RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: **29 AUGUST 2017**
title: **GENERAL PARKING**
submitted by: **JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**
principal author: **NEIL YATES, ENGINEERING SERVICES MANAGER**

1   PURPOSE

1.1   To look at current issues affecting parking in the borough.

1.2   Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley.

- Corporate Priorities – To ensure best use of council resources in the provision of parking.

2   BACKGROUND

Ribble Valley Borough Council currently manages 29 car parks throughout the borough, some of which are owned outright and others that are leased to the Council. 19 of these sites are chargeable to customers on a pay and display basis.

3   ISSUES

Upgrade of Payment Systems:

3.1   The Council takes payment of off-street car parking charges from the motorist either through an annual contract (payable in advance) or through a cash payment to the on-site pay and display parking machines. These machines (23 in total on the Council's 19 chargeable sites) accept payment by cash only.

3.2   It is becoming more common for parking machines to accept cashless payments e.g. by debit/credit card and there is now some expectation by customers that non-cash payment systems should be available.

3.3   This issue is partially mitigated by the pay-by-phone option introduced in 2016, where customers can purchase tickets via mobile phone. However, this method is currently only responsible for around 1% of tickets purchased in the Council's car parks.

3.4   The manufacturer has stated that the existing machines cannot be retrofitted to take card payments so new machines would need to be provided in order to offer this facility. Legislation was also introduced in 2016 that required any card payment machine to also provide a contactless payment option.

3.5   The Council would also need to sign agreements with a merchant bank and a payment service provider to facilitate the payments. A similar arrangement already exists to enable the pay-by-phone method of payment, albeit via Chipside, the company employed by the Council for the back office administration of its parking fines. This

currently costs the Council approximately £5 per month in total for all its pay and display car parks.

3.6   A capital scheme value of £14,550 has been allocated in the 2017/18 budget to fund the upgrade of machines to be able to accept chip and pin payments. A quote has been obtained from the contractor with whom the Council has an existing maintenance agreement for £16,341 for three new machines.

3.7   It is intended to replace one machine at each of the following car parks –

- Edisford Road Car Park
- Lowergate Car Park
- Railway View Car Park

3.8   The rationale for these suggested sites is that these car parks are responsible for generating the most income and have the oldest machines. An alternative to the aforementioned car parks is Pope Croft Car Park at Ribchester, which is the highest income generating car park outside of Clitheroe.

3.9   If approved, it is envisaged that it would take approximately 2 months to complete the necessary agreements between the relevant parties and to undertake the replacement of the affected pay and display machines.

Holmes Mill:

3.10   In April 2017, James' Places, the owners of the Holmes Mill development, made contact with the Engineering Services department regarding the possibility of the Council undertaking the management of their car park, once opened to the public.

3.11   James' Places proposed that the car park should be free of charge to its customers for a time period of up to three hours per visit. The Council would carry out parking enforcement on behalf of James' Places and in return would receive any revenue generated from penalty charge notices issued in the car park.

3.12   The above proposal would be on an initial 12 month arrangement on a rolling basis, with a three month notice period of termination at any time.

3.13   In order to comply with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and to enable enforcement on the car park to be undertaken legally, the Council would need to create a new parking order for the car park. In order for this to be possible, the Council would have to lease the car park from James' Places. A similar situation has previously occurred at Chipping Car Park, where the Council leased the car park from Chipping Village Hall.

3.14   A further potential issue was identified in that if customers did not have to pay and display a valid ticket to park in the car park, then the Council's Civil Enforcement Officers would be unable to identify how long vehicles had been parked, unless they were to manually log them on their first visit and then check them on their return. This would be disadvantageous to the Council due to the time consuming nature of this work and the low likelihood of being able to issue any penalty charge notices for offences committed.

3.15   The Council has asked James' Places about the possibility of charging for parking in the car park, as per its other pay and display car parks, but have currently not received confirmation about the acceptability of this proposal.

3.16   The Council's Car Park Working Group discussed the issue in July 2017 and resolved that any agreement with Holmes Mill should be done under the policies and principles that the Council currently applies. As of August 2017, no further dialogue has been had with James' Places regarding the issue, but a further report will be submitted to this committee in due course.

Shoppers Car Parks at Christmas:

3.17   To support the retail sector and the local economy, the Council has previously offered free parking in its town centre car parks on Saturdays in December for Clitheroe and Longridge.

3.18   It is proposed this year that the Council offers free parking on the following Saturdays:

2nd December;
9th December;
16th December;
23rd December;

4   **RISK ASSESSMENTS**

The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – £14,550 would be spent from the capital programme budget and £1,791 from an existing maintenance budget to undertake the replacement of three pay and display machines. There will also be an ongoing charge by the merchant bank and payment service provider to facilitate these payments, estimated to be around £5 per month.

    There will be a loss of income for the Christmas car parking proposal.

- Political – The payment upgrade scheme shows the Council to be moving with the times.

    The Christmas parking proposal shows a political support to the retail sector and local economy.

- Reputation – Both the payment upgrade scheme and the Christmas parking proposal should only enhance the reputation of the Council.

- Equality & Diversity – The proposed sites for the payment system upgrade would see the scheme only be implemented in Clitheroe but the next proactive installation would look to replace the machine at Pope Croft Car Park, Ribchester.

5   **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1   Approves the purchase of three new pay and display machines for Edisford Road, Lowergate, and Railway View Car Parks, at a cost of £16,341, to be financed by £14,550 from the capital programme budget and £1,791 from the repairs and maintenance budget.

5.2   Notes the information relating to car park arrangements at Holmes Mill.

5.3   Continues to allow free town centre parking on four Saturdays leading up to and during the festive period, as in the previous years.

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REF: Adrian Harper Community Services 29.08.17