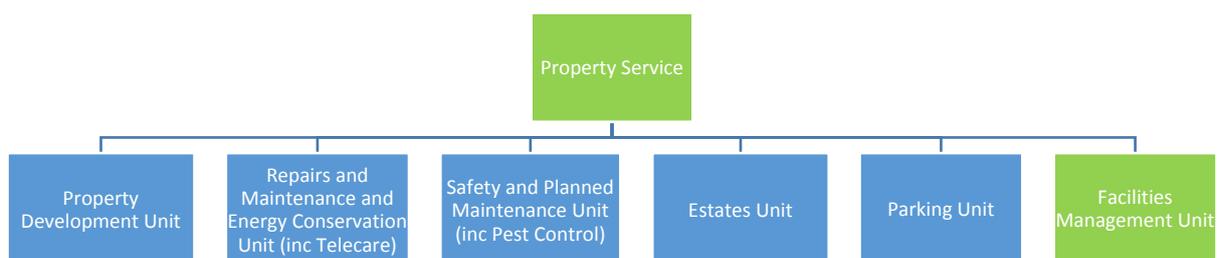


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| NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE | COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE |
| DATE OF MEETING | 7th February 2019 |
| TITLE | PARKING MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS |
| AUTHOR | Dafydd Gibbard - Senior Property Manager |
| CABINET MEMBER | Cllr Dafydd Meurig |
| PURPOSE | Raise awareness of the Council's parking management arrangements and responsibilities, work outputs and challenges for the future |

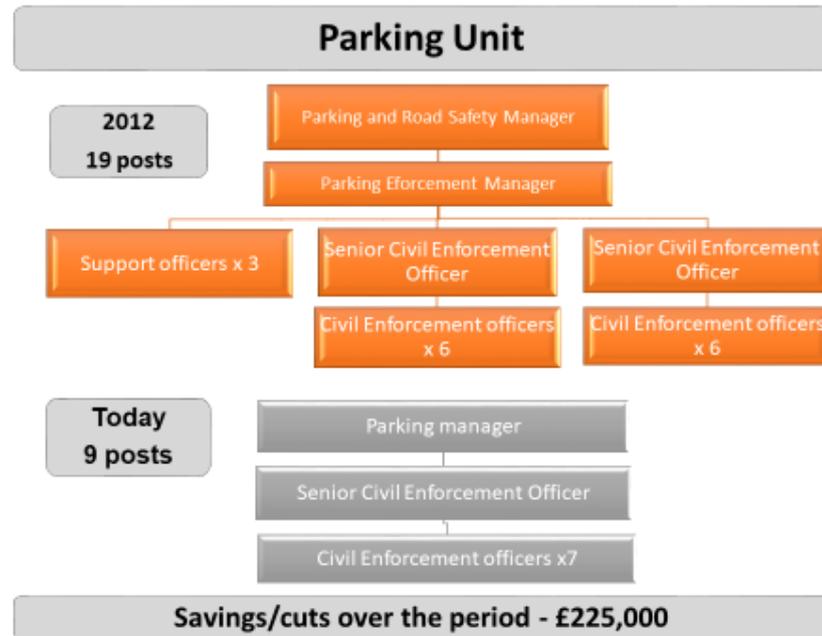
1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to share information about the Council's arrangements and responsibilities in the field of Parking management. It will explain the nature of the work carried out at present, the changes that have taken place over recent years, and the challenges we face.
- 1.2 The Parking Unit is responsible managing the parking provision, which is part of the Properties Service within the Environment Department.



- 1.3 There are two main elements to the work of this unit:
- managing 117 car parks throughout the county
 - implementing the parking enforcement arrangements
- 1.4 The enforcement aspect transferred from the Police to Local Authorities under the Decriminalisation of Parking enforcement, 2007. This was a service that, at the time, imposed a brand new duty on Local Authorities, and we started off with a clean slate. At the time, it was difficult to envisage the scope of the work, and over the years we have modified our resources and arrangements as we began to understand the situation.

- 1.5 As the diagram below shows, until around 2012, the Parking Unit had 12 Enforcement Officers, Two Senior Enforcement Officers, and two officers on a managerial level. Since then, the number of Enforcement Officers has fallen to seven, and there is one Senior Enforcement Officer and one Manager. Through the introduction of mobile technology, the back office, consisting of three officers, has also ceased to exist. This has led to an annual revenue saving of £225,000 in the costs of providing a parking management service.



