

PARKING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN – CONCESSIONARY CHARGING POLICY, VILLAGE PARKING, & TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES
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Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: Yes
Report To: Cabinet
15 September 2025

Purpose of Report

1. This report proposes a concessionary parking fee framework for the Council's car parks, tailored to local needs and informed by community engagement.
2. It also provides an update on progress with key parking strategy actions, including the introduction of alternative management approaches in large village car parks and the implementation of parking technology trials to improve customer experience and efficiency.
3. Engagement work was completed prior to developing the proposed parking management approach for large villages. The draft concessionary parking policy, and the revised implementation timeline for village charging and technology roll-out reflects the outcome of that engagement, and subsequent Cabinet and Council decisions.
4. The draft policy sets out the framework for the consistent application of subsidised concessionary permits for the Council's car parks. The implementation of this policy will be supported by phased and targeted technology investment which will make the implementation and continuing management of concessionary parking policies more efficient, fair, and customer friendly.

Summary

5. Charging for car parks helps to distribute the financial burden of their upkeep evenly. It ensures that those who benefit from the facilities contribute towards these costs.
6. The consistent application of a concessionary parking policy increases fairness and access, aligns with corporate and legal obligations and supports those for whom parking costs would be a barrier. This helps to manage limited parking resources fairly.
7. In March 2025, Cabinet reviewed proposals for implementing a different management approach at Council-owned car parks in larger village centres throughout Mid Sussex.
8. This was informed by engagement with key stakeholders in January/ February 2025 which showed that parking services can more effectively serve some sectors of the community by offering targeted concessionary charges, giving subsidised and therefore discounted access to car parks.
9. Separately, at the Council meeting of 26 February 2025, Officers were asked to:
 - (a) Introduce two additional resident parking permit schemes identical to the scheme used in Queensway car park East Grinstead, for use in the Vicarage Road car park, East Grinstead, and in Heath Road car park in Haywards Heath, and

- (b) Prepare a feasibility study on the introduction of a limited number of low cost evening permits for use by volunteers in community venues (for example Chequer Mead, East Grinstead and Cyprus Road, Burgess Hill) to park in council car parks
10. Subsequently, at its meeting on 19 May Cabinet received an update on the feasibility work and business case for decking Queensway Car Park in East Grinstead, noting the outcome of that work and requesting officers to carry out further work to explore alternative options for improving off-street parking within the town.
11. This report provides an updated implementation timeline for both village charging and technology trials, reflecting the requests outlined above from Cabinet and Council. It also provides information on a proposed concessionary charging policy, the principles of which need to be agreed before the Council undertakes any formal consultation.

Recommendations

12. **Cabinet are recommended to:**

- (a) **agree the framework and proposals to provide subsidised concessionary permits for identified groups across the district, subject to an EqIA;**
- (b) **agree to the implementation of a Discretionary Charging Policy reflecting these arrangements; and**
- (c) **agree the revised timeline for the implementation of village charges and technology trials.**

Background

13. The Mid Sussex Parking Strategy and Action Plan (2020-2030) was adopted and approved at Council on 9 December 2020. The Strategy provides strategic direction for managing and investing in the Council's parking service. The service includes car parking and enforcement. The strategy supports sustainable economic growth across Mid Sussex and focuses on how the Council will manage parking over the decade to 2030. Parking services are essential for meeting the needs of residents, local businesses, and visitors. By offering targeted concessions the Council supports the aims of the Strategy and its priorities to build a stronger economy and community.
14. In March 2025, Cabinet agreed a revised approach to the management of the following village car parks subject to statutory consultation.

