
OVERNIGHT RESTRICTIONS IN LEOPOLD MULTI STOREY CAR PARK

To: **Cabinet 21st January 2014**

Main Portfolio Area: **Operational Services**

By: **David Gonzalez – Commercial Services Manager**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **Central Harbour**

Summary: **To propose a partial overnight closure of Leopold Street car park to assist in the reduction of long standing anti-social behaviour and minimise operational costs.**

For Decision

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 For a number of years, and especially over the last 12 months, there have been significant levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB) experienced within Leopold Street car park, which can be grouped into three main categories:

Anti-Social Behaviour: There are significant issues with mainly teenagers who congregate in the stairwell and upper floors, leading to graffiti, harassment of businesses at the back of the car park, skateboarding and vandalism to machines, signs, drains and doors. The issues also spill out onto the pathway behind the car park affecting local businesses, mainly between 3.30 and 7.00pm.

Car Racing: There are groups of drivers that regularly race around the car park, revving engines, wheel spinning and causing noise disturbance, with this mainly occurring after 7.00pm.

Homeless Sleepers: There are a number of homeless people who use the underpass and main stairwell to sleep overnight. The main issues are faeces and urine, abuse to cleaning staff, hygiene for users, substance abuse and related items being discarded, the rubbish/mattresses/bedding left and the extremely poor image and conditions which impacts on the experience of car park users.

2.0 Current Situation

2.1 Although the Police have been in attendance on many occasions, they would expect the council to carry out action to our operational property to reduce the opportunity for ASB to take place. These issues are impacting on Police resources and in the period from January to November 2013 there were 113 official calls into their call centre regarding Leopold Street (63 of which are directly attributed to the car park). Most of the remaining 50 calls are related to the issues and groups in and around the car park. Additionally, there are many more calls and complaints to PSCOs and officers directly, which are not tracked through the call centre.

2.2 **Anti-Social Behaviour:** There is currently a dispersal order in place which has gone some way to help the situation, however, the offenders then return and this is taking its toll on Police resources. The Police are recommending extending the dispersal order both in terms of time and geography to take on additional areas like the pathway behind Leopold Street.

Car Racing: Although reported to the Police, no action can be taken as these activities cease when they attend.

Homeless Sleepers: This is the major issue and is causing numerous complaints, use of officer time and additional expenditure to try and resolve issues being caused by sleeping in the underpass and main stairwell. Unfortunately, the dispersal order only functions when there is more than one person sleeping there. TDC has some options re: trespassing on our land but the current process of issuing a legal notice is difficult and even if served would have little real impact given the transient nature of these individuals. The main issues are the faeces, urine and general abusive behaviour, which are having a significant effect on users. Porchlight has tried to engage with the sleepers a number of times, but most of the individuals do not want to be housed.

2.2 The following actions have also been tried by the council:

- **Security:** Between May and August 2013 the car park had on-site security between 7pm and 11pm, 7 days a week. Although this did have a limited effect, the ongoing cost could not be supported
- **Placing of cages to windows and stairs lighting in main stairwell:** Since being installed there has not been a broken window or light in the front stairwell.
- **Refurbishment of main stairwell and underpass:** This has seemed to have reduced graffiti incidents and has produced excellent feedback.
- **Improvement to lighting in underpass:** This has improved the feel of the area, but not significantly stopped ASB incidents.

2.3 Observations were made over 10 days at 7.00pm, 10.00pm and 2.00am to identify how many cars were using the car park. Over the period there was an average of 10 cars parked on floors 1-5 in total, and this number would be able to be accommodated on the ground floor if option 3 is accepted. The measured figures are shown in the table below:

		No. of Cars Parked at Times (Floors 1-5)		
Date	Day	19:00	22:00	02:00
10/11/2013	Sun	15	23	20
13/11/2013	Wed	2	2	2
15/11/2013	Fri	4	5	5
20/11/2013	Wed	3	2	3
23/11/2013	Sat	15	23	20
24/11/2013	Sun	8	8	8
26/11/2013	Tue	10	13	8
29/11/2013	Fri	8	8	9
01/12/2013	Sun	9	15	15
04/12/2013	Wed	10	13	13
Total Cars		84	112	103
Average Cars		8.4	11.2	10.3

3.0 Options

3.1 The table below set out a range of options for consideration, assessing potential implementation costs, risks and benefits:

Option	Approx. Cost	Risk	Benefits
1. Do nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional cost Loss of potential savings on lighting, management time & resources and repairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Damage to lifts and car park Anti-social behaviour remains Police concerns and support Level of complaints Loss of income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No additional spend to what is currently being experienced
Not Recommended: The council need to take action to reduce the ASB issues at the car park to retain the support of the Police, who are using considerable officer time in dealing with issues. The opportunity to save operational costs and improve the image of the car park will also be lost.			
2. Overnight complete closure of car park & underpass between 7.00pm and 7.00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £24-32K Would provide saving of £15k p.a. on energy, £5k on reduced vandalism and £2k on light replacement £7K p.a. security cost for opening and closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No parking available after 7pm Hotel and Harbour parking agreement would have to be ceased or changed Would need closure arrangements Resident and business reaction Loss of about £4K pa in parking income Loss of 424 spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support of Police Saving on electricity Reduced vandalism Simpler therefore cheaper closure solution
Not Recommended: Although this is cheaper than option 3 and should eliminate all ASB issues experienced overnight, this would lose the provision for the current evening usage of the car park.			
Option	Approx. Cost	Risk	Opportunity

