

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 06/10/2015

Title:

CAR PARK REVIEW 2015

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Kevin Deanus]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

The purpose of the report is to present the findings of the review of the Council's off-street car parking operation, seek approval to carry out formal consultation on the proposed changes to charging periods and report the results of that consultation to the Executive in December, along with proposed revisions to tariff structures arising from the review.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

The recommendations contained within this report will help to provide **Value for Money** by ensuring that the use of Waverley car parks is maximised and by contributing towards the maintenance of a balanced and sustainable budget.

Also, through ensuring the appropriate use of the borough's car parks, the recommendations contribute towards the **Understanding Residents' Needs** priority, by ensuring the continued vitality of the borough's town centres.

Finally to protect and enhance the **Environment** by maximising the availability of car parking spaces and reducing unnecessary car journeys, looking for parking spaces

Financial Implications:

The car park tariff structure, which was set by the Council following the 2011 Car Park Review, has remained broadly unchanged and most charges have not increased since that time despite an aggregate RPI uplift of approximately 7.5% over that period. The financial implications arising from the recommendations of the review are detailed in the report.

Legal Implications:

As mentioned above, changes to charging hours would require the making of a new Off-Street Parking Order. The process for making a new Order involves a statutory public consultation exercise in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, any results of which would need to be brought back to Members for consideration in due course.

Background

1. The Council's car parks are important assets that benefit the community as a whole. With available town centre car parking space becoming increasingly scarce, the 33 car parks operated by Waverley (25 pay and display, and 8 free) provide the motorist with a range of different parking options to suit their needs.
2. The improved availability and good management of parking space is vital to the town centres and local shops, and to thriving communities. Proper, considered management and charging arrangements can positively influence the length of stay and traffic movement, and help to reduce the level of congestion in a town centre.
3. The 2015/16 Service Plan for Environmental Services identifies the need to review and update the Council's "Car Park Review 2011", with the specific aims of:
 - a. Assessing the achievement of the review recommendations and establishing their success, and;
 - b. Identifying and presenting any further changes necessary to the Executive for endorsement.
4. The 2015 Car Park Review at Annexe 1 follows a similar exercise which was carried out in 2011. This document reviews the recommendations which were implemented following the 2011 review and assesses their impact, and then considers what further changes might now be necessary to ensure the borough's off-street car parks are effectively managed into the future.
5. Income from car parks is reinvested in the operational management, maintenance and enhancement of the car parks and used to support a wide range of council services which maintain and enhance the local environment in Waverley including street cleansing, recreational open spaces and the countryside, recycling and refuse collection.
6. Public notices will need to be posted in local newspapers and in each car park giving Notice of Amendment to the Waverley Borough Council Off-Street Parking Places Order. There will be resource implications in the publishing of notices, production and posting of revised tariff boards, and the re-programming of Pay and Display machines.
7. A sum of £2,000 is provided annually in the Revenue Estimates for Car Parks, specifically for the cost of tariff changes. The costs of advertising, revised tariff boards and reprogramming of machines can be contained within this sum.
8. The reduction of the end of the charging period from 7.00pm to 6.30pm would result in an estimated loss of £40,000 of income.
9. At the last meeting of the Executive, action authorised by the Executive Director was noted which related to the continuation of free parking being offered on a Thursday afternoon from 3pm to the end of the charging period across all car parks throughout December 2015.

Recommendation

The Executive is recommended to

1. authorise officers to commence the formal consultation process on the proposal to provide an additional 30 minutes free parking each day in all of Waverley's car parks by reducing the charging hours to 8am to 6.30pm in line with the requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984;
2. ask officers to report back to the Executive in December on the results of that consultation; and
3. note the contents of the review and agreed for a report back to the Executive in December on the proposed recommendations arising out of the review.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL CAR PARK REVIEW 2015

Introduction

1. In 2011, in line with recognised good practice, a borough wide review of the use of Waverley's car parks was undertaken. The main purpose of this review was to manage parking space more effectively.
2. The review looked at the use of the car parks, customer expectations, the demand for parking space, charges and charging period, as well as the condition of the car parks. The findings were implemented on 1 February 2012.
3. Subsequently, in response to feedback from customers and traders, a new "Pay by Phone" system was introduced, to operate alongside the traditional pay and display system, in December 2014. This was intended to address the expressed concerns of drivers regarding the inflexibility of the pay and display system.

