

Committees: Corporate Projects Board - <i>for decision</i> Epping Forest and Commons Committee - <i>for decision</i> Project Sub - <i>for decision</i>	Dates: 02 February 2022 09 May 2022 26 May 2022
Subject: Provision of car park charging infrastructure across the Commons Division at car parks at Burnham Beeches, Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs. Unique Project Identifier: 12063	Gateway 6: Outcome Report Light
Report of: Director of Open Spaces Report Author: Andy Barnard. Asst Director, The Commons	For Decision
PUBLIC	

Summary

1. Status update	Project Description: A project to provide infrastructure to enable the introduction of charges for the parking of cars at Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs and to improve existing infrastructure at Burnham Beeches. RAG Status: Green Risk Status: Low Costed Risk Provision Utilised: £0 Final Outturn Cost: £120,045
2. Next steps and requested decisions	Requested Decisions: 1. <i>Note this G6 report.</i> 2. <i>Approve closure of this project</i>
3. Key conclusions	The project was delivered in its entirety within budget but to a slightly lengthier timeline due to severe disruption/impacts of Covid throughout the timetabled delivery period. As such the car parking charge infrastructure was fully operational from January 2021 rather than October 2020.

	<p>Hardware and software have been working reliably since installation. Car park income is now being realised across all three project sites and currently exceeding the £86,000 annual target set out in the G5 report with the first 11 months having accrued £204,000. Members should note that the early Covid period saw several months of exceptional (2x) use of the open spaces which has inflated income to a very significant extent. It is highly unlikely that this level of income will be achieved in more normal times however, confidence remains that the original income targets remain achievable.</p> <p>Initial outlay of the project totalled £120,045. Income in year 1 has already exceeded the capital outlay (even allowing for the time value of money) and therefore this project is demonstrating a positive Net Present Value.</p> <p>In general, the project was more complex than originally anticipated due to the multitude of possible technical solutions on the market. A soft market testing process helpfully refined the solutions so that the final tender specification best suited the remote geographic location of each car park and the available service utilities.</p> <p>The project tender process was led by the Head Ranger of Burnham Beeches with design and technical expertise provided by District Enforcement and the City's IT systems team in the Chamberlains Dept. Pay by Phone was delivered by RingGo. Civil engineering and landscaping works were carried out by the City Surveyor. Provision of information signage was delivered by the local open spaces team.</p> <p>Community consultation was delivered by the Open Spaces team via the established Consultative Groups at each open space coupled to newsletter and social media messaging prior, during and post, delivery phase. Given the nature of the project there was perhaps inevitably, still some local concern and resistance. All issues were dealt with by the Superintendent, Chairman of Epping Forest and local teams. The central media team were kept informed and primed should there be any wider press or reputational issues. These community concerns seem to have abated in recent months.</p> <p>The introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras (ANPR) was perhaps the most technical issue but has proved of immense benefit as it automated the enforcement of charges and penalties for failure to pay thereby minimising input from local officers. ANPR has also helped to reduce antisocial behaviours on the sites (fly tipping, vandalism, overnight stays etc).</p>
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Main Report

Design & Delivery Review

4. Design into delivery	The design work described in the Gateway 5 report set out a clear project delivery pathway and this was very largely followed. The main disruptor was the Covid Pandemic. This led to a programme slippage of 3 months so that the infrastructure went live in a phased manner i.e. December 2020 at Burnham Beeches and January 2021 at Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs rather than all in October 2020.
5. Options appraisal	<p>The options appraisal stage was critical to the successful outcome of the project. An early decision not to offer 'pay by cash' helped refine matters and focused activity on the need to offer a variety of other, operationally more efficient payment options to ensure visitors to the open space could pay either by phone or by card. This decision has also helped to reduce the local administration burden particularly at Burnham Beeches where previously cash payment was the only option with all the associated handling costs</p> <p>The use of ANPR ensured that enforcement could be carried out remotely by our existing contractor, District Enforcement, thereby ensuring minimal impact on the Ranger teams. Rangers at all three sites enforce parking charges where there is no ANPR i.e. occasional roadside parking offences and two Pay-by-Phone 'only' car parks at Burnham Beeches.</p>
6. Procurement route	<p>Procurement reference number Prj-CoL- 16459</p> <p>The services were procured by open tender (preceded by soft market testing) with the assessment and appointment process led by the Project Manager. The process attracted three good quality tenders. The interview process led to further refinement of the technical options/challenges (particularly links between software and hardware and banking/auditing). The option to test the car park charge machines recommended by each contractor ensured that we procured an appropriately robust system that was easy to operate by both car park users and staff.</p>
7. Skills base	As this was a client led project it was project managed by the Head Ranger of Burnham Beeches who had some experience of car park infrastructure at that site. However, project managing the design and installation of an entirely new system was a different category of challenge and provided a steep learning curve. The Head Ranger surmounted all difficulties and acted as a first-class project manager. The City Surveyor has a wealth of experience in delivering this type of infrastructure and facilitated progress with the project manager and lead contractor as required. Software and data advice were a greater challenge with less clarity than was perhaps expected albeit all matters were successfully resolved.

