

Overview & Scrutiny

Date of meeting:	14 November 2023
Title of Report:	Outcome of Trial of New Parking Machine
Report of:	Kirsty Jenkins
Cabinet Portfolio:	Cllr Alan Oliver
Key Decision	No
Confidentiality	Non exempt

1 Summary

- 1.1 To share with Members of the committee, the outcome of the trial touch screen parking ticket machine, with a view to recommending that the Council upgrades 22 of its current parking machines.
- 1.2 Members are asked to comment on the trial and this report, before a paper is taken to Cabinet in December.

2 Officer Recommendation

- 2.1 That Members note the outcome of the touch screen parking machine trial and recommend to Cabinet that upgrades to new touch screen models be introduced to 22 machines over the current and next financial years.
- 2.2 That there will be a bid to the capital programme as part of the annual budget process to finance the upgrade of the existing parking machines.

3 Background

- 3.1 Hart District Council has 22 car park machines which were last upgraded in 2017 and will need to be upgraded again to improve service to customers and reduce ongoing maintenance repair costs.
- 3.2 Technology has progressed since the last upgrades were installed and touch screens are easier for customers to use as well as less likely to breakdown because they have less component parts to become faulty. The aim of the trial machine was to find out if residents found the machine a better option than the existing 'button machines'.
- 3.3 It was agreed to conduct a 3-month trial upgrading Victoria Road car park (machine V10) to a touch screen parking ticket machine (Flowbird S5). This machine was selected because it has high usage and would be extensively tested. The trial aimed to assess its usability and maintenance performance compared to existing button-based machines.

4 Main issues

- 4.1 The outcome of the trial showed that of 355 residents surveyed, 99% of users found it easier (96%) and quicker (93%) or the same to use. Some of the feedback received during the trial included:

'Great to use. I park closer to this machine as it is easier to use than the others.'

'Old machines in Church Road and Victoria Road are hard to use and don't recognise finger pressing on keys. New machine is much better.'

'Much better. Buttons on other machines stick.' Customer also asked when a machine like this one would be available in Church Road Car Park.

'Easy to use and better than the machines in Guildford.'

- 4.2 One of the issues with the existing button machines is ongoing maintenance costs. It costs between £500 and £1,000 each time just one button is damaged, depending on whether one or both keyboards require replacing. There were 24 faults reported to 14 June this year resulting in a need for 36 keyboard replacements at £500 each.
- 4.3 The trial machine has had no faults reported since installation on 2 June 2023.
- 4.4 Upgrading the machines keeps them up to date with technology and removing the card insertion device reduces risk of tampering and removes the possibility for customers to be scammed through distraction theft. There have been 6 cases of this reported to the Parking Team in the last 12 months.
- 4.5 In addition, it is likely that production of the button machines will be phased out over the next few years.
- 4.6 Costs of upgrading 22 machines with the S5 touch screen machines is estimated at £75,000.

5. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 5.1 Not upgrading existing parking machines will result in continued maintenance costs being incurred (£18,000 across existing button machines to 14th June in 2023). The aim is to reduce that liability whilst also ensuring that we are providing our customers with the best service. We are also aware that existing button machines are likely to be phased out over the next few years.
- 5.2 Removing all car park machines and relying only on parking payment through apps would create significant digital exclusion. Around 20 local authorities have taken this approach, but it is not one that officers would recommend at this time.

6 Corporate Governance Considerations

Relevance to the Corporate Plan

- 6.1 This ensures that Hart is a great place to live and work and is part of building a resilient council where we provide the best customer service in an inclusive way, taking care not to create digital exclusion.

Service Plan

Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan?	No
Is the proposal being funded from current budgets?	No
Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal?	No

- 6.2 This was not included in the Service Plan because the offer of the trial machine was not available when the Service Plan was put together. It was due to be considered for next years' Service Plan. The project was brought forward to address the ongoing maintenance repair costs.

- 6.3 Staffing resources have been identified to manage the procurement of new machines and to manage the transition.

Legal and Constitutional Issues

- 6.4 There are not considered to be any direct legal issues arising from the report.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 6.5 Based upon a quote from the current trial machine provider, cost of upgrading 22 machines is estimated to be £75,000. Procurement processes would be followed to ensure best value.

- 6.6 There are not considered to be any additional staffing resource requirements.

Risk Management

- 6.7 The principal risk of not upgrading the existing machines to touch screens is ongoing maintenance costs associated with the existing button machines and potential phase out of parts for these machines.

- 6.8 Vandalism remains in a risk in either case but is lesser with the touch screen machines as they are built for durability and have less component parts that can be damaged.

7 Equalities

- 7.1 Upgrading of existing machines would create neutral or positive impacts on all protected groups and as such a full EqIA is not needed.

- 7.2 As identified by the customer survey, the new touch screens are more accessible for those with dexterity issues and as such create a positive impact for older or more physically impaired customers.

8 Climate Change implications

- 8.1 No substantial direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

9 Action

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the feedback from the trial and recommend to Cabinet that 22 machines are upgraded to touch screens across 2 financial years.

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