

**STRATEGIC PLANNING  
SUSTAINABILITY &  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**6 NOVEMBER 2018**

**Park and Ride: Future Options**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service/Lead Director</b>	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Tay Arnold, Planning Projects and Delivery Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

This report interlinks with the Park and Ride – Pay to Park Trial report and outlines three options to inform the decision regarding the future of the Park and Ride services and associated car parks. The advantages and disadvantages of each of the options are outlined.

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the Council closes the current pay to park service
2. That the sites at Willington Street and London Road are retained for a use to honour the commitments made in the Local Plan and Integrated Transport Strategy
3. That the Council procures a commercial Park & Ride service on a licence arrangement
4. That delegated authority is granted to the Director of Regeneration and Place, in consultation with the Chairman of Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee, to agree a minimum service specification for a commercial park and ride service.
5. The Council contributes just to the cost of operating the two car parks and continues to honour the commitments set out in the Local Plan and ITS around alternative sustainable transport.
6. That if a commercial Park and Ride service is not found to be viable, the car parks at Willington Street and London Road are retained with a modest charge to users with investment linking them to the Town Centre via sustainable transport modes

<b>Timetable</b>	
<b><i>Meeting</i></b>	<b><i>Date</i></b>
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	6 November 2018

# Park and Ride: Future Options

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A report on the 'outcomes of the Bus Interchange study, parking strategy and Park and Ride study and Park and Ride operational review' was brought to SPST on 22<sup>nd</sup> January. The Committee resolved to agree a year's extension to the current contract, with a change to Pay to Park from Pay to Ride and an extension of running times of the service to 7pm. The Committee also resolved that "a full report be brought to this Committee by October 2018 which sets out the alternative sustainable transport options and which measures the success or otherwise of Park and Ride based on peak usage."
- 1.2 Following on from this resolution a report was brought to this committee on 10<sup>th</sup> April which outlined the scope for the future report. The purpose of the work was to consider a range of deliverable, short term, sustainable transport alternatives to the current Park and Ride service, focussing on those outlined in the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS), specifically relating to buses, rail, cycling, walking and other forms of transport such as car clubs.
- 1.3 It was proposed that the investigation concentrated on two key themes: available alternative sustainable options; and whether these options provide a suitable alternative for both current Park and Ride users as well as current peak time commuters who do not currently travel in to the Maidstone Town Centre by a sustainable method. The scope was agreed as per the report and a new date of November for the report was agreed.
- 1.4 Policy SP23 in the Local Plan commits to delivering modal choice "through managing demand on the transport network through enhanced public transport and the continued Park and Ride services and walking and cycling improvements". The scope for exploring alternatives focusses on these and the other sustainable options included in the ITS. The adopted Local Plan also notes that the ITS should aim for a reduction in the number of single occupancy car trips into the Maidstone Town Centre by long stay commuters – particularly during peak periods.
- 1.5 The ITS provides a framework and programme of schemes and interventions to support the Local Plan, taking in to account the committed and predicted levels of growth in homes and jobs. Objective 1 of the ITS focusses on 'enhancing and encouraging sustainable travel choices'. In particular it proposes:
  - The development, maintenance and enhancement of walking and cycling provision, through network improvements and encouraging uptake amongst the population
  - The development, maintenance and enhancement of public transport provision, including Park and Ride, encouraging uptake amongst the population.

- 1.6 The ITS outlines targets to monitor the success of achieving these objectives, specifically to “to decrease car driver mode share in Maidstone from 44.3% of all work trips to below 40% by 2021 and below 37% by 2031.”
- 1.7 Park and Ride is discussed at the quarterly meetings of the Quality Bus Partnership and there continues to be strong support from KCC officers and bus providers for its continued provision.
- 1.8 To inform the development of alternative options and to better understand barriers that exist to the uptake of sustainable travel options in to the Town Centre, an online questionnaire was carried out. 774 people responded to this, encompassing both current Park and Ride users as well as non-users. To provide qualitative information, a series of face to face surveys of Park and Ride users accompanied this. 248 peak service users were surveyed. Everyone involved in the study at both Park and Ride sites was very positive about the service it provides, citing the reliability of the service and that they could plan their day around the timetable. In addition to this, many people also spoke about how safe they felt using the service. The majority of those surveyed were travelling to work and used the service 5 times a week. The surveys indicated that many of these people were on minimum wage and travel was a significant expense for them. As such, many people felt that not having a Park and Ride service would have a major impact on their life and some respondents indicated that they would have to consider leaving their jobs as they would no longer be able to afford to continue working where they were.
- 1.9 An update on the performance of Park and Ride has been outlined within a separate report and has helped inform the options contained below.
- 1.10 Last year’s subsidy for Park and Ride was £242,000. The budgeted subsidy for 2018/19 is currently £310,170. Full details of income and performance are contained within the Park and Ride – Pay to Park trial report. Broadly however this increase in required subsidy reflects the loss of the ENCTs subsidy. This cost takes in to account the costs associated with maintenance of the car parks, officer time and overheads as well as the costs of the current Arriva bus service. If the decision is made to continue to provide this service (Option 1) then it would be necessary to commence a new procurement exercise. Whilst the total costs of a new contract will not be known until the tender exercise is undertaken, it is unlikely that the total costs would vary substantially from the above outlined cost and would require a commitment to funding the service for a minimum of 5 years. The update on the Park and Ride, Pay to Park pilot is contained within the associated report. It outlines the changes that were implemented following the recommendations made by this committee in January and includes details of the first four months usage figures and income trends. It also provides details of peak usage, intended to allow Members to assess the success of the trial and whether they feel this represents value for money.
- 1.11 Option 2 involves the retention of the two current Park and Ride car parks. These would then be operated as part of the overall car park portfolio for the Town Centre. Whilst previous surveys indicate that the long stay car

