

# Test Valley Borough Council Annual Parking Report



2020 – 2021

# Test Valley Borough Council

## Annual Parking Statement 2020 – 2021

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 All public car parks and roads in Test Valley, excluding motorways and trunk roads, are designated as a Civil Enforcement Area.
- 1.2 During the period covered by this Annual Parking Statement, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, the Council was responsible for the enforcement of the Council's off-street car parks. The Council's Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs), under the Traffic Management Act 2004, enforce parking restrictions in the off-street car parks. Prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 the Council also enforced on-street parking restrictions on behalf of Hampshire County Council under an agency agreement between the two authorities. This agency agreement, and the Borough Council's involvement in on-street parking enforcement, terminated on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.
- 1.2 This is the thirteenth Annual Parking Statement published by the Council in respect of its management of parking, in accordance with the guidance published by the Department of Transport. It is intended to provide the public with information about its policies, procedures and key statistics relating to its parking activities.

### Policy Aims and Objectives

- 1.3 The Council, in carrying out its management of the Borough's car parks, has identified a number of objectives. A summary of those objectives is set out below. The Council seeks to:
- assist in allowing the free flow of traffic by minimising the use of vehicles in the busiest and most congested areas;
  - improve traffic conditions and reduce the risk of accidents;
  - provide sufficient shopper and visitor parking facilities to support shops/commercial organisations and leisure activities; thereby underpinning the Borough's social and economic life, to manage the use of spaces by price to encourage retail vitality and match long term provision to the availability of long-term spaces;
  - safeguard the needs and requirements of businesses/organisations and visitors;
  - control the supply of off-street spaces by taking a long-term view of transport and transport strategies as they relate to the settlements within Test Valley;
  - regularly review parking tariffs which provide revenue to sustain the Council's integrated transport aims;
  - ensure that parking controls are observed and enforced in a fair, accurate and consistent manner;
  - provide a high standard of customer care;
  - provide well-maintained car parks that are easy for customers to use, with particular regard to disabled customers;

## **2 Parking Policy**

- 2.1 The Council believes that the making and enforcing of parking regulations should be carried out in a transparent, legal and comprehensive manner. It considers that the preparation and implementation is about being fair to all users of the Council's public car parks.
- 2.2 The parking service website [www.testvalley.gov.uk/parking](http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/parking) contains details of the Council's enforcement policy and the appeal process. It explains our procedures for handling appeals both on the statutory grounds and the exercising of discretion in the case of mitigating circumstances.
- 2.3 The enforcement procedure for parking contraventions forms the framework for maintaining compliance with traffic regulations in a consistent manner.
- 2.4 The Transport, Parking and Streets pages on the Council's website are regularly reviewed and updated to provide easy access to information on car park locations and charges .

## **3 Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities**

- 3.1 The provision of parking enforcement in the Council's car parks is delivered by an in-house team. The only external elements are cash collection from ticket machines, the operation of cashless parking (currently via RingGo) and enforcement agents (bailiffs) for the recovery of unpaid penalty charge debts.
- 3.2 The Council operates 15 Pay and Display car parks in Andover and 8 Pay and Display car parks in Romsey, plus a number of dedicated Season ticket car parks and limited stay recreation car parks. The total capacity this equates to is 2175 parking spaces in Andover and 986 spaces in Romsey. In addition to this, most of our car parks contain motorcycle parking bays, where single motorcycles can park for free when parked in a marked motorcycle bay, and there are a small number of designated coach parking bays in each town.
- 3.3 CEO's are the public face of civil parking enforcement and the way they perform their functions is crucial to the success, and public perception, of the Council's Civil Parking Enforcement operation. CEOs are expected to perform their duties in a professional and efficient manner at all times. They should apply consistency, firmness, sensitivity and tact coupled with common sense and patience, and be able to think clearly and react sensibly under pressure.

