

## **Committee: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

Agenda item: 6

Wards: All

### **Subject: Parking (neighbourhood shopping parade survey analysis and proposals)**

Lead officer: Chris Lee

Lead member: Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environmental Sustainability.

Councillor Judy Saunders - and Cabinet Member for Performance and Implementation

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Sara Williams, future Merton Programme Manager for Regeneration, Investment and Renewal

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#### **Recommendations:**

- A. That Scrutiny note the comments received from the survey carried out between March and April 2013 (detailed in appendix A) and the common themes that emerged from the town centre survey in 2012 as shown under Section 3.15 of this report.
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#### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report details the outcome of the surveys carried out between March and April 2013 looking at parking at each of the neighbourhood shopping parades throughout the borough.
- 1.2 The report was commissioned to better understand the extent to which parking provision supports the retail and other businesses in the 34 shopping parades in the borough. The survey followed on from work done to better understand the extent to which off street car park spaces owned by the Council meet the needs of business and the motorist.
- 1.3 The report shows whilst the response to the survey was limited it does identify a number of themes that were also common to the town centre parking report. These include the desire for an element of free parking, standardisation of tariffs and the need to review the maximum length of stay amongst other matters.
- 1.4 The report concludes that each shopping parade will require detailed attention to assess the extent to which these solutions and / or others will be appropriate in order to ensure that we have thriving shopping parades as well as effective traffic management.

## 2 DETAILS

2.1 Neighbourhood parades play an important role in serving residents shopping needs. This was recognised through the report commissioned for a Retail and Town Centre Capacity Study (August 2011) which considered the retail and leisure offer at our local centres, including the neighbourhood parades. The findings state that generally residents visit stores near to their home and a relatively high proportion walk to buy food and grocery items. The report states that the existing provision of local centres (including the neighbourhood parades) offers a balanced distribution of local facilities serving local communities. An audit was carried out based on the number of units, the mix and diversity of retail and service uses, the role in terms of shopping and customer group and the level of accessibility by public transport. The full study can be found at:

[http://www.merton.gov.uk/12465\\_-final\\_report\\_\\_\\_appendices\\_consolidated\\_\\_aug\\_2011\\_.pdf](http://www.merton.gov.uk/12465_-final_report___appendices_consolidated__aug_2011_.pdf)

2.2 Neighbourhood parades are though different from town centres, relying less upon the motor vehicle for their trade particularly local supplementary food shopping [ topping up the weekly supermarket visit ] but they do serve many customers that need to use the car especially those selling bulky items or providing services such as launderettes, dentists and home furnishings.

2.3 Nevertheless it should be noted that parking is just one factor which will influence the success or failure of our shops and shopping parades. This is not to say it is not important, but it is also not the panacea to the current financial challenge being faced up and down the country by retailers in shopping parades, shopping malls or town centre high streets.

2.4 Parking control is a part of the Council's, [as Highway and Traffic Authority] response to managing congestion and traffic flows in the borough. These responsibilities are set within the content of national and London wide strategies including the Mayors transport strategy. Our ambition to support business and to sustain thriving retail opportunities, through our Core Strategy and Economic Development Strategy is set alongside our duty to manage traffic flows and congestion in Merton.

2.5 Over the last 18 months, Merton's Parking Services and Traffic and Highways teams have used capital funding to investigate and implement parking improvement measures to support local businesses and residents with more recent measures being in our town centres and localised shopping parades. Completed schemes include:

Merton High Street – this was carried out with TfL funding available for improvement works along the entire corridor.

Kingston Road - Raynes Park - Works completed in July 2013, providing short term Pay and Display (P&D) footway parking with 20 minutes free.

West Barnes Lane - Motspur Park - Works completed in May 2013. This provided 1 hour free parking & waiting restrictions to assist with loading / unloading.

Burlington Road - New Malden - Works completed in May 2013. This provided P&D short term parking and parking with 20 minutes free.

Leopold Road – Wimbledon- Works completed in September 2012. This provided extended hours of operation for P&D bays with 20 minutes free.

Church Road - Village area - Works completed in February 2013. This introduced 20 minutes free parking and allowed parking all day on Saturdays; (Highways are currently consulting on allowing all day parking during the week).

Arthur Road - Wimbledon Park - Works completed February 2013 to introduce 20 minutes free parking.

2.6 Current Schemes to be completed during 2013 are:

Kingston Road/Oxford Road –Raynes Park - To convert Permit Holder bays to Shared Use bays with 20 minutes free parking. This is currently under consultation.

Firstway - Raynes Park - To convert single yellow line to parking bays; 1 hour free parking. This is currently under consultation.

London Road - Tooting Station - To introduce P&D bays with 20 minutes free. This is currently under consultation.

Kingston Road (opposite Fire Station) –Highways are currently investigating footway parking on Kingston Road with P&D bays with 20 minutes free.

Durham Road – this road is currently being considered for a CPZ and businesses have been consulted accordingly.