<p>3. Overnight closure of floors 1-4 as well as underpass between 7.00pm and 7.00am.</p> <p>40 bays on ground floor will be unrestricted within closure period, with 3 disabled bays</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £36K-£44K (includes £7.5K additional lighting control) • Would provide saving of £10k p.a. on energy, £5k on reduced vandalism and £2k on light replacement • £7K p.a. security cost for opening and closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most disabled bays would need suspending after 7pm • Greater costs • Would need closure arrangements • Potential ASB issues on ground floor although less likely and controllable • Loss of 381 spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of Police • Saving on electricity • Reduced vandalism • Improved visitor feedback • Maintain overnight income • Improve parking environment • Would allow focused Police support • Would allow for safer car park award to be obtained
<p>Recommended Option: Option 3 is recommended as it potentially deals with the majority of the issues currently being experienced. This option would still allow sufficient parking to remain overnight to assist local residents and businesses. This option would also allow electricity savings of over 80% as only the ground floor would be powered, and would also allow the retention of the income received after 7.00pm. It would help significantly reduce the number of complaints, as well as keep the environment suitable for residents and visitors. Police resource could then be focused on a much smaller period of time if the general ASB continues between 3.30pm and 7.00pm. Parking, Community Safety, Community Policing and local stakeholders are also supportive of Option 3 as a reasonable compromise.</p>			
<p>4. Overnight closure of underpass and main lift and stairwell between 7.00pm and 7.00am</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would provide saving of £3k p.a. on energy, £5k on reduced vandalism and £2k on light • Approx. £15K in shutters for underpass and main stairwell • £7K p.a. security cost for opening and closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No lift available to users after 7.00pm • Vulnerability of back stairwell • Accessibility issues for disabled users parking in floors 1-5 • Safety issues in pedestrian use of ramps • Less impact on ASB issues • Reduced scope of savings to cover initial and on-going costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will not lose any overnight capacity • Cheaper to implement
<p>Not Recommended: Although this option is cheaper than option 3 in the short term, this would only resolve the homeless sleepers and ASB within the underpass and main lift shaft. The car racing would not be affected. Will also not deliver savings from reduced lighting.</p>			

3.2 Additional issues have also been considered

- **Planning** – this relates to parking for town centre residential and business development. Discussions with Planning have indicated that overnight partial closure would not be an issue given the wide availability of town centre car parking, transport links and lower car ownership levels for existing and future developments.
- **Safety** – although the subway would not be available to and from the car park the impact on road safety is minor due to the level of usage, especially when set against the current problems of the subway.
- **Local Hotels** – there is only one arrangement with a hotel for overnight use of the car park, which would be negotiated. This is unlikely to be a major problem as the usage is low and can be accommodated on the ground floor. Alternatively, there is sufficient parking in Military Road, Staffordshire Street, Cavendish and Queen’s Street, with on-street restrictions ending at 7.00pm currently and at 6.00pm from 1st April.

- **Businesses** - there is sufficient alternative parking Military Road, Staffordshire Street, Cavendish and Queen's Street, with on-street restrictions ending at 7.00pm currently and at 6.00pm from 1st April.
- **Access to rear of car park** – closure of the rear stair well would remove this as a cut through overnight from some properties backing onto Cliff Street. This route is not suitable for people with mobility issues, and with no obvious significant usage of the car park, the numbers affected are very low. The alternative route down Westcliff Arcade and along Leopold Street is more suitable for people with mobility issues, although it would add approximately 100m to access the ground floor of the car park.

4.0 Corporate Implications

4.1 Financial and VAT

- 4.1.1 The approximate costs for each option are listed in section 3, but would be confirmed through tendering processes. The works and on-going security costs would be funded on a spend-to-save basis, with savings being returned to the relevant reserve.

4.2 Legal

- 4.2.1 There should be no legal implications as the council can determine the operating parameters of the car park, and a similar system is already in operation at Mill Lane.

4.3 Corporate

- 4.3.1 Risks and benefits are highlighted in the options section above.
- 4.3.2 The proposals have the support of a wide range of stakeholders and agencies in Ramsgate.
- 4.3.3 Although overnight usage is very low there are some minor adjustments that would be required to current permit arrangements associated with harbour users and a local hotel. These will be dealt with under separate discussions. The designation of the car park under the Thanet wide permit system would also be adjusted, although there is little evidence of permit use overnight.
- 4.3.4 Although it would be intended to implement the proposals on a permanent basis, the overnight usage could be returned straightforwardly if overnight parking demand in Ramsgate town centre increased significantly.

4.4 Equity and Equalities

- 4.4.1 The recommended option 3 is based on 19 of the current 22 disabled bays and all 8 of the Parent and child bays being unrestricted between 7.00pm and 7.00am. This will allow any user to be able to park in all but 3 permanent disabled bays. Although this would restrict the availability of disabled only bays, the ratio of disabled bays to total bays available would be in accordance with normal design requirements.

5.1 Recommendations

- 5.1 That Cabinet agrees Option 3 set out in the table under 3.1, using the layout in Annex 2.
- 5.2 That the partial closure proposals are implemented after 1st April 2014 to coincide with the change of the end of on-street restriction to 6.00pm.
- 5.3 That the minor changes to permit arrangements indicated in 4.3.3 are delegated to officers to negotiate and implement.

6.0 Decision Making Process

- 6.1 This decision does not impact on the policy and budgetary framework and can be agreed by Cabinet.

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Annex List

Annex 1	Floor Layout for option 2
Annex 2	Floor Layout for option 3
Annex 3	Floor Layout for option 4

Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Finance	Sarah Martin, Finance Services Manager
Legal	Steven Boyle, Interim Legal Services Manager
Community Safety	Martyn Cassell, Community Safety and Leisure Manager