parks could accommodate the extra cars entering the Town Centre in the absence of a Park and Ride service, retention of these car parks would reduce stress on the provision, including difficulty of finding a space and would ensure at peak times such as Christmas there continued to be capacity of parking provision.

- 1.12 The displacement of cars from Willington Street in the absence of a Park and Ride service may well have a greater adverse impact due to the known capacity issues in the long stay car parks in that quadrant of Maidstone. Retention of these car parks would also enable the Council to operate the car parks as out of town hubs, including honouring the commitment in the ITS to enhance and encourage sustainable travel choices. The cost of retaining the car parks is estimated to be around £100,000 per annum (this is the total annual cost of the service minus the current cost of the Arriva contract). This cost is made up of a range of elements including NNDR payments, maintenance of the car parks and lease costs.
- 1.13 It should also be noted that commercial bus services continue to operate near to the two sites. London Road is approximately 350m from the bus stop, the principal service is route 71/71A provided by Arriva, which is every 15 minutes in the off-peak period, and which has 6-7 journeys in the period from 0600 hrs to 0900 hrs. It operates every 30 minutes after 7pm with the last departure from Maidstone at 11pm. In addition, route 72 operates on an hourly basis from Kings Hill, Larkfield and Aylesford, however there is no service in the am peak period other than a number of school days only journeys operating as routes 572, 575 and 576. Willington Street bus stop is approximately 160m from the site and is local route 4, run by Arriva and runs every 30 minutes in the off-peak period along Ashford Road, there are 2 journeys in the am peak, and the last trip from Maidstone is at 6.11pm. Journey time to the Chequers Bus Station is 9 minutes. In addition to this Stagecoach run an hourly route 10X, which also serves the stop on Ashford Road adjacent to the Landway. Again, there are only 2 journeys in the am peak period. Trip time to Earl Street, Maidstone is 10 minutes, and the last departure from Maidstone is at 6.49pm. There is currently no desire at this stage to divert any existing scheduled bus services in to the sites due to the time implications on the existing timetable.
- 1.14 An exploration of what could be provided commercially by bus providers has commenced and initial indications, from several providers, are that there is interest in providing specific service from these sites. These conversations with bus providers have suggested that a more frequent service at peak times from the sites could be provided if opened to the market. Further work would also need to be done to understand the ticket costs of a market led provision. If this option is agreed a procurement exercise will be undertaken, to offer a license agreement, based on the parameters that MBC would continue to operate the car parks but would not provide any additional subsidy. The scope of minimum service specification to be agreed between the Director of Regeneration & Place and the Chair of SPS&T.