2.7 Between July and October 2012 the Council sought the views of local residents, business groups and businesses in our six town centres on parking. This questionnaire asked users of each town centre about cost, availability, restricted hours and maximum stay. The recommendations based on the outcome were agreed at Cabinet on 11 March 2013 and it was further agreed that a second consultation should take place on the designated neighbourhood parades across the borough.

2.8 To date, Parking Services is arranging as part of the town centre survey to:

- 2.8.1 Standardise the parking tariffs so they are less complex reducing the current number of tariff structures from in excess of 50 to single figures. This work is on-going and will require formal consultation to implement any recommendations.
- 2.8.2 Reduce the number of business permits within zone W2. This was completed with business parking transferred to the Queens Rd car park in Wimbledon Town Centre.
- 2.8.3 Introduce cashless parking (mobile phone payments) this and virtual permits will be introduced in 2014.
- 2.8.4 Introduce parking as an agenda item on the community forums for the public.
- 2.8.5 Provide electronic signs showing the availability of parking spaces

### **3 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 3.1. The second consultation took place between 12<sup>th</sup> March and 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013. It was open to any business or resident and visitor to the borough through the 'Get Involved' community engagement web pages.
- 3.2 The consultation was based on parking provisions at the 34 designated neighbourhood shopping parades across the borough. This report provides details on the responses received and recommendations based on common themes from both surveys.
- 3.3 The neighbourhood parade survey was primarily aimed at businesses to understand their need and if current parking provisions could be improved, with a view to stimulating the local economy.
- 3.4 339 hard copy questionnaires were sent out through the Business Rates team to all the businesses located within Merton's 34 shopping parades (as identified in the Adopted Unitary Development Plan (2008); please refer to Appendix A for list of the parades. The survey was also made available on the 'Get Involved' community engagement page of Merton's website, enabling participants to respond electronically for as many parades as they wished.
- 3.6 189 responses were received electronically and 25 of the 339 in hard copies. A total of 214 responses were received.
- 3.7 Consultees were asked to initially identify the parade they were responding about and then answer five further questions relating to controlled parking zones (if applicable), availability of spaces, maximum stay, costs and any additional comments.
- 3.8 Respondents were asked to demonstrate if they were responding as a business or a resident. 67 responders answered this question of which 17 (25.37%) advised that they were businesses.
- 3.9 Appendix A provides details of the responses received per question; individual responses can be found by visiting the 'Get Involved' community engagement pages at: <https://consult.merton.gov.uk>. (Search for neighbourhood shopping parades under the 'completed consultation' option). Appendix B provides a location map.

3.10 Although responses were often very specific to the need of the individual parade, there were some common themes that came from the responses including:

- Requests for 20 minutes free parking;
- Standardising and consideration of tariffs;
- Increasing the length of stay
- Prevention of nuisance and abuse of free parking provision;
- Not increasing charges or additional restrictions being implemented.

3.11 The top four parades with the most responses are shown below with details on concerns specific to the parade.

#### **3.11.1 65-87 Ridgway with 33 responses (7%)**

**Hours of operation:** Mon-Sat 8.30 am – 6.30pm

**Charges:** 55p per 30 mins, 2 hours max stay. Shared use bays

The majority of responders were not happy with the hours of operation, nor were they satisfied with the amount of parking spaces available or the cost. Of the total 130 responses regarding maximum length of stay the majority of responses were for this parade, 12 suggesting 2 hours and a further 8 who were requesting over 2 hours.

#### **3.11.2 1-12 cons Merton Park Parade (The Rush) with 19 responses (8.8%)**

**Hours of operation:** Mon- Fri 10am to 6pm

**Charges:** 55p per 30 mins, 1 hour max

In terms of satisfaction with parking, of those that responded, 7 were satisfied as opposed to 5 who were not. No one here replied regarding the length of stay and of the 10 responses on the cost of parking, 8 were unhappy.

#### **3.11.3 300-372 Grand Drive with 15 responses (7%)**

**Hours of operation:** none

**Charges:** none

People responding for this parade focussed on the number of parking spaces available, 9 of the 10 answered positively and that they were satisfied with the number of spaces.

### 3.11.4 253-271 Coombe Lane with 13 responses (6%)

**Hours of operation:** There are no restrictions along this section. However the hard copies were sent out with restrictions showing and those that responded did so, on the basis of there being restrictions.

9 responses were given regarding the number of spaces of which 5 were satisfied. 5 of 7 responses preferred over 2 hours parking. It should be noted that the lay-by is not public highway and we cannot and do not intend to introduce any restrictions in this location.