2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 The Parking Unit is in charge of two main fields of work, these are:

- implementing the parking enforcement arrangements
- managing the provision of suitable parking spaces in accordance with the Council's Parking Strategy

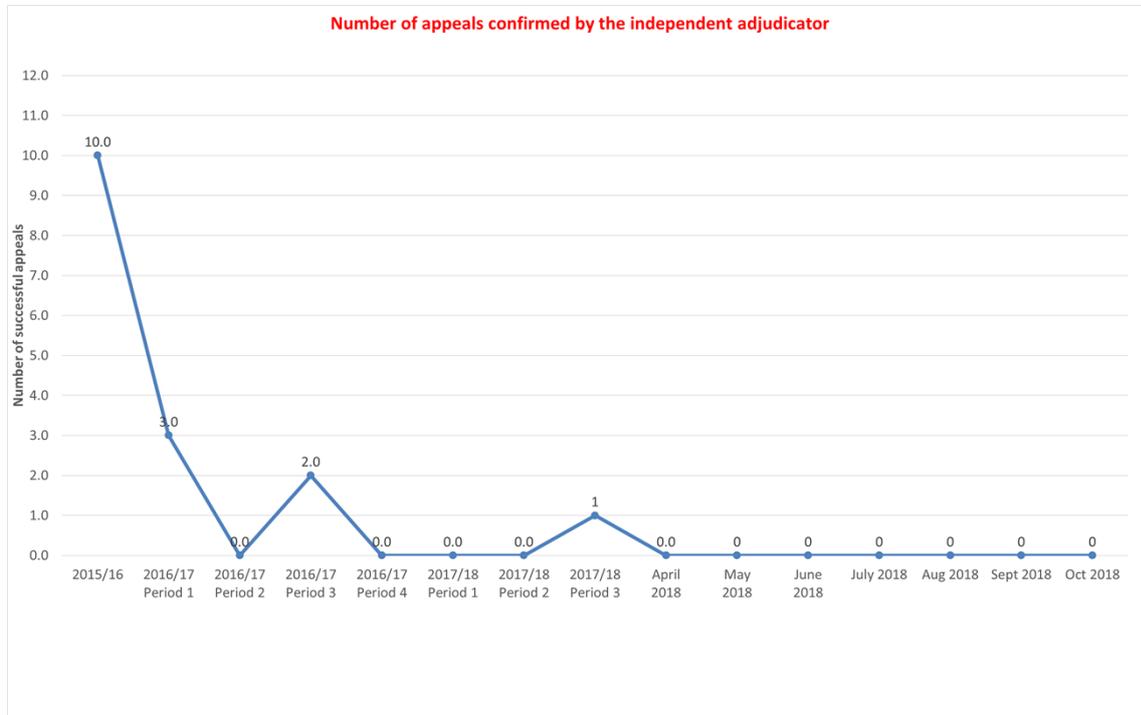
Parking Enforcement

2.2 The Transportation Service imposes different restrictions and rights of use (as Statutory Orders) on our roads network, with the aim of making roads safe for motorists and pedestrians. The main duty of the Parking Enforcement Officers is to enforce these Statutory Orders in order to ensure their effectiveness.

2.3 Although no one likes a parking fine, there is great demand in communities throughout the county for the presence of Parking Enforcement Officers, especially in urban areas, holiday destinations, near schools, in areas of dense housing, where children play etc.

2.4 Ensuring fair and transparent enforcement is part of this Unit's remit. Arrangements to administrate the system is provided via a partnership of Authorities in Wales. A straightforward appeals system is provided along with the right to appeal to an independent

adjudicator if dissatisfied. As the graph below shows, nowadays, the cases where an independent adjudicator finds that the Council has taken unfair enforcement steps are rare exceptions. Every such finding gives us the opportunity to review our arrangements and make improvements where necessary.



Managing the provision of suitable parking spaces in accordance with the Council's Parking Strategy

- 2.5 The Council has 117 parking spaces throughout the county. 60 of these are pay and display, the rest are free, in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Parking Strategy.
- 2.6 The Council's Cabinet adopted the current Strategy, which includes the parking management arrangements and the current parking fees structure, on 19 February 2015 (a copy of the report is in Appendix A). It is worth noting that the Communities Scrutiny Committee at the time had scrutinised the content in detail during its meetings on 10 December 2013 and 1 October 2014, as part of creating this Strategy.
- 2.7 Parking can be a contentious issue, and the review of arrangements was an opportunity to ensure that all areas of parking management were addressed, that there was consistency across the County, and that every matter under consideration linked in with the rest. It is, therefore, worthwhile for the Communities Scrutiny Committee to be aware of all the arrangements when considering this field, especially the challenges that are likely to arise in the coming years. In brief, the Strategy gives full consideration to the following issues:
- Parking fees structure - the main principle here, apart from ensuring consistency and fairness, is that longer stay parking at centres should cost less pro rata, in order to encourage people to stay longer for the benefit of the local economy. The time someone can park in a short stay car park should be restricted in order to ensure turnover and spaces for those who wish to 'pop-in' to the centres.