	<p>District Enforcement, Hectronic and RingGo provided training for the local Ranger and Administration teams on all new software and hardware issues.</p> <p>All new systems have been absorbed by the existing local teams. No new posts were created, or staff costs increased.</p>
8. Stakeholders	<p>Local communities were consulted via the established, local, consultative groups. Despite the ensuing Covid pandemic great effort was taken to explain that the introduction of car park charges was driven by 12% cuts being introduced in 2020/21 financial year. Discussions took place in a timely manner i.e. from January 2019 onwards and were the subject of site visits as well as formal meetings.</p> <p>Some individual objections were raised across all 3 open spaces once the social and local media campaigns had announced the project. These were mainly critical comments expressing doubt for the need for budget cuts. Another common criticism was that the City was being insensitive by introducing the charges during the pandemic. Local Parish, Borough and County Councillors were lobbied by some local residents and they in turn sought comment from the Superintendent asking for the project to be either delayed or cancelled entirely. The Superintendent, with Member support, resisted these views.</p> <p>Whilst the project has been delivered and most now accept the need to charge for car parking on the open spaces the matter is still occasionally being raised.</p>

Variation Review

9. Assessment of project against key milestones	<p>The key dates of the tender process (February-March 2020) were delivered on schedule. The Covid pandemic occurred in March 2020 and matters became significantly trickier as contractors were unable to visit the sites and plan civil engineering works. The October 2020 'go live' deadline for all three sites was missed but all parties worked hard to work to a new, phased, schedule with Burnham Beeches going live in early December 2020 and Farthing Downs and Riddlesdown following in late January 2022. This phased approach minimised loss of income to local risk budgets and allowed time to test equipment /software and resolve any issues at Burnham Beeches before wider use.</p>
10. Assessment of project against Scope	<p>The project set out to introduce 7 day per week car park charges at Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs and extend existing weekend car park charges at Burnham Beeches from weekends and bank holidays only to 7 days per week. The project was 'motivated' by</p>

	<p>the need to meet 12% budget cuts commencing 2021/22. The project has met those criteria within budget albeit to a slightly delayed deadline.</p> <p>The project has also delivered some fringe benefits including reductions in vandalism, antisocial behaviour and vehicle related incursions all of which has helped to reduce pressures on local risk budgets and officer time. Decreasing use of the car park for non-open space activities e.g. dropping off and picking up students from local schools has also helped minimise the amount of unnecessary traffic entering and leaving the sites. Other activities such as professional dog walking has also reduced significantly at Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs. Given the above, the sites now provide a more tranquil experience for the majority of visitors. Whilst there is some evidence that car numbers to the sites have reduced, there is also anecdotal evidence that the number of visitors walking and riding to the sites have increased.</p>
11. Risks and issues	<p><i>Did identified risk occur, if so what was the effect?</i></p> <p>Risk 3. IT connectivity. There was an unanticipated issue with software system compatibility that risked the project falling behind schedule in the later stages. The main issue being that the preferred software supplier (Lloyds) is different to the industry standard (World Pay). The Lloyds/World Pay software is used to accept onsite parking payments and slot them into the appropriate City budget. Despite World Pay being the City's second choice supplier the administration process to set up the necessary protocols, codes, mandates caused lengthy delays. However, these issues were resolved with the help of the Chamberlains IT Team prior to the go live date.</p> <p>Risk 5. Covid delaying ability to get on site to confirm details, delay supplies of materials etc. Closure of car parks during the early months of Covid. The pandemic led to a slight delay (2-3 months) to the 'go live' deadline and a phased approach delivery approach was taken to mitigate the worst impacts.</p> <p>Risk 7. Planning issues for signs, pay machines and poles. Planning matters for the introduction of new infrastructure are approved at Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs. As the infrastructure at Burnham Beeches was a simple replacement of old with new it was determined at the contract stage that planning consent would not be required however, further discussions with the planning authority indicate that the ANPR pole and camera are 'additional' so a retrospective application is required. Given that</p>