- 3.12 We can conclude from the responses that the key concerns are the costs associated with parking and the length of time being allowed to park. A total of 130 responses were made to the question on the maximum length of stay. The majority of responders (72) were stating that this should be 2 hours or over 2 hours. 65-67 Ridgway were the main responders (23 in total). It is worth noting that extending length of stay may have a negative impact on the business as it could reduce the turnover of visitors.
- 3.13 Alongside the length of stay, the hours of operation were also highlighted as an issue in some areas. Each parade where there have been responses has demonstrated its main concerns, for Ridgway this includes the number of parking spaces available. Merton Park focuses on the cost, Grand Drive, the number of parking spaces and in Coombe Lane the hours of operation as well as the number of parking spaces.
- 3.15 The common themes that were made by respondents to the main town centre survey in 2012 and the secondary neighbourhood parades survey include:
- 3.15.1 Standardising tariffs - The neighbourhood parade survey result suggests that the current tariffs cause confusion for drivers who may then incur penalties. Merton has in excess of 55 tariffs operating. Parking services are looking at reducing the number of tariffs and removing confusing tariff structures following the town centre parking survey. (See 2.8.1)
- 3.15.2 Allowing a period of free parking, for example 20 minutes managed through the existing pay and display machines with the option for longer stay if needed. Therefore if a visitor needs an hour parking they would obtain one hour parking but pay for 40 minutes. Alternatively obtain a ticket for 20 minutes free of charge. This has been popular in other parts of the borough and has been supported by businesses to allow short regular visitors to parades without 'clogging up' parking facilities. This may be suitable for many parades and individual investigation will assess the need. Where paid for parking is not provided consideration would need to be given as to whether this should be managed via charging and allowing a period of free parking.
- 3.15.3 Enabling spontaneous stopping and parking: A number of responses in the neighbourhood parade survey raised concerns around difficulty with impromptu parking, particularly to stop quickly to pop into a shop. One recommendation from the main town centre survey was the introduction of cashless parking facilities which we expect to be in place across Merton in the next year. Visitors may be more inclined to stop and purchase from a corner shop if they knew they could pay for parking without the need for change for the meter. Recent responses suggest that parking is hindered when visitors are not clear about the cost to park and the need to have the correct change. Parking services are

already considering giving visitors the option to either be enabled to pay by smartphone or pay in the local shop and dependent on spend receive free parking or incentives to shop locally, such as a prize draw.

- 3.15.4 There was a specific concern about the lack of available parking spaces at 67-89 Ridgway Place. A similar response was received in the 2012 town centre survey regarding the need for additional parking spaces in nearby Wimbledon Village. Following the town centre survey officers carried out further investigation at Ridgway Place and concluded that it is not possible to create additional spaces in this parade.
- 3.16 The Council is keen to build on its findings regarding the parking needs locally and make the appropriate improvements. It is apparent from the variation in responses that parking needs are localised and due to the number of sites involved it is necessary for the council to prioritise a number of parades to be progressed through to investigate and implementation of improvements to meet specific needs pending the nature of the business. For example, allowing sufficient time for patrons visiting a dentist, launderette or hairdresser. Businesses want customers to be able to park easily but with a time constraint to facilitate a reasonable turnover.
- 3.17 It should be noted that since the completion of the survey, there have been concerns from the public that not all of the high street parades were included. This is because the second survey specifically targeted designated neighbourhood parades.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 It is recommended that as we continue to take forward the proposals from the town centre survey as identified under 3.15, officers investigate what changes are needed at each shopping parade as necessary taking each in turn.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the further work focuses on those parades exhibiting the greatest need based on the survey and existing information regarding parking / traffic management issues, determined by officers in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

#### **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 5.1 Do nothing. This will not address the issues raised during the surveys; it will lead to loss of confidence in the Council and will do nothing in supporting local businesses.

#### **6. TIMETABLE**

- 6.1 A programme will be prepared in consultation with Parking Services, Traffic and Highways and future Merton.

#### **7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There is a limited budget for parking / traffic reviews undertaken by Traffic and Highways. Additional Capital resources will be required to complete these works and this will need to be sought via Cabinet / Council as necessary.

- 7.2 Any changes to parking fees could have implications on income which will need to be factored into the Council's financial planning. Analysis may be required to determine loss that may be incurred by enabling longer parking for free periods. Conversely supporting local shops and businesses by enabling free and more accessible parking initiatives will encourage local spending and support the economy.

## **8. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Traffic Management Orders would be made under Section 6 and Section 45 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended). The Council is required by the Local Authorities Traffic Order (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 to give notice of its intention to make a Traffic Order (by publishing a draft traffic order). These regulations also require the Council to consider any representations received as a result of publishing the draft order.

## **9. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 None for the purpose of this report

## **9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 None for the purpose of this report.

## **10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 None for the purpose of this report.

## **11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

- Appendix A - Summary report on responses to neighbourhood parking parades survey
- Appendix B - Map of neighbourhood parades

## **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Full responses to the survey can be found at:

[https://consult.merton.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/Analyse\\_Neighbourhood\\_Parade\\_2013Campaign-item%201%20.xls](https://consult.merton.gov.uk/UploadedFiles/Analyse_Neighbourhood_Parade_2013Campaign-item%201%20.xls)