- Establish a criteria for different types of locations - ensure that the size and character of centres are given regular consideration, and that fees for similar centres are the same.
- Establish a criteria for short stay and long stay designations - again to ensure consistency and fairness.
- Christmas Parking - an attempt was made to establish clear guidelines for Christmas parking, highlighting the loss in income resulting from a period of free parking.
- Parking for blue badge holders - options were considered with an eye on the way neighbouring authorities managed parking for blue badge holders.
- On-street Parking - locations were identified where a capital investment is needed to improve parking provisions and an opportunity to charge a fee for parking there in order to ensure management and good use.
- Annual parking - the fees for annual parking tickets were reviewed and the higher rate charged for those living outside the county was abolished.
- Residential Parking - it was deemed that the residential parking arrangement were appropriate as they were.
- Management of private car parks - it was acknowledged that there was opportunity and success to be gained from managing other assets, and it was decided to continue with this and monitor true costs.
- Cashless payment - this was put forward as a pilot scheme for machines that accept card payments. This has recently been implemented at six locations and the costs of establishing such an arrangement has fallen to a level where it is likely that we will see a further increase in the number of machines in our car parks that have a card payment option.
- Matters that have not been developed further:
 - **Pay on exit** - due to the capital financial implications and maintenance, on-call staff and practical complications, it was decided that this was not a wise option to develop.
 - **Automatic number plate recognition**- due to capital investment and the image portrayed to visitors and the complications that could arise, this was not developed as an option
 - **CCTV Enforcement**- due to financial implications, complications and image this was not developed as an option.

2.8 It can be seen from all the above considerations that parking arrangements were reviewed in detail in 2015, and one or two further changes have been made since establishing the changes, namely:

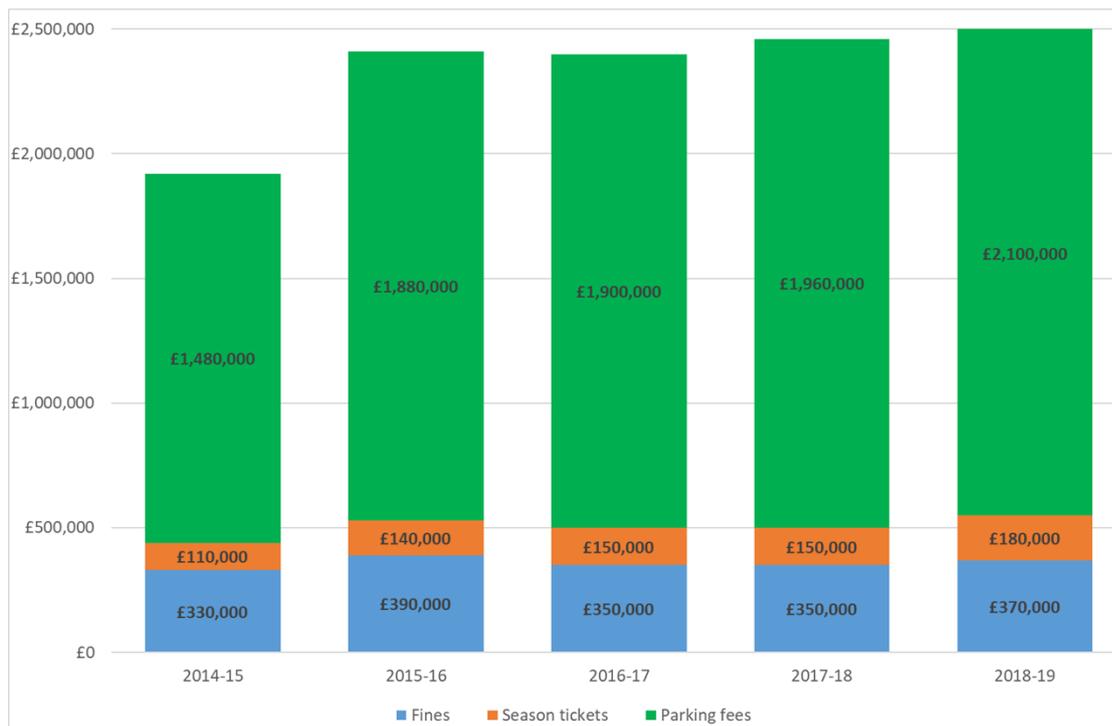
2.9 **Free parking over the Christmas period** - in adopting the Parking Strategy, it was noted that there was a desire to continue to offer a period of free parking in order try to attract more shoppers to Gwynedd's city and town centres. At the time it was intended to provide free

