

APPENDIX G: TAUNTON INTEGRATED PARKING STRATEGY – POLICY FOR ADOPTION 6/12/23

1. Introduction

Prior to vesting day on the 1 April 2023 creating Somerset Council as a unitary authority; responsibility for parking services in Taunton was divided between the authorities as follows:

- Off-Street Parking: Somerset West and Taunton Council in partnership with Somerset County Council for the enforcement.
- On-Street Parking Enforcement: Somerset County Council.
- Park and Ride: Somerset County Council.

This arrangement has meant that whilst there has been a good degree of collaboration and joint working between the authorities on parking matters, it has not been possible to have a fully integrated parking strategy for the town which seeks to achieve agreed social, economic, and environmental outcomes.

Somerset Council is preparing a new Local Transport Plan which is likely to be adopted during 2024. The Executive Board (10 July 2023) adopted a set of Transport and Planning Policy Guiding Principles to inform preparation of the new plan. Parking policy will be a key lever to achieve the outcomes of the new plan and in particular helping achieve the following key principles which were agreed by Executive in the July 2023 paper:

- *Reducing carbon emissions will be the key priority for the transport and development plans including adoption of a transport decarbonisation pathway.*
- *Priority policy interventions will be related to reducing the need to travel and promoting sustainable travel (active travel for shorter distances, e-bikes and micromobility for slightly longer distances, shared transport, bus, demand responsive transport and rail for longer distances, and policy interventions such as parking management that aim to reduce demand for travel by private car).*

Somerset Council as a unitary authority is now in a position to adopt an integrated parking strategy for Taunton comprising the following guiding principles, and this will form part of the Local Transport Plan in due course. This paper adopts the overall strategy and guiding principles, with individual elements subject to further consultation on detailed proposals as necessary in line with the legislation governing any particular element.

2. Taunton Integrated Parking Strategy

The policy seeks to reduce demand for travel by private car into Taunton Town Centre in order to:

- Manage levels of congestion and air quality on town centre roads ensuring as far as possible that pollutants do not exceed concentrations that adversely affect public health the environment.
- Minimise carbon emissions from private cars through reducing distances travelled into the town to access parking provision.
- Improve the town centre retail environment by making it easier and more attractive for people to walk, cycle, congregate and connect in the town centre.

Measures will include:

- Reducing demand for town centre parking through active management of parking charges including increasing charges in areas where necessary to achieve the outcomes of the strategy.
- Consulting on and introducing on-street parking controls as necessary to manage any adverse impacts of changes to parking fees. The control of freely available on-street parking within 1 mile of key destinations in the town centre (such as the station, the hospital and any other impacted areas) will support delivery of the strategy and help manage any adverse impacts on residential areas.
- Enable investment of any surplus parking income from these measures into provision of public transport services and facilities including park and ride to deliver an integrated strategy in line with the Road Traffic Regulation Act (1984) Section 55.

Measures are likely to be introduced incrementally starting with revisions to parking charges, followed by any necessary parking controls arising from monitoring the impacts of the changes.

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