- 3.4 The success of civil parking enforcement depends on the dedication and quality of the staff that deliver it. It is essential to give staff at all levels the skills and training to do their jobs effectively, in order that the Council can command public confidence and respect. This should also improve the self-esteem and job satisfaction of staff, resulting in higher retention rates. Training is seen as an important aspect of civil parking enforcement running costs.
- 3.5 The main objective of CEO's is to ensure that parking controls are observed and enforced in a fair, accurate and consistent manner.
- 3.6 CEOs duties also include related activities such as:
- inspecting parking equipment;
  - checking and reporting defective signs and road markings;
  - issuing information leaflets or warning notices;
  - providing witness statements;
  - where appropriate, appearing before a parking adjudicator;
  - informing the police of criminal parking activity;
  - reporting suspected abandoned vehicles;
  - putting in place and removing notices about the suspension of parking places;
  - reporting on changes in parking patterns; and
  - assisting with surveys.
- 3.7 CEOs are allocated daily rounds to enforce. Any requests for enforcement or reports of parking in contravention of restrictions are logged and where appropriate extra enforcement is organised.
- 3.8 The office processes involved in civil parking enforcement are an integral part of the enforcement regime and staff carrying them out need similar levels of skill, training and professionalism as CEO's. It is important to ensure that staff have the skills, training, authority and resources to give the public a high quality, professional, efficient, timely and user-friendly service. Time and quality targets are set for dealing with parking queries.

## **4 Review of Body Worn Cameras**

- 4.1 The Council introduced the use of Body Worn Cameras by its Parking Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO's) in April 2019. The cameras have now been in use for two years, and in April 2021 the Parking management team undertook the second annual review of their use, together with a review of the policy, procedures and Privacy Impact Assessment. This is a summary of the findings:
- 4.2 The cameras were originally introduced with the following aims:
- to reduce the number of incidents of aggressive behaviour and abuse aimed at our officers

- to reduce protracted complaint investigations by providing impartial, accurate evidence
- to enhance opportunities for high quality evidence-capture to enable internal or police investigation following incidents
- to give greater insight into service delivery and identifying opportunities for improvement in the interests of protecting the health & safety of Parking Civil Enforcement Officers

4.3 Prior to the introduction of the cameras, in 2018/19, there were 9 formally logged reports of aggressive behaviour/abuse. Following the introduction of the cameras in April 2019, in 2020/21 there were also 9 formally logged reports of aggressive behaviour/abuse. In 2020/21 there were zero logged reports of aggressive behaviour/abuse, and the cameras were not activated at all. Given this significant reduction in the number of incidents reported, the cameras appear to be working effectively as a deterrent.

4.4 The enforcement officers continue to recognise their benefits and feel them to be beneficial. The cameras have been worn during patrolling throughout the continuing Covid-19 pandemic, where we have heard in the media of reports of physical abuse & spitting at enforcement officers. With this additional threat posed, the cameras appear to be beneficial both in our aim to keep our officers safe by acting as a deterrent, as well as to provide high quality evidence should the need ever arise to call upon evidence following any incident of abuse.

4.5 During the last year, there have been no identified GDPR issues with the cameras, and no complaints from the public about their use. The benefits / aims of using the cameras remain valid and unchanged.

4.6 In light of the above, continued use of the Body Worn cameras by our parking enforcement officers is deemed to be justified.

4.7 The Privacy Impact Assessment and Body Worn Camera Policy & Procedure have been reviewed and both remain unchanged. In order to ensure they remain familiar with the policy, the Council's enforcement officers undertake refresher training in the policy and procedure every 12 months.

4.8 For more information regarding use of the Body Worn Cameras, the privacy notice can be found at [www.testvalley.gov.uk/gdpr](http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/gdpr), follow the link to privacy notices for each service, and then use of Body Worn Video Cameras.

## 5 Performance Monitoring

### Car Park Occupancy

- 5.1 Government guidance highlights that the availability of car parking has a major influence on the choice of means of transport. It is therefore important that the parking stock in the Borough is managed to provide a balance between encouraging use of alternative modes of transport whilst ensuring that the vitality of both Andover and Romsey is not compromised.
- 5.2 The Council monitors parking demand through ticket sales data and all car parks are surveyed for occupancy three times a year (May, August and October). Due to the first Covid-19 lockdown, the May 2020 car park survey was not undertaken. The car park occupancy results (published below) are reviewed annually and consideration is given to reallocating spaces from one category of stay to another, to maintain optimum occupancy levels.
- 5.3 The Reallocation Policy was reviewed in 2012 as part of the review of the Council's Parking Strategy. The Council aims to operate the short and medium stay car parks within a maximum average occupancy rate of 90% based on peak day surveys. This indicator would mean that on a typical busy shopping day, on average across the short and medium stay car parks, one in nine spaces or more would be vacant, with the exception of Christmas shopping periods.
- 5.4 Since 2012 applying the reallocation policy has resulted in the reallocation of spaces in both towns to ensure that sufficient parking spaces are available for shoppers in the car parks closest to the town centres. The reallocation has meant that spaces for long stay parking have been located further out from the town centre. In the case of Romsey this includes the construction of additional parking at Romsey Rapids where long stay parking was introduced in 2015.