parking from the weekend before the last full week leading up to Christmas, until 27 December. Although the intention was welcomed, the period of free parking proposed changed annually depending on the day of the week Christmas day would fall. In order to try to provide clarity for shoppers and customers, the period was re-defined so that the car parks could be used for free from 15 December every year.

- 2.10 **Setting up a "Local Parking Permit"** - During the consultation period on introducing pay and display arrangements in additional car parks, it became apparent that consideration needed to be given to one field that had been causing considerable concern in several communities. This situation arose with residents who normally parked their cars in car parks near their homes, and the concern that they would be unable to do so in future. Several observations referred to the fact that there were no parking spaces near their houses and that they were entirely dependent on being able to park their cars in the car parks closest to their homes.
- 2.11 Of course, the Council is not duty-bound to provide free parking spaces for home-owners. However, following receipt of these observations, it is believed that the Council should try to assist with such situations and, to that end, a new Local Parking Permit was created that would give householders the right to buy a parking ticket for the long-term car park closest to their home. It would therefore be targeted specifically at those who otherwise had nowhere to park near their homes. The cost of the new Local Parking Permit would be £60 per annum or a little over £1.00 per week.
- 2.12 This permit was introduced in April 2017, and this year to date 177 people have taken up the offer. The availability of the ticket has also raised residents' awareness of the Annual Parking Permit (which allows the permit holder to park in any long-stay car park in Gwynedd). As a result, several people have liked the sound of this permit, and 2125 Permits have been sold this year to date.
- 2.13 **Holiday Season Only Car Parks** - Also during the consultation process on introducing pay and display arrangements in additional car park, several people noted that some car parks had been designated as pay and display as they were only affected during the holiday season, in which case, it made no sense to charge during the winter months. The Cabinet accepted that rationale and, as a result, parking charges would only apply during the holiday season.

3. INCOME FROM PARKING

- 3.1 The graph below shows that existing pay and display arrangements at 60 of our car parks, along with Annual Parking Permits and payments from parking enforcement, has led to an income over the past four years as follows:



3.2 The total income had, therefore, increased from £1.92M in 2014/15 to £2.65M in 2017/18, an increase of 38%.

3.3 From the graph below it is clear that income from enforcement has remained consistent over the years. Income from parking tickets has increased substantially following the introduction of the new Local Parking Permit in 2017. The greatest increase in the income from car parks stems mainly from the introduction of pay and display arrangements in 10 additional car parks.

3.4 The income is now a key part of the Council's annual revenue income and makes a valuable contribution toward maintaining services. Legislation demands that any income generated from parking management must be reinvested in the highways network. The Council currently spends over £6M a year on managing and maintaining the roads network; the income from Parking, therefore, contributes approximately half this sum.

3.5 If this income did not exist, the Council would have to cope with this substantial loss in annual revenue in the same way as it endeavours to cope with other cuts to the revenue income.

4. CHALLENGES FOR THE COMING YEARS

4.1 The main challenge for this field is likely to stem from the need to continue to endeavour to increase the annual revenue income, to help the Council avoid further savings in other fields. Any new income that could be generated would be available to contribute to the shortfall in the Council's revenue budget over the next three years and we are currently looking at options to try to find a further £180,000 of additional income from car parks. We are also seeking to establish an electric car charging plan with the aim of generating a further £50,000 of income a year.

4.2 In addition, we are also required to cope with the effect of annual inflation i.e. the effect of inflation means that the income target for parking increases year on year (£197,000 over the past five years and an additional £47,000 during the next financial year). A huge effort is, therefore, needed to find ways of increasing the income to address the impact of inflation before any contributions toward the Council's savings target can be considered.

4.3 If the effect of inflation is to be met and a contribution of £180,000 made toward the savings targets, it can be anticipated that by 2022/23 the annual income will need to be £450,000 higher than it is today.