	<p>approval for the other sites has already been given it is unlikely that it will be declined at Burnham Beeches. However, in a worst case scenario, the site would revert to pay by phone and via the new car park machines with compliance testing carried out by local staff, as delivered prior to ANPR. The pole and ANPR camera (value of approximately £4,000) would be stored should there be equipment failures on the other sites. This issue does not affect the City's right to apply, collect and enforce parking charges on the site.</p> <p>There was no costed risk provision for this project.</p>
12. Transition to BAU	<p><i>Did the project have a clear plan for transfer to operations / business as usual? Did this work well?</i></p> <p>The project was designed to minimise and where possible reduce existing staff duties and no new roles were created. Where impacts were unavoidable detailed training was provided, particularly in areas concerning the use of reconciliation software and to a lesser extent the use of equipment to serve Parking Charge Notices where ANPR is not present (roadside verges at all sites and two very small car parks at Burnham Beeches). Old infrastructure at BB was removed and replaced as described in this report as part of this project plan and quickly returned to BAU. For Farthing Downs and Riddlesdown this was a transition to a new business activity that has since settled into BAU.</p>

Value Review

13. Budget	<table> <tr> <td><i>Estimated Outturn Cost (G2)</i></td><td colspan="2"> Estimated cost (including risk): £130,000 Estimated cost (excluding risk): £130,000 </td></tr> </table>		<i>Estimated Outturn Cost (G2)</i>	Estimated cost (including risk): £130,000 Estimated cost (excluding risk): £130,000																									
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	<i>Total</i>	<i>£130,000</i>	<i>£120,045</i>
	<p>Staff costs were not included in the approved G5 report and are omitted here on that basis</p> <p>This account has been verified by the Assistant Director of The Commons.</p>		
14. Investment	<p>This was an invest to save project.</p> <p>The G5 estimated a return of £86,000/annum against a £130,000 investment.</p> <p>The first 12 months period is now complete albeit crossing two financial years. Actual income generated by this project in the first 12 months is £204,000.</p>		
15. Assessment of project against SMART objectives	<p>All objectives and key measures of success were met albeit the delivery deadline slipped by 2-3 months due to the Covid pandemic. See also comments in sections 5 and 10.</p>		
16. Key benefits realised	<p>This was Priorities Pot funded project. All key benefits have been realised. See also comments in sections 5 and 10.</p>		

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

17. Positive reflections	<p>Well led by a determined Project Manager with good partnership working with the City Surveyor and lead contractor. Technical solutions have all worked reliably. Impact on roles for existing staff minimised and successfully absorbed by teams without additional staff time required.</p> <p>Income targets have been exceeded due to exceptional visitor numbers during the covid period but will still be met in more normal years.</p> <p>The use of ANPR has automated the enforcement process and greatly reduced antisocial behaviour particularly at Farthing Downs and Riddlesdown to the benefit of local resources and the visiting public. The sites are designed to operate without ANPR or loss of income, should technical issues arise.</p>
18. Improvement reflections	<p>Several challenges arose with regard to the software systems used to accept onsite parking payments. Lloyds are the City's preferred supplier, but the industry standard is World Pay. Despite World Pay being the City's second choice supplier this issue caused lengthy delays when setting up the necessary protocols, codes, mandates etc albeit these were resolved without impairment to the project timetable.</p>
19. Sharing best practice	<p>Experience already being shared with other open spaces carrying out similar projects</p>

20.AOB	N/A
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Appendices

Appendix 1	Project Coversheet
Background report	Gateway 5. 30th March 2020. Provision of car park charging infrastructure across The Commons Division at carparks at Burnham Beeches, Riddlesdown and Farthing Downs.

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