#### Summary of Average Peak Demand in Andover and Romsey (Public off-street car parks)

<b>Andover</b>							
Percentages are average peak occupancy of three snapshot surveys in May, August and October *in 2020 surveys were only carried out in August and October							
	2016	2017	2018	2019		2020*	
				Friday	Saturday	Friday	Saturday
Short Stay	74%	60%	64%	67%	70%	25%	29%
Medium Stay	63%	55%	55%	64%	56%	36%	43%
Long Stay	44%	63%	59%	54%	20%	11%	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Average Total</b>	<b>Na</b>	<b>Na</b>	<b>Na</b>	<b>60%</b>		<b>30%</b>	

<b>Romsey</b>							
Percentages are average peak occupancy of three snapshot surveys in May, August and October *in 2020 surveys were only carried out in August and October							
	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>		<b>2020*</b>	
				<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
Short Stay	79%	81%	67%	76%	76%	71%	71%
Medium Stay	82%	88%	94%	79%	82%	78%	78%
Long Stay	74%	86%	82%	78%	72%	53%	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>59%</b>
<b>Average Total</b>	<b>Na</b>	<b>Na</b>	<b>Na</b>	<b>77%</b>		<b>61%</b>	

## Car Park Charges

- 5.5 During 2019 a review of parking charges took place and a new charging structure was agreed. This new structure was introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. As part of the Council's plans to rejuvenate its town centres, these new tariffs included the introduction of free parking for up to two hours in Andover's Shepherds Spring Lane Car Park, as well as a significant reduction in the cost of up to two hours parking across all other pay & display car parks in the Borough, now offering this for just £1. It is hoped that this will encourage those parking not to rush and instead enjoy a little more time in our town centres.
- 5.6 The Council has continued to provide free parking after 4pm, and all day on Sundays and bank holidays.
- 5.7 In response to lockdown restrictions announced by the government in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the decision was taken by Council Members to suspend parking charges in all of our car parks for the duration of the national and local lockdowns which included Test Valley during 2020-21. This was to ensure those collecting essential supplies for themselves or others could do so speedily and safely, and also to ensure adequate parking for those that live in the town centre that are confined to their homes.

To ensure that those who had paid for parking in advance were not unfairly disadvantaged, Council Members also agreed that Season Tickets valid throughout any period of free parking, would be extended by the period of days or weeks that car parking charges are free.

## **Customer Satisfaction**

- 5.8 The Council is committed to providing a high level of customer satisfaction in its car parks. To enable us to achieve and maintain our target, a questionnaire regarding car park facilities and environment is usually handed to car park users in all our car parks during one week in October each year. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, this method of distributing surveys was not considered appropriate in 2020. As we still wanted to obtain this important feedback, instead we included the questions about our car parks in with the Parking Administration surveys which we sent out.
- 5.9 The Parking Administration survey is a questionnaire enclosed with all Parking Permit and Parking Appeal correspondence processed during one week each October to provide a random cross sample. In this survey we request feedback regarding the service provided by the Parking Administration staff.
- 5.10 Of the 150 Parking Administration surveys which we sent out in October 2020, 117 replies about our car parks were received. Customers were asked whether they would agree that the quality of eight key facilities including ticket machines and lighting were satisfactory. The responses provided a customer satisfaction indicator of 97 %
- 5.10 Of the 150 questionnaires 19 replies were received in respect of the service received by the Parking Administration Team. Customers were asked to rate the efficiency and standard of service from poor through to excellent. The responses rating average to excellent provided a customer satisfaction indicator of 100%.