4.4 Considering this, the new options for generating income that are available for the Council to consider are likely to include the following:

4.5 **Increasing parking fees** - the effect of increasing parking fees can be envisaged as follows:

| Parking period | | Current | 10% Increase | 15% Increase | 20% Increase |
|---|----------------|---------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Short Term | 1 hour | £1.00 | £1.10 | £1.15 | £1.20 |
| | 2 hour | £2.00 | £2.20 | £2.30 | £2.40 |
| | 3 hour | £3.00 | £3.30 | £3.45 | £3.60 |
| Long Term (average fee as there is a variance in the fees for different bands) | Up to 4 hours | £2.00 | £2.20 | £2.30 | £2.40 |
| | Up to 8 hours | £3.00 | £3.30 | £3.45 | £3.60 |
| | Up to 12 hours | £4.00 | £4.40 | £4.60 | £4.80 |
| Estimated income increase | | | £195,765 | £293,648 | £391,531 |

4.6 **Free parking over Christmas** - the Council currently provides free parking at all its car parks between 15 and 27 December. The loss of income from this is approximately £45,000 a year.

4.7 The intention behind this scheme was to boost the local economy through making the high street more attractive at the busiest time of year for shops. However, it is not clear whether this strategy achieves its purpose. The vast majority of car parks near the High Street are short stay car parks (parking for up to three hours only), in order to promote turnover throughout the day and to ensure that more people can gain access to parking during the day. Our policy of not charging at the same busy times as such a turnover would make it easier for people to visit town centres leads to a lower turnover and fewer opportunities to find a convenient place to park.

- 4.8 We also conducted a survey at eight busy car parks over the 2018 Christmas period. The survey shows these car parks fill quickly in the mornings (by 9am) and that up to 35% of the parking spaces are full for at least six hours before vehicles depart. It also shows that the number of spaces used in this way increases daily during the working week.
- 4.9 The survey strongly suggests that those working in town centres use the short term car parks during this time, thus reducing the numbers of parking spaces available for those who wish to visit the shops and spend money. A report commissioned by Welsh Government in 2017 on the implications of providing free parking spaces has reached a similar conclusion. It notes that visitors to towns believe that the locations of car parks, a sufficient parking allocation, that car parks are tidy and welcoming, and that the shopping locations are lively and attractive, are more important provisions than free parking.
- 4.10 **Change criteria for introducing pay and display arrangements** - the Parking Strategy currently notes that we do not have pay and display arrangements at car parks with fewer than 20 shops or businesses. Reducing this threshold would mean that we could charge at more car parks but there is doubt as to whether this would lead to a genuinely new income as recent experience shows that few cars are likely to use these car parks at any given time. One possible outcome is that these cars would start parking on the highway at locations that would be difficult to manage, creating road safety risks. We will need to be very vigilant of this, bearing in mind that our aim is to ensure the safety of our highways for motorists and pedestrians.
- 4.11 **Car parks managed by other departments** - some car parks are not managed by the Parking Unit and are managed differently from what is outlined in our Parking Strategy. These car parks are mainly in tourist destinations and the fees and management arrangements differ from place to place, which leads to a lack of consistency across the county. Discussions are already in the pipeline with other Departments to seek to standardise arrangements and ensure that every part of the county is treated fairly and consistently. This is likely to lead to the introduction of new pay and display arrangements at up to 10 locations.
- 4.12 **Electric Car Charging** - this is a fast growing field and is likely to change substantially over the next five years. Carbon emission regulations and the desire among motorists for alternative modes of transport will lead to more electric cars requiring charging facilities along their journeys or as they visit the area. We need to be aware of that challenge, and ensure that Gwynedd facilitates the experience of visiting the area in such a car. We have already set up a project to identify how best to provide this at logical places.
- 4.13 **Provide an enforcement service for organisations and companies** - we increasingly receive requests from public bodies and commercial companies for assistance to manage their car parks. They are often in discussions with private companies that offer parking enforcement services but see the Councils as a suitable partner for the type of management they have in mind. In trying to ensure that visitors and residents have a positive experience of parking all over Gwynedd, we believe this is a service that should be provided where practicable and financially viable.
- 4.14 **Meet the need for enforcement by residents** - we continue to receive frequent requests for more parking enforcement services at places such as schools, playing fields, housing estates,

tourism destinations etc. We try to ensure consistency and fairness across the county with the resources available to us. We regularly review our arrangements in order to ensure we can respond to this demand.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to note the content of the report and agree to an eventual update on the range of options for ensuring an increase in the parking income.