Update 2015

4. The car park tariff structure, which was set by the Council following the 2011 Car Park Review, has remained broadly unchanged and most charges have not increased since that time. In fact, the charges in a significant number of car parks were not amended as part of the 2011 review, and have remained unchanged since 2008.
5. This is despite annual increases in operational and contractual costs since February 2012 and an aggregate RPI uplift of approximately 7.5% over that period (or 21% since 2008). This has given a real cashable benefit to the residents and businesses of Waverley during the deepest parts of the economic recession.
6. Car parks in Waverley are generally defined as one of the following:
 - a) **Premium Site:** The most sought after town centre car park where a premium price is employed to manage demand and encourage turnover- and where long stay charges are designed to discourage all day (commuter/ worker) parking
 - b) **Prime Site:** As above but with a lower long-stay charge
 - c) **Town Centre:** A car park that is intended primarily for the use of shoppers, but secondary to prime sites.
 - d) **Medium Stay** — A car park catering for all categories of users and duration of stay. They are not as busy as town centre car parks.
 - e) **Long Stay** — A car park intended primarily for users staying for at least half a day.
 - f) **Out of town** — A parking area situated in a village or out of town location where tariffs are designed to encourage all day/ long stay parking.

7. The fact that the arrangements and designations that were put in place have not yet been revisited since 2012 also means that any localised changes in usage patterns which may have happened since then (due, for example, to the arrival of new/ different retailers the construction of new, nearby residential properties, or simply changes in parking habits brought about by the changes implemented in 2011) have not been reflected in the current tariff structure, and may warrant further changes in approach.

Analysis of outcomes of 2011 Car Park Review

8. The following table sets out the recommendations of the 2011 review, considers whether they have been achieved (in part or in full), and provides additional commentary on the impact of the changes and any further action which might now be appropriate.
9. In summary, current transaction data for all car parks demonstrates that many of the initiatives introduced in 2011 did have the desired effect of changing driver behaviours at the time, encouraging long stay worker and commuter parking into the less well-used out-of-town car parks, and freeing up the over-subscribed town centre car parks for short-stay use by shoppers.

Recommendation	Achieved	Comment
To plan for the future parking needs of the main centres and protect existing stock as a minimum,	Partially	Existing parking stock protected- but the need for additional sites in some areas continues to increase as demand outstrips supply. Further work required to look at acquisition of additional sites/ optimisation of existing sites.
To make provision in the Parking Order to extend the charging period to 7pm at all pay and display car parks	Yes	Successfully implemented- reflects the longer shopping day and the night-time economy. Some concerns expressed regarding the impact on local residents' parking- particularly in non-shopper car parks and where on-street parking is limited. Rewiew Again

<p>The charging days of Monday — Saturday to remain unchanged.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Reflecting the fact that Sunday is now a normal shopping day, many Councils have now implemented a 'flat rate' Sunday charge. This should be revisited in Waverley.</p>
<p>Change the designation of High Street, Haslemere and Waggon Yard, Farnham car parks to 'Prime Site' and Town Centre Site respectively. Also change the designation of Chestnut Avenue, Haslemere and Stocklund Square, Cranleigh car park to medium stay. The relative charges to apply in each case.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>High Street Haslemere Successful- usage remains high; turnover high. Waggon Yard- change in designation has resulted in drivers moving to other car parks, but usage still high. Chestnut Avenue- revised tariff structure has resulted in increased usage- particularly long-stay. Consider re-banding. Stocklund Square- usage has improved.</p>
<p>To address capacity issues and provide a greater opportunity for a motorist to find a short stay parking space by increasing charges at:</p> <p>High Street, Haslemere Lower Hart, Farnham / Mint Street, Godalming / North Street, Farncon / South Street, Godalming / Weydown Road, Haslemere</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Successful, with the exception of Weydown Road, which is not attractive to short stay users- being primarily a commuter car park. Consider a further uplift to reflect the fact that charges have now been static since 2012.</p>
<p>Apply a maximum stay limit of three hours to each bay reserved for use by a blue badge holder.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Positive feedback received- has freed-up more capacity for blue badge holders. Re-visit provision of dedicated disabled bays across car parks</p>
<p>To introduce a payment scheme that permits parking of a small (up to 14 seats) community transport vehicle or mini bus.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>In place, with a small number of regular users now taking advantage of this scheme.</p>
<p>Remove Contract Parking Space at Queen Street to make this space more generally available. Introduce Season Tickets for use at this car park</p>	<p>Yes</p>	