Village area	Car park location
Cuckfield	Broad Street car park
Hassocks	Dale Avenue car park Orion car park
Hurstpierpoint	Brown Twins car park Trinity Road car park
Lindfield	Denmans Lane car park Tollage Road car park

15. This agreement was provided subject to the application of the following principles:

- a) Use of technology to digitise the service where feasible to improve the efficiency of the enforcement team, so that it can focus on on-street parking
 - b) Discs should be digitised
 - c) Apply a charging regime from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Saturday, with an initial uncharged period to reflect the needs of large villages
 - d) Charges to be reasonable, reflecting local conditions and community needs
 - e) Provide discounted digital season permits/ tickets where appropriate to support residents and businesses
 - f) Subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) and the development of a policy to guide their use, investigate making available a limited number of permits to support the work of volunteers.
16. This work has reviewed the current concessionary parking charges across the whole parking service. The report formalises the Council's arrangements and provides transparency on the available concessions. It also provides an updated plan for the introduction of charges in the Council's village car parks and for the technology trial.
17. Whilst the final payment solution has yet to be confirmed, it is clear that the use of smart parking technology in villages represents a significant opportunity to enhance customer service, improve parking options, and drive positive community outcomes. It will also support the implementation of concessionary charges by providing an effective and efficient method of managing them. The data collected provides essential intelligence for future village development planning. Understanding parking demand patterns, visitor flows, and usage trends enables more effective planning for events, infrastructure development, and business support initiatives.

Concessionary Charging Policy

18. The Council have, on an ad hoc basis, historically offered concessions on fees and charges for, or fully funded access to, parking services in a variety of circumstances, including:
- (i) Those working for a charity;
 - (ii) Allotment users;
 - (iii) Key public service workers; and
 - (iv) To support temporary events.
19. Concessionary access can be extended to specific groups through a digital permitting system. This system enables eligible individuals to apply online and receive confirmation of their concessionary status, making the process straightforward and accessible. Formalising arrangements for identifying relevant groups and the subsequent application of concessionary charges for parking services ensures:
- (i) Transparency of the concessionary charges on offer;
 - (ii) All users are aware of their responsibilities;
 - (iii) The application and appeals processes are clear;
 - (iv) Limits can be imposed on the maximum number of concessions in any one location; and
 - (v) Records can be kept using the Council's existing digital permit system, negating the need for paper permits.
20. This report recommends (subject to the completion of an EQiA) the implementation of the following permits. These concessions accommodate the needs of a variety of users, including targeted residents, volunteers at registered charities, and healthcare providers:

- (i) **Resident permits:** issued to individuals who can demonstrate they reside within ½ mile of the designated car park;
 - (ii) **Charity permits:** issued to volunteers at registered charities with premises within ½ mile of the designated car park;
 - (iii) **Roving Healthcare permits:** issued to organisations that can demonstrate they need parking facilities for a limited time whilst undertaking domiciliary medical care visits to residents less than ½ mile from any car park;
 - (iv) **Public Service permits:** issued to organisations that can demonstrate they are a local authority, an NHS organisation or a care organisation with employment less than ½ mile from the designated car park;
 - (v) **Overnight permits:** issued to individuals who wish to park overnight in a designated car park; and
 - (vi) **Fully funded permits:** issued on a case-by-case basis to temporarily waive parking charges in support of an event.
21. Full details of these proposals, including details on associated limitations on numbers and other pre-conditions can be found in Appendix 1.
22. It is acknowledged that, in order to best serve our community, the charging regime in the villages (and the application of concessions across our car parks) needs to be flexible and agile to reflect specific needs. Work is ongoing to assess how this aspiration can be best supported through the use of smart technology to enable the proactive management of supply and demand, and- if possible- to offer products that are transferrable between car parks and/ or vehicles, and can be used flexibly across a day, where such a need arises.
23. There are Council car parks that are not included within this proposal. These are outlined, along with accompanying rationale, in Appendix 2.