- 1.15 Option 3 is to retain the car parks as assets with a modest charge to users and invest in linking them to the town centre via alternative sustainable transport modes (to be explored). This option is similar to option 2 but would potentially involve a higher subsidy from the Council as initial capital and revenue funding could be required to encourage uptake of the sustainable transport options. The level of subsidy required is anticipated to be in the region of £200k per annum. However, the outcomes, such as the number of cars entering the town centre (especially at peak times) are uncertain, and there is a value for money risk.
- 1.16 Option 4 is to close the Park and Ride sites. The January report estimated that this would represent a saving of about £196,200 (following any disposal or re-purposing of the sites). It is proposed that these savings could be re-invested in to other sustainable options of a similar nature to those proposed above, however without the focus on the two hub locations. Full details of the options to support option 4 and the total costs would be outlined in a future report. A future report would also need to be brought outlining options for alternative use of the sites. On the basis of the previous tri-study findings the existing town centre long stay car parks could accommodate the additional number of cars that would no longer be able to park at the two sites. If the Park and Ride is closed and no new or additional sustainable option are put in place then this has a significant impact on the Council's delivery of the Local Plan and ITS.
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## **2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Option 1 is that the Council re-procures the current pay to park service.. On the basis of the current operating figures provided in the accompanying report this would continue to require a considerable subsidy of approximately £300k per annum. It does, however, allow the Council to provide a much needed service to a small group of users, who have indicated within the questionnaire that a loss of this service would have significant implications for them, as well as demonstrating commitment to the policies and actions outlined within the adopted Local Plan and ITS. It also allows the Council to offer this service to staff who are not able to park at the council offices. If Park and Ride in its current guise is discontinued, this would have an impact on the 50 council staff who use park and ride to travel to work and other options would have to be considered for these officers.
- 2.2 Option 2 is that the Council retains the two car parks, closes the current pay to park service and procures a commercial Park & Ride service on a licence arrangement (against a minimum service specification to be agreed between the Director of Regeneration & Place and the Chair of SPS&T). The Council contributes just the cost of operating the two car parks and continues to honour the commitments set out in the Local Plan and ITS around alternative sustainable transport modes. This would minimise the impact of terminating the service for both the public and council staff. This represents an approximate subsidy likely of c£100k pa. It would also represent a saving against the current costs of operating the service,

although this has not been fully quantified. The disadvantages of this option are potentially a commercial bus service from the site would not provide the same level of service as the current subsidised one or the market might not offer a compelling proposition against the specification.

- 2.3 Option 3 is to retain car parks as assets with a modest charge to users and invest in linking them to the town centre via alternative sustainable transport modes (to be explored). The level of subsidy is likely to be in the region of £200k per annum. This option reflects the commitments in the adopted Local Plan and ITS and could represent a financial saving against the current level of subsidy. However, the outcomes, such as the number of cars entering the town centre (especially at peak times) is uncertain and there is a value for money risk.
- 2.4 Option 4 is that the Council ceases the Park and Ride service and closes the two car parks, putting the car parks to alternative use (to be explored) to remove the need for ongoing subsidy. This would have the greatest impact on the existing users but does represent the greatest financial saving. If the Park and Ride is closed and no new or additional sustainable option are put in place then this has a significant impact on the Council's delivery of the Local Plan and ITS.

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### **3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Option 2 is the preferred option as this minimises the impact of terminating the service on both current users and the town centre carparks, whilst providing a financial saving. However, if this proves not to be possible, the recommendation is that option 3 is taken forward.

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### **4. RISK**

- 4.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. The risk that has been rated "RED" or "BLACK" is the reputational risk of ceasing the Park and Ride service
- 4.2 The report details mitigation strategies for the above risk as it advocates alternative provision but they remain assessed as "High".

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### **5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 A summary of the recent survey is appended to this report in appendix 1

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### **6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 6.1 If the preferred option is agreed then officers will commence a procurement of a commercial service to operate from the two car parks.
- 6.2 Notice will be given to users of the park and ride service regarding the upcoming changes.
- 6.3 A further report will be provided outlining the final costs of the package of measures.

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## 7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve regeneration of the town centre as well as providing a safe, clean and green environment. We set out the reasons other choices will be less effective in section 2.	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place.
<b>Risk Management</b>	Already covered in the risk section	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place
<b>Financial</b>	Options 2, 3 and 4 represent a saving when compared to the current costs of operating the Park and Ride service. Option 1 may provide a small saving when compared to the current cost of the service. Any proposals need to take into account the projected saving of £75,000, due to be delivered in 2019/20, which is shown in the current MTFS.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place
<b>Legal</b>	Any contractual changes or changes to leases will need to be referred to the relevant legal	Cheryl Parks Mid Kent Legal



	officers at the appropriate time. Equalities Impact needs to be considered and assessed if changes to the existing provision are to be made, including to those in different social groups.	Services (Planning)
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	There are no apparent implications in the report	Cheryl Parks Mid Kent Legal Services (Planning)
<b>Equalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependant on the option agreed, a further assessment should be undertaken to determine the impact on groups with protected characteristics.</li> </ul>	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	N/A	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place
<b>Procurement</b>	On accepting the recommendations, the Council will then follow procurement exercises. We will complete those exercises in line with financial procedure rules.	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer

## 8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Questionnaire results
- Appendix 2: Equalities Impact Assessment

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## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.