## **Administration Efficiency**

- 5.11 All appeals against Penalty Charge Notices received by the Council are acknowledged within five working days of their receipt. To allow for thorough investigation of the circumstances surrounding an appeal against a Penalty Charge Notice, consideration of the merits of the case including an appeals panel meeting if deemed appropriate, and the drafting of a detailed response; the target for issuing a decision is 20 working days from receipt of the appeal. In 2020/21 the team processed 606 appeals and achieved 81.02% compliance against this 20-day target for the year. There was a drop in performance in April 2020 because of a vacant post within the administration team, though from May 2020 to March 2021, the team achieved 100% compliance against this target.
- 5.12 Time taken to process new permit applications and renewals is also monitored. The objective is for the permit application to be processed within 5 working days of a 'complete' application being received by the parking administration office or; where an application is made to renew a permit, a minimum of five days before the old permit expires. In 2020/21 the team processed 95 new permit applications (100% within 5 working days) and 303 permit renewals (100% within the target time scale).

## **6 Key Projects, Challenges and Areas of Improvement during 2020/21**

### **COVID-19**

- 6.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about challenges and changes to the way the Council's car parks have operated, as well as to the management of the Council's Parking staff and the way in which they deliver the service during the last year.
- 6.2 The decision was taken by Council Members to suspend parking charges in all of the Council's car parks for the duration of the national and Test Valley local lockdowns during 2020-21. This was to ensure those collecting essential supplies for themselves or others could do so speedily and safely, and also to ensure adequate parking for those that live in the town centre that are confined to their homes. Parking charges were suspended for a total of 228 calendar days during the period between 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021.
- 6.3 To ensure that those who had paid for parking in advance were not unfairly disadvantaged, Council Members also agreed that Season Tickets valid throughout any period of free parking, would be extended by the period of days or weeks that car parking charges are free. The Parking Administration Team have been responsible for manually calculating the extended duration of each permit as and when applications are made to renew the permits.
- 6.4 During periods when the Council's parking charges were suspended, some parking staff have been redeployed to other roles, for example assisting in the new asymptomatic COVID Test Centre in Picket Twenty or patrolling of the Council's outdoor public spaces, to encourage compliance with the government's COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing measures.
- 6.5 Risk assessments have been completed and these continue to be reviewed in order to make the Council's workplaces 'COVID-19 safe' in accordance with current government guidance. This has involved significant changes to the way in which our Officers carry out their work, including setting them up so that they are able to carry out as much work as possible from home, and for those officers whose work cannot be carried out from home, changes have been to the way in which they carry out their work in terms of social distancing and cleaning and hygiene measures in order to comply with the government's COVID-19 restrictions.
- 6.6 Risk assessments have also been carried out in relation to the Council's public car parks and control measures implemented so that they are COVID-19 safe. Additional signage has been erected in the car parks reminding car park users of their own responsibilities in terms of social distancing and maintaining hygiene.

- 6.7 The Council has made space available in a number of its car parks for use by the local NHS Trust to support efforts to combat COVID-19. Part of Shepherds Spring Lane Car Park in Andover has been provided for use as a COVID-19 Testing Centre, and our West Street, Andover and Crosfield Hall, Romsey car parks both have areas of reserved parking on days where there are vaccination clinics being held.
- 6.8 The suspension of car parking charges together with the general impact of the lockdown restrictions on our town centres has resulted in a significant loss of car park income to the Council.

## Off-Street Car Parks

- 6.9 A review of the Cashless Parking contract (for which RingGo is the current supplier) commenced in November 2020. The tender is due to be awarded to the winning supplier in the first quarter of 2021, with the new contract to commence in September 2021.
- 6.10 The use of the current RingGo cashless parking service dropped in 2020-21, which is to be expected given that car park charges were suspended for a significant period of the year. For the period 2020-21 there were 61,351 transactions using the RingGo service, representing £87,600 net car park income. In context this is just over of our 16.7% total net car park income.
- 6.11 The disabled parking spaces at Andover Leisure Centre have been included in the Council's Off Street Parking Places Order to deter parking by motorists not displaying a valid Blue Badge. These disabled parking spaces are not just for use by disabled visitors to the Leisure Centre but are also convenient for accessing other town centre locations such as The Lights.
- 6.12 Use of the Electric Vehicle Charging points installed across various car parks in the Borough has increased since eighteen additional points were installed in the Spring of 2020, however usage has fluctuated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Summary of Electric Vehicle Charge Point Usage

Month	No. of charging events	% of available KWH used
Apr-20	82	2.75%
May-20	119	3.83%
Jun-20	181	7.56%
Jul-20	264	10.51%
Aug-20	332	13.63%
Sep-20	56	20.74%
Oct-20	192	9.26%
Nov-20	40	2.14%
Dec-20	71	3.23%
Jan-21	29	1.79%

Feb-21	41	<b>2.49%</b>
Mar-21	57	<b>3.12%</b>

In addition to benefitting workers and visitors to Andover and Romsey town centres, the charge points will also benefit those residents who may not have off-road parking and therefore don't have the ability to charge at home. During car park charging hours (Monday to Saturday 8:30am to 4pm) motorists must pay to park in addition to the Electric Vehicle charging costs, and they must also abide by any maximum permitted stay as detailed on the adjacent signage.