Implementation Timeline- Village Charges and Technology Trials

24. The engagement work undertaken prior to developing a parking management approach for large villages highlighted the need for a concessionary charging policy to underpin any new regime.
25. The discounted rates applied through this concessionary policy would sit alongside, and complement the charging regime proposed in the March Cabinet report, which is reproduced in the tables below for ease of reference:

Table 1: Proposed Village Tariffs

0-1hr (disc)	0-1hr (no disc)	1-2hr	2-3hr	3-4hr	4hr+
£0.00	£0.60	£1.00	£1.20	£1.40	£1.80

Table 2: Proposed Village Season Tickets and Virtual Discs

	Monthly	6-month	Annual	Residents overnight	Disc (per annum)
Charge	£23.76	£140.40	£224.64	£52.00	£4

26. Implementation of this policy will need to be supported by technology and financially and operationally it is more cost effective to implement that technology in parallel with the planned technology trials in the town centres. Therefore, an updated high-level timeline has been developed for both the roll-out of village charging (with appropriate supporting technology) and the implementation of the technology trials. This updated timeline is provided at Appendix 3.
27. This provides a framework for managing this complex dual-track project, ensuring coordinated delivery of both the regulatory framework and technical infrastructure necessary for implementing village parking charges, alongside the trialling of ANPR technology in selected town centre car parks.
28. This culminates in public consultation taking place in February 2026, followed by a go live date (subject to the outcome of that consultation) of May 2026 for both workstreams.

Policy Context

29. To provide a clear and suitable structure for the application of fees and charges, initially across the Council's parking services, a policy specifically covering Discretionary Charges will be developed for consideration at a future meeting.
30. This Policy will set out the Council's position on fees and charges for discretionary services more broadly and will establish key principles to apply when creating or reviewing charges.
31. It will also support the Council to identify where the application of a concessionary rate would be appropriate (e.g., for organisations whose purpose is to assist the Council in meeting specific objectives in its priorities or policy framework, or which contribute to the aims of local partnerships).
32. Notwithstanding this Policy and any other relevant Council Policy, each concessionary application will be considered on its own merits and, when it is necessary for the Council to depart from this Policy, reasons will be provided.

Other Options Considered

33. The option of offering concessionary permits to parents and/ or guardians wishing to utilise car parks to drop off and pick up pupils at schools across the district was considered.
34. However, alignment with similar schemes across West Sussex has been considered when determining which groups should be targeted. Following this work with other District and Borough Councils across the County, it was clear that permits of this type are not offered elsewhere.
35. Additionally, the provision of permits to this specific group would not actively encourage the modal shift required to increase road safety during peak times. It is important that any proposals do not undermine the work undertaken by another authority with regards road safety.

Financial Implications

36. The proposed, per annum, charging structure for the concessionary permits outlined in this report are tabulated below. The charging proposals are based on the annual charge for a full price annual season ticket (which is, itself, already significantly discounted). The table below uses the highest annual Season Ticket rate currently charged for illustrative purposes.

Table 3: Proposed concessionary permit charges per annum

Full price	50% Discount on Full Price	75% Discount on Full Price	Fully Funded
£1,014	£507	£253.50	£0
Annual season ticket holders	Resident permits (any time) Public Service permits Overnight permits	Roving Healthcare permits	Charity permits Other fully funded permits- case-by-case in support of events

37. Table 4 provides a summary of the same policy applied to the season ticket rates proposed in the village car parks:

Table 4: Proposed concessionary permit charges per annum

Full price	50% Discount on Full Price	75% Discount on Full Price	Fully Funded
£224.64	£112.32	£56.16	£0
Annual season ticket holders	Resident permits (any time) Public Service permits Overnight permits	Roving Healthcare permits	Charity permits Other fully funded permits- case-by-case in support of events

38. The subsidy committed to concessionary permits is currently estimated at approximately £380,000 per annum across the Council's car parks, which equates to just under 15% of the annual income received from parking charges. Applying that same percentage to the modelled income of circa £100,000 from the implementation of charges in villages would give rise to a further £15,000 subsidy.

39. The revised timeline for the introduction of village charging will have an impact on the income forecast at budget setting. Work will take place to model the likely impact (also taking into consideration other budgets within scope of the Parking Strategy Programme) to inform budget setting for 2026/27.

Risk Management Implications

40. The proposals outlined in this report will remove or alter the concessionary or fully funded access of some groups to the Council's parking services. It is proposed that, wherever possible, these groups are transitioned to a suitable, alternative permit or, where this is not achievable, a reasonable and proportionate timeframe for removal is agreed.