<p>To increase the charge of a season ticket for use at:</p> <p>Crown Court, Godalming Chestnut Avenue, Haslemere North Street, Godalming Stocklund Square, Cranleigh Village Way, Cranleigh Waggon Yard, Farnham Weydown Road, Haslemere</p>	Yes	Has successfully diverted long-stay parking to other, more modestly priced sites, thus freeing up capacity for short-stay shoppers parking
<p>Restrict the use of a Season ticket to a single car park.</p>	Yes	Negative feedback received initially, but now accepted. Enables better planning for capacity.
<p>To seek permission to operate a pay and display car park at Lucks Green.</p>	No	Common Land issues have made this more challenging than originally anticipated and this has not yet been taken forward.
<p>Village Way Car Park- Convert the area of land to a surfaced pay and display parking facility and relocate the multi use games area to a more appropriate site.</p>	No	Capital scheme developed but business case not sufficiently strong as the current car park is not operating at capacity
<p>Reduce the daily and season ticket charges at Meadow car park.</p>	Yes	Charges reduced to encourage long-stay (worker and commuter) use. Very successful initiative- car park now well used by long-stay parkers. Consider uplift.
<p>To reduce the charge at North Street car park, Farncombe, on a Saturday</p>	Yes	Saturday use of this car park remains low
<p>To install a pay and display facility at Station Lane, Milford and implement a charge for parking at this car park.</p>	Yes	Initially generated significant negative feedback. Following two subsequent reviews, the charges remain, and are helping to manage capacity. Consider a further uplift to short stay and long stay charge
<p>Reduce the charges at Weydown Road, on a Saturday.</p>	Yes	Saturday use of this car park remains low.
<p>To refurbish the car parks at Weyhill and introduce charges for both long and short stay parking</p>	No	Decision taken to put the scheme 'on hold' to allow Haslemere Vision to develop alternative proposals.

Review Alternative car park payment technology again in the future.	Yes	Alternative payment options were reviewed again in 2014, and this culminated in the introduction of a 'Phone and Pay' system in December 2014. This is now embedded and is being used by an increasing number of drivers (currently, approximately 4.5% of car park transactions, and over 9% of income are generated through 'Phone and Pay'). Continue to promote Phone and Pay
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Proposals for 2015

10. Whilst the 2011 review can be considered a significant success, many of the pressures it addressed at the time have subsequently continued to grow, and there is now a need to bring forward further action. The background to each of the recommendations is set out below along with the recommendation.

Managing limited capacity in shoppers' car parks

11. There are still a number of car parks where, during peak periods demand nears or exceeds capacity each day. These include:
- Chestnut Avenue, Haslemere
 - High Street, Haslemere
 - Lower Hart, Farnham
 - Central, Farnham
 - Crown Court, Godalming
12. This demonstrates that, in order to ensure the continuing vitality of the town centres, the existing parking stock needs to be protected as a minimum, and that the Council should continue to actively seek ways to increase capacity where the need is greatest.

Recommendation A: Existing parking stock in Waverley to be protected as a minimum, and the Council should continue to actively seek ways to increase capacity where the need is greatest.

13. In the meantime though, it also suggests that a further review of the current charging regime is warranted in order to better manage the demand for parking space across the Council's parking sites.
14. Most other local authorities have increased charges during that period to keep up with inflation and it is considered that an appropriate RPI-linked uplift should be applied in car parks across Waverley, recognising the fact that charges have remained largely at the same level since at least February 2012, and in many cases 2008.

Recommendation B: An RPI-linked tariff uplift should be applied in all Waverley car parks.

Tariff review of commuter car parks

15. Given their proximity to railway stations, a number of the Council's car parks are primarily used by commuters. Given the time-lapse since the Council last reviewed its charges, the daily tariffs for these car parks have now fallen out of line with nearby sites operated by the rail network providers, meaning that in some cases the Council is now charging half as much as Network Rail. This applies in particular to the long stay premium (with short stay option), long stay (with short stay option) car parks and Meadow, where it is recommended that an uplift is applied.
16. The long stay premium (with short stay option), long stay (with short stay option) car parks have historically only had a two hour short stay option. In order to provide greater flexibility for short stay users it is proposed that a one hour and two hour short stay option be introduced.

