines.***
- ***The new equipment will be more resilient than the existing ANPR system which is increasingly suffering from outages***
- ***More consistent enforcement - currently the barriers are lifted at 10pm in the evening and people can drive out without paying. Under the new system drivers who do not pay risk a PCN***
- ***Reduced capital investment of £196k at a time when the capital program is stretched with multiple priorities***
- ***Significant revenue saving of approximately £185k whilst maintaining customer facing staff.***

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Jan Jonker (He/Him)

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Adur & Worthing Councils

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