41. The WSCC consent process requires dedicated liaison resources, while the ANPR workstream demands technical project management expertise. Given the parallel nature of these workstreams, resources are allocated across both tracks to prevent bottlenecks.

42. Technical contingencies have been established for ANPR integration challenges.

43. The concentrated testing period in March 2026 represents a critical validation phase. The project ensures comprehensive testing protocols are established to validate both the regulatory framework and technical systems before go-live.

Equality and customer service implications

44. This report contains a proposal to introduce concessionary or fully funded access to parking services. These proposals also mean that some groups would be impacted by these changes.
45. To ensure that the Council complies with the Equality Act it is intended that an Equality Impact Assessment is completed.

Other Material Implications

46. None.

Legal Implications

47. Recommendations outlined within this report, for the application of concessions to specific groups (subject to an EQiA) have been produced pursuant to powers conferred by Sections 32- 44 of Part VI of the Road Traffic Regulation Act, which permits Local Authorities to provide off-street parking facilities and their associated charging structures and mechanisms.

Sustainability Implications

48. The recommendations outlined in this report align comprehensively with Mid Sussex District Council's Sustainable Economic Strategy 2025-2028, directly supporting multiple strategic objectives and contributing to the overarching vision of creating "a vibrant District that is attractive, resilient and innovative that balances social well-being, environmental protection and sustainable economic growth.
49. This policy framework ensures that parking management continues to be a strategic tool for supporting local economies whilst maintaining accessibility for diverse community needs. This approach recognises that effective parking management can enhance rather than hinder economic vitality when appropriately implemented with targeted concessions.
50. The extension of smart parking technology to village car parks represents a significant advancement in creating more sustainable and efficient transport infrastructure. By providing real-time data on parking availability and usage patterns, the technology enables more informed decision-making for future infrastructure planning and supports the creation of vibrant, accessible town and village centres.
51. The policy's emphasis on technology investment creates opportunities for future integration with broader sustainable transport initiatives. The data collected through smart parking systems will provide "essential intelligence for future village planning and support understanding of parking demand patterns, visitor flows, and usage trends. This evidence base is crucial for the Strategy's objective to work with West Sussex County Council in delivering sustainable and active travel networks including cycleways, bridleways, rural bus networks and community transport.

Appendices

Appendix 1- Concessionary Parking Permits

Appendix 2- Exempted Car Parks

Appendix 3- Village Parking and ANPR Technology Implementation

Appendix 1

Concessionary Parking Permits

Both existing and future applications for concessionary parking permits received from public service organisations will be subject to the same conditions

Resident permits

- Resident permits will only be issued to individuals who can demonstrate that they reside within half a mile of the car park.
- There must be a demonstration that there is no personal parking provision available.
- A limit on the number of permits per property may be enforced by the Council (subject to capacity within the car park).

Charity permits

- Concessionary permits will only be issued to organisations who can demonstrate they are a registered charity.
- The Charity must have premises less than half a mile from the parking facility.
- The Charity must demonstrate the employees are not receiving a salary.
- The Charity must demonstrate that there is no private parking available.
- A limit on the number of permits per organisation may be enforced by the Council (subject to capacity within the car park).

Roving Healthcare permits

- Roving Healthcare permits will only be issued to organisations who can demonstrate they need to park in the parking facilities for a limited time for the purpose of carrying out legitimate domiciliary visits from medical/care personnel to residents less than half a mile of a parking facility.
- A maximum of five concessionary permits will be offered per organisation.

Public Service permits

- Concessionary permits will only be issued to organisations who can demonstrate they are a Local Authority, an NHS organisation, or a care organisation.
- The organisation must have an employment base less than one mile from the parking facility
- The organisation must demonstrate that there is no private parking available
- The Council shall maintain a limit on the number of public service permits which may be offered in a car park or across several car parks. This may be increased or decreased dependent on the usage.

Overnight permits

- A maximum of five concessionary permits will be offered per application.