Recommendation C: The daily charge at the long stay premium (with short stay option) long stay (with short stay option) car parks should be increased from £4.00 to £5.00, and the charge at Meadow should rise from £1.50 to £2.00 per day. A one hour and two hour short stay options be introduced in the long stay premium (with short stay option) long stay (with short stay option) car parks.

Review of Charging hours

17. Following the 2011 review, the charging hours in Waverley's car parks were set at 8am-7pm in recognition of the extended opening hours of many high street shops, and the resultant need to better manage limited town-centre parking space during this period.
18. A number of other nearby authorities have introduced evening or overnight charges. Some of these apply to 8pm, whilst others extend to midnight, or even through to the following morning. However, a number of Councils only apply such charges to selected town-centre car parks to reflect their evening usage.
19. In light of representations from some local residents in 2011 regarding the blanket extension of car parking charges to 7pm, it is considered appropriate to re-visit this decision in light of the unintended impact on residents' parking. Equally there is no strong case for extending charging hours to 8pm in some of the busier, town centre sites where space is only at a premium during the daytime and not after 6pm.
20. Given these findings it is proposed that the charging period be reduced to 8am to 6.30pm thus providing an additional 30 minutes free parking each day. This would result in an estimated loss of £40,000 of income per annum.

Recommendation D: Authorise officers to consult on the proposal to provide an additional 30 minutes free parking each day in all of Waverley's car parks by reducing the charging hours to 8am to 6.30pm in line with the requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984

Review of Charging days

21. Following the introduction of Bank Holiday charging in Waverley back in 2010 it was decided not to extend the charging period to incorporate Sundays when the service was reviewed in 2011.

22. With Sundays increasingly becoming a normal shopping and leisure day, the majority of Waverley's neighbours now operate a Sunday charge (most offering a "discounted flat rate" for the whole day). The case for implementing a "discounted flat rate" Sunday charge in Waverley is however not as strong as in larger towns and the introduction of a discounted flat rate charge is not recommended at this stage.

Effective management of free car parks

23. In addition to its 25 pay and display car parks, the Council also operates a further 8 free sites. They are:
- Weyhill, (Fairground), Haslemere (200 Spaces)
 - Beacon Hill, Hindhead (35 Spaces)
 - Heather Way, Hindhead (18 Spaces)
 - Lucks Green, Cranleigh (15 Spaces)
 - Lower Library, Bramley (20 Spaces)
 - Rear of shops, Bramley (15 Spaces)
 - Front of RC church, Bramley (6 Spaces)
 - Village Hall, Grayswood (15 Spaces)
24. In order to better manage the limited capacity at Station Lane Car Park, Milford - and to support the local business community by discouraging long-stay commuter and worker parking- the 2011 Car Park Review recommended that a pay and display facility should be installed, and charges implemented at this (previously free) site. Following feedback from local residents, workers and traders when this proposal was initially consulted upon, a charging structure of 10p for up to 2 hours, and £1.50 all day was set. The introduction of these charges has had the desired effect on usage patterns and no further change is recommended.
25. Similarly, the 2011 Car Park Review recommended that the free "Fairground" car park at Weyhill should be refurbished and that charges for both long and short stay parking should be introduced in order to facilitate better management of this car park.
26. However in response to representations from members of the public, Haslemere Town Council, and Haslemere Vision, the Council decided, in February 2014 to defer its application for Common Land Consent for the refurbishment, to allow Haslemere Vision time to develop their proposals for the site as part of the Neighbourhood Plan.
27. To date, no firm proposals for the car park have been forthcoming from Haslemere Vision and officers will continue to liaise with them.
28. It is also felt that surveys of the other free car parks should be carried out (particularly those in Hindhead and Bramley) to establish usage patterns and capacity, with a view to implementing charging if and where appropriate.

Recommendation E: Carry out usage and condition surveys of Waverley's free car parks and report back with findings and recommendations in February 2016.