## **On-Street Parking**

- 6.13 Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 Test Valley Borough Council is no longer involved in the management and control of on-street parking. This function is now the full responsibility of Hampshire County Council, who are the Highway Authority.

## 7 Enforcement & Other Parking Statistics

7.1 In the financial year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, 1989 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) were issued. During this period 606 appeals were processed, of which 368 were upheld on technical or mitigatory grounds. Further parking statistics can be found in the table below:

### Test Valley Borough Council Summary of Parking

	2020/21
<b>Parking Statistics as at 16.6.2021</b>	
Volume of off-street car parking spaces	3179
<b>PCNs issued</b>	
Volume of higher level PCNs issued	233
Volume of lower level PCNs issued	1756
of which: Attached to windscreen	1989
Served to keeper by post	0
<b>PCN's Paid</b>	
Volume of 2020-21 PCNs paid	1550
Volume of 2020-21 PCNs paid at the discounted rate	1285
Volume of 2020-21 PCNs paid before Charge Certificate (within 56 days)	1445
Volume of 2020-21 PCNs paid after a Charge Certificate served	105
<b>Recovery of unpaid PCNs</b>	
Volume of 2020-21 PCNs where Charge Certificates registered at Traffic Enforcement Centre (TEC)	120
Volume of Warrants of Execution issued to an Enforcement Agent during 2020-21	433
<b>Other PCN statistics:</b>	
Volume of 2020-21 PCNs written off	59
Volume of 2020-21 PCNs resulting in an informal challenge	422
Volume of 2020-21 PCN informal challenges which resulted in cancellation of the PCN	270
Volume of 2020-21 PCNs resulting in a formal representation	19
Volume of 2020-21 formal representations which resulted in cancellation of the PCN	14

## 8 Financial - Parking Account

Test Valley Borough Council Summary of Parking 2020/21

	<b>2020/21</b> £	<b>2019/20</b> £
<b>On-Street Parking Income</b>		
On-Street parking income		
On-Street residents permit fees	0	37,762
On-street Penalty Charge Notice income	0	98,279
Blue Badge application fees	0	0
On-Street parking waivers fees	0	2,636
<b>Total on street parking income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>138,677</b>
On Street parking direct costs	0	194,129
		<small>**In 19/20 there have been changes to how the Council calculates internal recharges.</small>
<b>On Street parking surplus / (deficit)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(55,452)</b>
<b>Off Street Parking Income</b>		
Off street parking income	628,179	2,177,020
Off street PCN income	78,869	135,774
Other off street parking income	11,252	3,850
<b>Total off street parking income</b>	<b>718,300</b>	<b>2,317,553</b>
Off street parking direct costs	1,466,961	1,478,271
		<small>**In 19/20 there have been changes to how the Council calculates internal recharges.</small>
<b>Off Street parking surplus / (deficit)</b>	<b>(748,661)</b>	<b>839,282</b>

\*\*The income and expenditure of local authorities in connection with their on-street charging and their on-street and off-street enforcement activities are governed by Section 55 (as amended) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

## 9 Future Plans 2021/22

### Off-Street Car Parks

- 9.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 'Growing our Potential' 2020-2123 identifies key strategic challenges that will be faced over the next four years and beyond. One of these challenges is encouraging inclusive growth within our town centres. To help understand and address this challenge the Council has identified 'Town Centres' as one of its four key priorities. What this means is that we will look to grow the potential of Andover and Romsey town centres to be attractive, vibrant and prosperous places which are capable of adapting to change.
- 9.2 The Council has published two masterplans for Andover and Romsey Town Centres. These masterplans will help strengthen the towns as they adapt and evolve in light of changing habits and ensure they support business, leisure, retail and residential opportunities to help make our town centres more resilient. A crucial element of this is to ensure that sufficient public car parking is provided to meet the needs of the residents as well as attracting visitors

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