

Committee	FULL COUNCIL
Date	21 September 2021
Agenda Item	7d

Review of Car parks

Background

- Events over the past year have caused us to reflect upon the current car parks operation to ensure that HTC are offering convenient and flexible facilities to users and using the latest technology and processes available. Clearly the Covid-19 pandemic has led many people to use contactless and online payment for their purchases as part of everyday life and the use of cash has significantly reduced. There was considerable pressure from the public at the beginning of the pandemic to switch to contactless payment for car parking. This can be achieved through either contactless card payment on a new machine or through a mobile phone App or a combination of both
- A user consultation conducted by Cllr Peter Caulfield in 2020 through Facebook concluded that of those responding 455 (85%) said they would like a contactless card payment facility and 77 (15%) said they would like to use a MiPermit App for payment.
- As the only remaining bank in the town is closing on 12 October 2021, the council is under some pressure to find a swift solution to the time-consuming task of counting and depositing cash.
- There is no provision in the budget for new machines, but this matter being urgent, it would be prudent to purchase as soon as possible using capital reserves, which can be used only for capital purchases.

Technology available for paying for car parking

- 1 **Coin only payment machines** – these are still widely used but as alternative payment methods are emerging some authorities are removing this facility
- 2 **Contactless pay and display machines** – these are being used widely and are a fairly common means of payment. There are some examples of chip and PIN payment but these are now used less in favour of contactless. New pay and display machines are available which offer both coins (for those not ready to use a card) and contactless cards. The coin option can be blanked off if no longer needed
- 3 **Cashless payment online or by an App** – this is now a widely used payment method with several developed payment portals in the market. Examples are MiPermit, RingGo and others. These portals can be used for Pay and Display and for payment of penalty charge notices (PCN). Some portals offer the opportunity for use for other online payments. MiPermit is provided and managed by Chipside, already used by HTC for the issue and follow-up of penalty charge notices (PCNs).
 - a. The vast majority of the Essex authorities, including BDC, are currently using the MiPermit portal for pay and display, and online payment of penalty charge notices (PCN).
 - b. MiPermit is also widely used across England and Wales with at least 62 local authorities having a payment portal currently in operation.

- c. RingGo is widely used across the UK with around 200 authorities and operators listed.

Conclusions

The current HTC facilities and processes for car park operation are significantly lagging behind those extensively used by neighbouring authorities and nationwide. There are opportunities for HTC to improve its facilities and processes for the benefit of users, and also to improve the efficiency of HTC operations.

The benefits that could be provided are:

- 1 Two options for contactless pay and display for car park users
- 2 Opportunity to significantly reduce the HTC handling and management of cash, not helped by Lloyds Bank closing in October (currently at least £1000 in cash counted and deposited each week)
- 3 Greater efficiency in management PCNs through online payment
- 4 Simplification of the payment and accounting processes and removal of the possibility of human error
- 5 Provision of a common system for users which will be familiar across the district

Proposals

1 Pay and Display Machines

It is proposed to replace the two current coin only pay and display machines with two new machines that offer both coin operated or contactless payment facilities. The current machines are unreliable and the supplier, based in Europe, has confirmed that they cannot be converted to contactless,

The cost of two new machines is just over £8k plus installation.

Quotations and commercial proposals from three suppliers have been obtained and are submitted in the Private Session report item 21 for review and approval.

2 Online Digital Payment Portals

It is proposed to introduce online portals using the MiPermit Digital Platform and Chipside web based PCN payment for the following activities,

- 1 Pay and display optional alternative to contactless and coin payment
- 2 Payment of Penalty Charge notices (PCN)

Reasoning supporting this proposal,

- 1 It is a common system used in the Braintree District and across much of Essex so will be familiar to residents and visitors.
- 2 It provides users with choice for pay and display and is likely to be the long-term preferred choice for many users as they become familiar with the process.
- 3 Users can extend their pay and display period remotely without having to go back to the car park if they wish to stay longer in town.
- 4 The portals are user friendly and easy to use and a link can be provided on the HTC website

- 5 It has the flexibility to be developed for other payments in the future if required
- 6 MiPermit is part of the Chipside company that enables HTC and other councils to manage parking enforcement.
- 7 Any challenges to PCNs can continue to be referred to the HTC for decision.

The cost of establishing the portal is in the region of £1k.

The transaction costs are circa 10p for pay and display transaction– plus card payment processing charges at around 0.85% per transaction

Quotation and commercial proposal have been obtained and are submitted in the Private Session report item 21 for review and approval.

Recommendation: That HTC approves the proposals detailed in this report as the way forward to modernise the management of car parking in Halstead.



Sarah Greator Town Clerk