Free/ concessionary Parking Promotions

29. Whilst not explicitly mentioned in the 2011 Car Park Review, the Council has, over the past three years, proactively trialled a number of different approaches to increasing the use and popularity of Waverley car parks, offering free or concessionary parking in its town centre sites. In particular, the Council:
- Carried out a 6-month trial of a shoppers' concessionary parking permit scheme in Haslemere during 2013.
 - Supported the national 'Small Business Saturday' initiative in 2013, by offering free parking across all its sites on Saturday 7 December 2013.
 - Offered free parking on Thursday afternoons throughout December in 2014.
 - Trialled free Wednesday afternoon parking at selected car parks in each of the four main settlement areas, commencing on 1 March 2015.
30. The Haslemere shoppers' concessionary parking permit scheme met with limited success, with only a small number of the 50 available permits being sold, and it was therefore decided not to continue with the scheme following the initial trial period.
31. When reviewing the success of the 'Small Business Saturday' initiative in 2013 it was concluded that Saturdays in the run up to Christmas were already busy days for shops (and car parks), and so to offer free parking when footfall was already high was of limited value. It was consequently decided that, for 2014 an alternative approach should be taken where parking is offered free of charge on each Thursday afternoon/evening in December in the lead up to Christmas. It was considered that this would encourage people into town centres at a less busy time for both retailers and car parks.
32. Whilst the impact of this initiative was not easy to measure, where the Chambers of Commerce actively engaged in the promotion, anecdotal evidence suggests that there was a positive impact on car park use and footfall. However, feedback from the Chambers of Commerce has not been consistently positive, with many feeling that such initiatives have limited value.
33. Despite this though, it is considered worth pursuing this scheme again for Christmas 2015, with a stronger promotional drive and a greater level of engagement with the Chambers of Commerce to encourage them to promote and support the initiative. The impact can then be further reviewed with the Chambers of Commerce early in 2016.
34. The Executive Director has therefore used his delegated powers to continue with this provision.

Recommendation F: To continue with the provision of free Thursday afternoon parking from 3pm to the end of the charging period across all Waverley car parks throughout December 2015. This has already been implemented via an Executive Director's Action.

35. Finally, the free Wednesday afternoon promotion, which was initially a three-month trial, was subsequently extended to run until the end of July this year, in order to enable feedback to be obtained from the Chambers of Commerce. In the majority of cases, Wednesday afternoons are the quietest periods in the town car parks, and therefore have the potential to offer the greatest value to retailers.
36. As above, feedback from the Chambers of Commerce has now been received, and there was a strong feeling that the free Wednesday afternoon parking concession was having little or no impact on car park usage or trade. The trial has therefore been ended and the normal charging regime re-introduced.

Maintenance of car parks

37. It is important that the Council's car parks are maintained in a safe and clean condition. Following the 2011 Car Park Review, a more proactive approach to car park maintenance was adopted, to ensure that they were actively managed in a more cost effective way.
38. Since that time, the Council has spent nearly £750,000 on either improving its existing car parking stock or providing further capacity where needed. In the financial year 2014/15, a number of significant projects were undertaken, including the refreshing and replacement of all the car park tariff boards, some targeted surfacing works, tree planting and re-lining.
39. For 2015/16, a capital budget of over £180,000 has been allocated towards the proactive maintenance of the car parking stock, and this will be used to finance further works across the borough on a priority basis.

Recommendation G: Continue to invest in the Council's car parking sites in accordance with ongoing condition surveys, to ensure sites remain attractive and safe, and fit for purpose for users and local businesses

