

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Net Zero, Environment and Transport
DATE	10 June 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Strategic Car Parking Review
REPORT NUMBER	CR&E/25/136
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Gale Beattie
CHIEF OFFICER	David Dunne
REPORT AUTHOR	Will Hekelaar
TERMS OF REFERENCE	7, 8

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the outcomes of the Strategic Car Parking Review.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Note the outcomes of the updated Strategic Car Parking Review, as per Appendices 1 and 2; and
- 2.2 Agree that the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Car Parking Review be considered in the development of the refreshed Local Transport Strategy and the Aberdeen Rapid Transit Outline Business Case.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 In 2019, a Strategic Car Parking Review (SCPR) was undertaken for Aberdeen, which considered the relationship between publicly available car parking and the city's economic, social and environmental wellbeing, and how parking provision fits with the Council's strategic transport and land use plans. The outcomes were reported to the Council's City Growth and Resources Committee in [June 2019](#). The Committee noted the findings and instructed the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning to develop a draft Car Parking Strategy and report back to Committee in summer 2020. This work was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the impact of the pandemic on the city centre economy and car park usage, it was not considered appropriate to pursue a Car Parking Strategy at that time.
- 3.2 In [October 2023](#), in response to a report on the feasibility of changing pay and display parking policy, Members of the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee instructed the Chief Officer - Operations and Protective Services, following consultation with the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning, to explore the feasibility of undertaking a review of on-street and off-street parking

and report back with a timeline and resource implications to the next Committee.

3.3 It was considered appropriate to look at these issues as part of a wider refresh of the Strategic Car Parking Review, given the scale of the changes Aberdeen has seen since 2019. In [January 2024](#), the Committee noted the likely costs and timescales for updating the SCPR and instructed officers to proceed, subject to funding being available, and report the outcomes back to Committee.

3.4 The subsequent review identified the following changes associated with car parking since 2019:

- The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 banned pavement parking, double parking and parking at dropped kerbs, with these measures now being enforced in Aberdeen. It also introduced a discretionary Workplace Parking Licensing (WPL) power, allowing local authorities to decide whether they wish to implement a WPL and to shape proposals to suit local circumstances;
- The Low Emission Zone (LEZ) has not significantly impacted on city centre car park accessibility. While a small number of car parks are located within the LEZ boundary, the vast majority are still accessible to those using non-compliant vehicles;
- Similarly, the city centre traffic management changes do not preclude the ability for people to access car parks in the city centre;
- Parking charges for on- and off-street car parks and the cost of residential parking permits increased from 01 April 2023 (and have since increased again as part of the 2025/26 budget process);
- Significant work has been undertaken to digitise car parking via replacing and modernising parking infrastructure, and to improve the customer experience. This includes the introduction of virtual parking permits, replacement and rationalisation of parking meters and deployment of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) vehicles, allowing intelligence-led and directed enforcement;
- As part of the lease agreement with Shell, the Chapel Street car park has been refurbished, although there are now fewer spaces available to members of the public on weekdays;
- Options are currently being reviewed by the Council's Corporate Landlord for improvements to the Denburn and West North Street multi-storey car parks.

3.5 The review has examined a range of data relating to current car parking pricing and policy in Aberdeen, and how this compares to other UK cities (Appendix 1, although please note that recent budget decisions have overtaken some of the issues highlighted in the Appendix 1 report). This tells us:

- There are sufficient car parking spaces within the city centre (ACC and privately operated) to meet demand;
- Bus-based Park and Ride sites in the region remain underutilised, although some rail-based sites are at or beyond capacity;
- Parking charges for privately operated car parks are significantly higher than the Council's tariff structure;

- Private car parks typically have charges for 24 hours, with ACC having a charging structure that generally applies for 12 hours a day;
- The cost of a full day of parking in the city centre is more expensive than the cost of an all-day bus ticket or rail return ticket within Aberdeenshire, however the cost per person decreases as car occupancy increases meaning it is cheaper for four adults to travel by car and park for 10 hours than to take the bus;
- The cost of city centre car parking in Aberdeen is significantly lower than in Glasgow and Edinburgh, although higher than Dundee;
- When looking at ACC car parking charges alongside those of some comparator UK cities:
 - Charges at council operated car parks are slightly higher than the equivalent tariffs in Dundee, Belfast and Plymouth, but are significantly lower than the charges applied in Glasgow and in comparison for some durations in Nottingham;
 - On-street parking tariffs in Aberdeen are higher than those of the other comparator cities, other than Glasgow;
 - Resident and business parking permit tariffs are higher than all comparator cities, other than Glasgow.