Fully funded permits

Occasionally requests are made to temporarily waive or reduce the parking charges in one of the Council's car parks in support of an event. Before approving a request, the following must be considered:

- Financial implications
- Impact on parking availability for other car park users
- Impact on adjacent businesses
- Impact on the Council's reputation
- Wider impacts or additional benefit to the district

Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and no decisions made will set a precedent for any requests received thereafter. The Council reserves the right to refuse a request.

Appendix 2

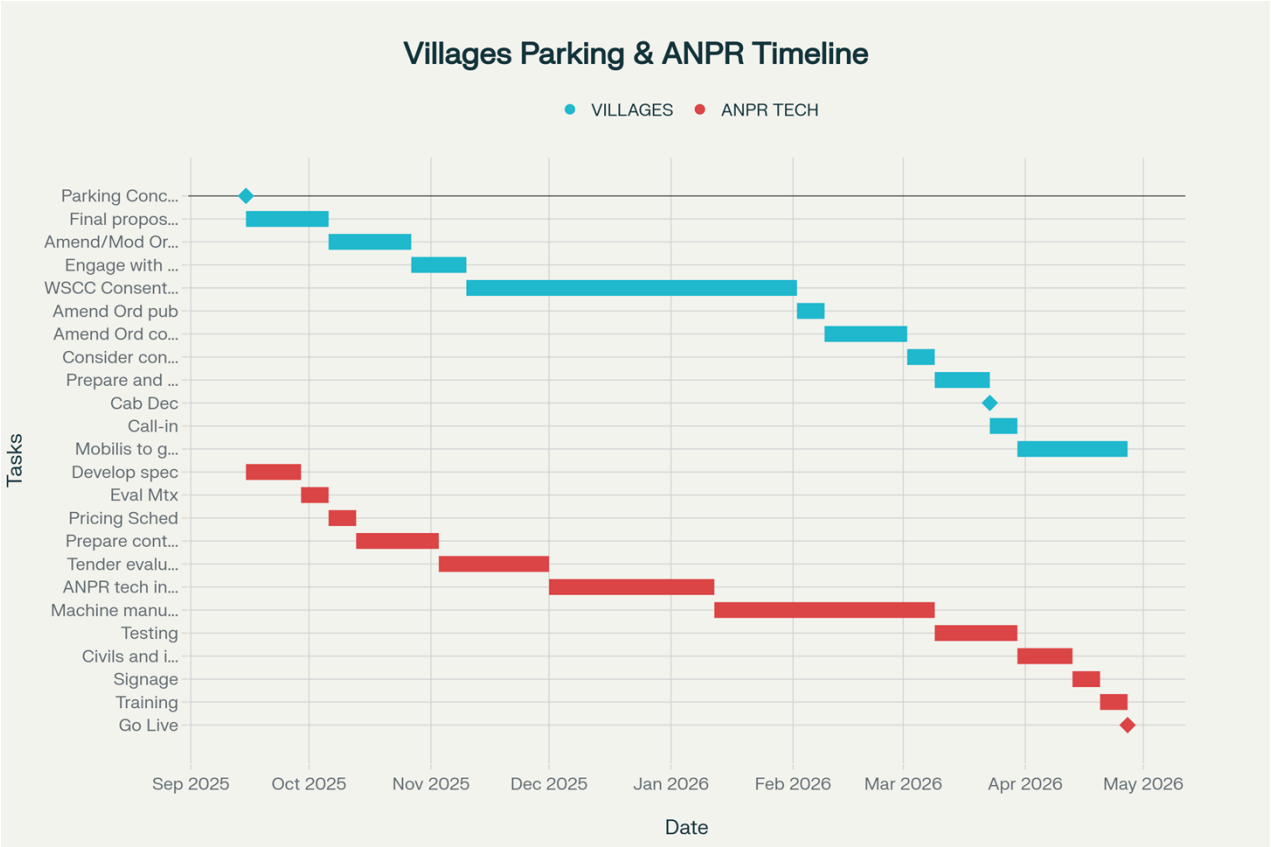
Exempted Car Parks

Car Park	Reason
Street Lane, Ardingly	The Parking facility cannot accommodate additional parking options
The Triangle Leisure Centre, Burgess Hill	The parking facility belongs to the Leisure Centre
St Johns Park, Burgess Hill	The parking facility functions to provide access to a green space
Worlds End Recreation Ground, Burgess Hill	The parking facility functions to provide access to a green space
The Kings Leisure Centre, East Grinstead	The parking facility belongs to the Leisure Centre
Mount Noddy Recreation Ground, East Grinstead	The parking facility functions to provide access to a green space
Muster Green, Haywards Heath	The parking facility is at capacity
Lower St Wilfrids, Haywards Heath	The parking facility is currently full and cannot accommodate additional parking options
St Wilfrids, Haywards Heath	The parking facility is currently full and cannot accommodate additional parking options
The Dolphin Leisure Centre, Haywards Heath	The parking facility belongs to the Leisure Centre
Beech Hurst Gardens, Haywards Heath.	The parking facility functions to provide access to a green space
Mid Sussex District Council Visitor Car Park, Haywards heath	The parking facility functions to provide access to the Council's offices
Recreation Ground, Horsted Keynes	The parking facility functions to provide access to a green space

Appendix 3

Village Parking and ANPR Technology Implementation

The Gantt chart visualises the timelines for the introduction of village charging and the implementation of the ANPR Technology Trials. This dual-track project spans from September 2025 to April 2026, with both workstreams designed to conclude simultaneously.



Project Overview

This is a dual-track approach where both the village charging and ANPR technology trials run in parallel. Both projects are strategically aligned to reach completion in late April 2026, ensuring synchronised delivery of the parking enforcement infrastructure.

Villages Parking Track