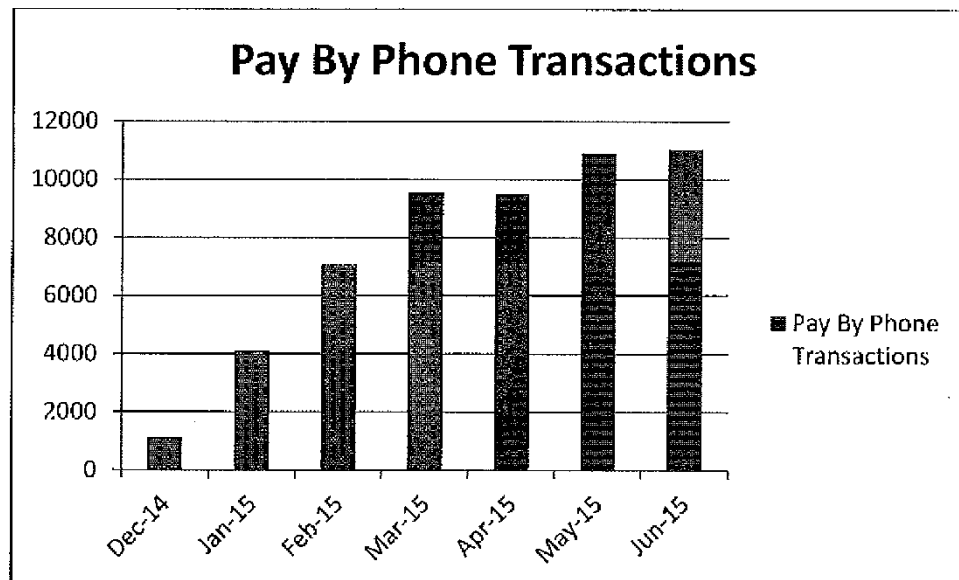
Provision for Blue Badge Holders

40. A Blue Badge holder may park free of charge in Waverley's car parks, in either the wide and conveniently located bays reserved for blue badge holders or a general bay. The bays are actively enforced to ensure that they used for the purpose intended and available to blue badge holders.
41. With an ageing population it is likely that Waverley will need to make greater provision for blue badge holders in the future. Continuing to permit blue badge holders use of general space, as well as the reserved spaces, is helpful in meeting this requirement. However, it is also appropriate to review the current level of disabled bay provision in each car park to ensure it remains appropriate and is broadly in line with current best practice guidelines.

Recommendation H: Instruct Officers to Carry out a review of the current level of provision of dedicated disabled (Blue Badge) parking spaces in line with current best practice and report back with findings and recommendations in December 2015

Alternative Payment Options

42. In response to feedback from customers and traders, a new "Pay by Phone" system was introduced, to operate alongside the traditional pay and display system, in December 2014. This was intended to address the expressed concerns of drivers regarding the inflexibility of the pay and display system.



43. As can be seen from the graph above, this scheme has proved very popular, with the number of 'Phone and Pay' transactions taking place continuing to grow month-on-month. Pay by Phone transactions currently equate to nearly 4.5% of all car park transactions and are delivering over 9% of total income.
44. As well as providing customers with a convenient, cashless alternative to the traditional pay and display approach, this initiative was also intended to address the reported issue of shoppers prematurely curtailing their visit to a town centre in order to 'rush back' to their car, as it provides the option to receive text alerts to warn when a parking session is due to expire, and the ability to 'lop up' a parking session remotely.
45. Despite this success however, feedback from the Chambers of Commerce suggests that there are still localised pockets of lower usage- particularly in the Cranleigh area, where telephone signals are often poor, and they are therefore keen to encourage the Council to continue exploring other alternative ways to pay for parking.
46. Once such option, which is currently being explored by Cranleigh Chamber of Commerce is a new 'pay on foot' system which would require no entry or exit barriers, and only a modest upgrade to the current parking machines. This is a new card payment system which is currently only in place (on a trial basis) in one other local authority, and the Cranleigh Chambers of Commerce have been asked to carry out further research with a view to presenting the Council with a business case for consideration in due course.

Outline Implementation and Communications Plan

47. The proposals made within this review would require Waverley to make a new Waverley Off-Street Parking Places Order (Parking Order).
48. The process for making a new Parking Order is prescribed in law and involves the placement of public notices in the local press. It is a phased process within a three month period.
49. From the date of publication the Order should be placed on deposit for a period of six weeks. Objections can be made during a 21 day period from the date of the publication of the Order. Prior to bringing the provisions of an Order into effect, the Authority must 'make' the Order i.e. have it signed by an authorised person on a specified date. Within 14 days of that 'making' a 'Notice of Making' should be published.
50. The table below shows an indicative implementation timetable for these changes to come into effect:

Implementation Timetable

Key Milestone	Date(s)
Proposals approved for consultation by Executive	6 October 2015
Publication of 'Notice of Proposal' in the Surrey Advertiser and Haslemere/Farnham Herald	16 October 2015
Place order on deposit for 6 weeks from date of publication	16 October 2015 - 27 November 2015
Report to Executive setting out details of any objections and proposed responses	1 December 2015
Approval of the proposals by Full Council	15 December 2015
Advertise Notice of Making the Order in Surrey Ad and Haslemere/Farnham Heralds	18 December 2015
Changes come into effect	11 January 2016