

Chichester District Council

CABINET

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Unauthorised Vehicle Encampments in Council Car Parks

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the release of £66,000 from reserves to fund unauthorised vehicle incursion deterrent measures at both Northgate and Cattle Market car parks.**

3. Background

- 3.1 This Council has taken an active role in supporting authorised locations for Travellers to reside within the district through its provision of an authorised transit site, alongside working with partners and within Development Management policies to support suitable homes for the Gypsy and Traveller communities. Despite this, a number of unauthorised encampments occur each year in council car parks.
- 3.2 The number and size of unauthorised encampments in council car parks vary each year, with two of the council's city car parks in particular – Northgate and Cattle Market – experiencing a higher level than other car parks of unauthorised encampments. Northgate car park for example has seen five visits in the space of two months already this year. Complaints from the public and local businesses have increased and the impact on the space in car parks has been significantly reduced each time.
- 3.3 Cabinet approved in 2021 for the introduction of 'bunds' to reduce the chance of unauthorised encampments on green spaces owned by Chichester District Council. This has resulted in a reduction in Traveller incursions on green land, however the visits to car parks (in particular Northgate and Cattle Market) have increased. It is recognised that effective deterrents are more difficult to implement for car parks as by their nature they are designed for ease of vehicle access.
- 3.4 Traveller incursions in car parks result in a reduction of car parking space available along with instances of significant anti-social behaviour. The incursions have had a

significant negative impact on the everyday lives of local residents and some of the local businesses. The increasing number and size of visits with the duration of stay at sites has demonstrated that deterrent measures should be considered further to reflect the additional level of impact caused to users and neighbours of these car parks.

- 3.5 Measures to restrict access in car parks generally focus on limiting high sided vehicles to access the area, most generally through use of a height barrier.
- 3.6 Options for both Cattle Market and Northgate car park have been considered and initial estimates of costs received. It is recognised that options will require careful consideration to ensure that the car parks can remain operational for all authorised users and to reduce the risk of congestion on the local highway. In addition to this, the annual Sloe Fair, for which CDC has a duty to provide the land as part of a charter which is in place, cannot be restricted in use by any obstructions such as height barriers within the area designated to the Fair.

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 4.1 To provide a deterrent to Northgate and Cattle Market car parks for unauthorised encampments.
- 4.2 That any deterrent measures installed do not prevent CDC from hosting the annual Sloe Fair in Northgate car park.
- 4.3 That any deterrent measures installed comply with any relevant planning requirements.
- 4.4 That any deterrent measures do not significantly impact the operational needs of the car park and reflect the outcome of discussions with key stakeholders.

5. Proposal

- 5.1 It is proposed that three access restrictions points are introduced at Northgate car park – each covering the entry / exit points and that one is installed at Cattle Market car park – to cover the entry / exit point.

6. Alternatives Considered

- 6.1 Do nothing. This will not result in opportunity to attempt to protect council land from unauthorised encampments.

7. Resource and Legal Implications

- 7.1 Estimates of cost have been received and Cabinet are asked to approve £66,000 to be released from reserves to cover the cost of the works to the sites.
- 7.2 Discussions have been held with the Development Management team to consider any planning requirements.

7.3 Works will be overseen by the Parking Services team.

8. Consultation

8.1 As part of the consideration of options for the sites, discussion and engagement is taking place with relevant stakeholders. This will continue as the project progresses.

9. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

9.1 It is hoped that the measure proposed will assist with reducing unauthorised encampments in council car parks. The scheme, if approved, will be monitored closely.

9.2 It is recognised that height barriers do not always resolve the issue and they are subject to being damaged – incurring additional cost. Introducing height barriers at the two car parks could result in Travellers using another car park which might result in expectations that height barriers will be introduced into all car parks.

9.2 It should be noted that the Travellers themselves are considered part of our community and any deterrents that restrict their nomadic lifestyle may have a negative impact on them. These impacts should be considered against the impacts on the settled community and neighbouring businesses, etc.

10. Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder – potential positive impact by restricting illegal or unauthorised access to CDC land and as such prevent potential crime and disorder that may follow such incursions.	X	
Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation		X
Human Rights and Equality Impact – all decisions need to be taken considering the duties of all sections of the community – residents in particular neighbours, legitimate users of the car parks as well as Travellers and their Article 8 rights.	X	
Safeguarding and Early Help		X
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		X
Health and Wellbeing – by preventing some incursions this will have a positive impact to the wellbeing of local residents.	X	

11. Appendices

11.1 None

12. Background Papers

None