3.6 Other key points identified were:

- Research indicates that the cost of parking is not generally a primary consideration for retail customers in comparison with location / convenience (this is supported by the data which suggests that paid-for parking at Union Square and Trinity Mall was better utilised than Council car parks on Sunday mornings, which offered free parking at the time of the research), likelihood of finding an available space, and personal safety, and that the introduction of parking charges / controls does not in isolation have a detrimental impact on the performance of town centres;
- Parking has a major influence on the transport choices people make and can be used as a demand management tool. The availability and price of parking spaces can be a key consideration in the number of car trips and the relative attractiveness of other modes; and,
- Travel demand management measures are crucial to achieving transport modal shift, particularly the successful delivery (and maximisation of the benefits) of Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART), as evidenced in the ART Strategic Business Case, which is a separate agenda item for this Committee.

3.7 The review concluded with a series of outcomes which are summarised in Appendix 2. It is the view of officers that the outcomes of the SCPR do not point towards any immediate actions for the Council, and that a number of the recommendations are already being progressed as 'business as usual'. In terms of next steps, it is therefore proposed that Officers consider the outcomes and recommendations of the review to inform the ongoing development of the Local Transport Strategy (LTS) and the ART Business Case and, where appropriate, consider what recommendations of the Review should be taken forward in this context. Officers also note that the decision of the Finance and Resources Committee on 07 May 2025 in relation to the North of Scotland Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Partnership may have

implications for the car parking estate and will also give consideration to this in the development of the LTS.

- 3.8 Furthermore, Officers are aware of the analysis undertaken for the £1 parking after 5pm trial (subject to a separate report to this Committee) and will likewise use these findings to inform the consideration of parking policies in the next LTS. This will recognise the need to balance vehicular accessibility with our environmental obligations, the revenue implications to the Council of changes to car parking, and the need to support and encourage non-car modes of transport, for the health and wellbeing of our citizens and for the continued sustainability of the local bus network, which is vital to supporting the accessibility of those unable to drive a car or who do not have access to a private vehicle.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from the report. This report presents the finding of the Strategic Car Parking Review, and the progression of any recommendations from the report will be considered in the development of the refreshed Local Transport Strategy and the Aberdeen Rapid Transit Business Case, both of which will be subject to separate future reporting.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the report. The progression of any recommendations from the report will be considered in the development of the refreshed Local Transport Strategy and the Aberdeen Rapid Transit Business Case, both of which will be subject to separate future reporting.

7. RISK

The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic	Failure to implement travel demand management measures could put	Continue to monitor risk as recommendations evolve as part of the LTS.	L	Yes

	at risk the Council's ability to achieve a range of strategic priorities relating to transport, health and the environment, and could undermine the viability of aspirational strategic projects such as ART.			
Compliance	No significant risks identified.			Yes
Operational	No significant risks identified.			Yes
Financial	Changes to car parking policy could have positive or negative impacts on revenue from car parking.	Continue to monitor risk as recommendations evolve as part of the LTS.	M	Yes
Reputational	Any changes to car parking policy and provision could be viewed negatively by members of the public and stakeholders and portrayed as a barrier to city centre accessibility. Conversely, failing to address car parking as part of a suite of travel demand management measures may suggest the Council is not committed to its sustainability and net zero obligations, and could undermine the success of ART.	Ensure any policies recommended in the LTS strike an appropriate balance between the competing needs of and demands on the city centre.	L	Yes

Environment / Climate	Failure to implement travel demand management measures could put at risk the Council's ability to achieve city centre air quality and net zero obligations.	Consider the outcomes of the review in the development of the refreshed draft LTS.	L	Yes
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8. OUTCOMES

<u>Council Delivery Plan 2024</u>	
	Impact of Report
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-2026</u>	
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	Changes to car parking policy and provision could support the following Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes, in that any changes seek to reduce the negative environmental impacts of transport and encourage the adoption of healthier transport modes: • 13. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate; and • 14. Increase sustainable travel: 38% of people walking; 5% of people cycling and wheeling as main mode of travel and a 5% reduction in car miles by 2026.
Regional and City Strategies	The proposals within this report support the Regional Transport Strategy, particularly Action MD3: • <i>Work with local authorities to develop car parking policies which contribute towards mode shift and a fairer system of payments to reflect the impact of traffic on urban areas and the need to offer alternatives to the car.</i> They also support the current Local Transport Strategy objective: <i>To develop a car parking regime that sustains and enhances the economic vitality of the City Centre and district shopping centres.</i> They also support the aspirations of the City Centre Masterplan, in terms of ensuring an accessible and sustainable city centre, where the negative impacts of transport on the sense of place are much reduced.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	None.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 North East Scotland Roads Hierarchy – OPE/19/089 ([City Growth and Resources Committee, June 2019](#)) (Item 11)
- 10.2 Feasibility of Changing the Current Pay and Display Policy (Notice of Motion by Councillor Malik) – RES/23/328 ([Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee, October 2023](#)) (Item 14)
- 10.3 Car Parking Review – COM/24/012 ([Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee, January 2024](#)) (Item 7)

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – 2025 Strategic Car Parking Review Update Report
- 11.2 Appendix 2 - Strategic Car Parking Review Outcomes Report

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