The Villages track follows a sequential regulatory process essential for implementing parking charges in village areas. This workstream begins with the Cabinet decision regarding concessionary charging and progresses through the statutory requirements under the Road Traffic Act. Key phases include:

- Early Phase (September-November 2025): Proposal finalisation, and preparation of Amendment/Modification Orders. The critical engagement with Ward Councillors from both MSDC and WSCC occurs during weeks 6-8.
- Regulatory Phase (November 2025-March 2026): The most substantial component involves securing WSCC consent under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act, allocated a maximum of 12 weeks (plus Christmas buffer). This extends from November 2025 through to February 2026, representing the longest single task in either workstream. Should WSCC Highways respond within this maximum timeline the programme will be adjusted.
- Implementation Phase (February-April 2026): The final phase encompasses publication of the Amendment Order, a 21-day consultation period, response consideration, Cabinet reporting, and decision-making. The track concludes with a 4-week mobilisation period for equipment deployment.

ANPR Technology Trials Track

The ANPR track follows a technology development and deployment methodology, moving from specification through to operational readiness. This workstream emphasises technical development, procurement, and implementation:

- Planning Phase (August-November 2025): Surveys are underway. Initial specification development, evaluation matrix creation, pricing schedules, and contract preparation occupy the first 7 weeks. A 4-week tender evaluation period follows.
- Development Phase (December 2025-March 2026): The core technology development phase spans 14 weeks, featuring 6 weeks of ANPR technology integration followed by 8 weeks of machine manufacture and configuration.
- Deployment Phase (March-April 2026): The final deployment phase includes 3 weeks of testing, followed by civil works, installation, signage, and staff training, culminating in the go-live milestone.

Critical Dependencies and Risk Factors

The timeline reveals several critical dependencies that require careful management:

- **WSCC Consent Process:** The max 12-week WSCC consent period represents the critical path for the Villages track. This statutory process, spanning the Christmas period, provides minimal schedule flexibility and could impact the overall project timeline if delays occur.
- **Technology Integration:** The 6-week ANPR technology integration period represents a technical risk, as any compatibility issues or technical challenges could cascade through the subsequent manufacturing and testing phases.
- **Synchronisation Points:** Both tracks converge at the late April 2026 go-live date, requiring precise coordination between the regulatory approval completion and technology deployment readiness.