

# Parking Services Report 2020/2021



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## **1. Introduction**

Welcome to Somerset West and Taunton annual parking report for 2020/21.

Somerset West and Taunton was formed following the joining of Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council. Somerset West and Taunton is a local government district in Somerset, England. It was established on 1st April 2019.

The two councils had worked in partnership from 2013, sharing a single team of staff and a Chief Executive. A business case was developed, and proposals made to the Government for the councils to create a single new Council. This was approved by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in May 2018.

This annual report provides an overview of the Parking Service throughout the financial year which includes parking management, working practises of the service, promoted lawful parking within the towns and villages within the Somerset West and Taunton boundary, information on finances, policies, new innovations, and improvements which have been made in our service highlighting high levels of parking and traffic compliance in line with the car parking strategy.

During the year the Council has focused on delivering user friendly car parking facilities to residents and visitors to the area whilst committing to the carbon neutral pledge to be a carbon neutral district and Council by 2030.

## **Introduction continued...**

In 2021 the Council created a car park project team to deliver a review of the current service to ensure the car parking within the district was consistent, transparent, fair, delivers easily assessable services, and is a beacon in terms of environment, maintenance, provision of electric vehicle charging points and upon which future financial planning can be made with confidence.

As the district continues to grow and attract new residents, this will inevitably lead to increased demand for movement to, from and within the district.

While the availability, frequency, and reliability of public transport - and the existence of high-quality facilities for walking and cycling - will influence the way people travel, there will nevertheless be an unavoidable impact on traffic and parking.

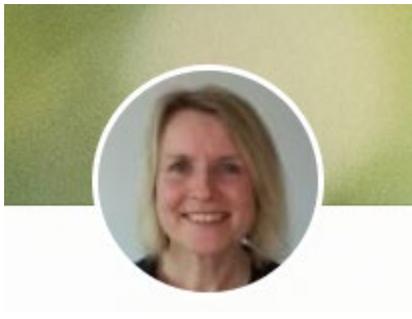
The Council carries out a monthly review of Key Performance Indicators which ensures performance remains on target and identifies any potential problems as soon as they occur. Parking Services also benchmarks itself against other Local Authorities annually this enables comparisons to be drawn with other authorities with a similar profile to Somerset West and Taunton to ensure our performance in key areas is in line with industry averages.

This annual report encompasses the advice in the PATROL Toolkit, 5 steps to success, the Council also uses these 5 steps to manage the car parking services alongside the parking service review project.

1. Your service – the what, why and how
2. Innovation and new developments
3. Education, enforcement and appeals
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5. Utilising digital channels

## The Service

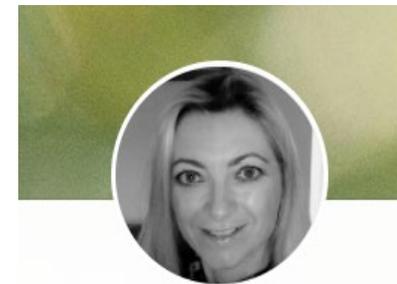
### Meeting the team



Lesley Ireton – Parking Case Manager



Stuart Noyce - Assistant Director  
Commercial Services



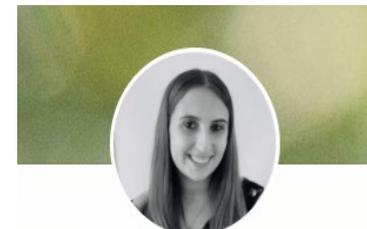
Lynette Wright - Finance Specialist  
External Operations and Climate  
Change



Clr Mike Rigby - Portfolio  
Holder, Parking Services



Vicky Lowman – Parking and  
Enforcement Specialist



Kathryn Edwards - Finance Case  
Manager External Operations  
and Climate Change

## **The Service Continued ...**

The main purpose of the Parking Service is to manage traffic through provision and management of parking facilities and contribute to maintaining the free flow of traffic to prevent danger and congestion through enforcement where vehicles are parked in contravention of restrictions.

The Council enforce the 'off street' parking provisions throughout the district, the availability, the quality, and the cost of the car parks are key to returning residents and visitors. Having the correct balance will ensure the assets are used and maintained in line with expectations. Somerset West and Taunton contract the parking enforcement function to Somerset County Council as part of the Somerset Parking Partnership who contract NSL the UK's leading provider for parking enforcement.

We are committed to supporting Somerset County Council and NSL to deliver a high quality, fair, consistent and transparent approach to parking and traffic enforcement for our residents and visitors.

Somerset West and Taunton enforce a total of 43 Car Parks (a mixture of long and short stay) which are within each of the towns listed below, the areas include both standard pay and display spaces and disability spaces. Details of each of these car parks can be found using this link <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/parking/car-parks/> .

Each car park location shows the total number of spaces within each location, a link to the virtual permit facility, pay by phone location code, opening hours and a map of the area. The pay on foot car park locations have linked Variable Message Signage, this signage is linked to digital display boards which are located at the borders of the town.

## **The Service Continued ...**

### **Car park assets**

#### **Taunton**

6 pay on foot locations and 12 pay and display – Total number of spaces 2,645 + 96 disabled bays

#### **Blue Anchor**

1 pay and display - Total number of spaces 156 pay and display + 4 disabled spaces

#### **Dulverton**

3 pay and display - Total number of spaces 115 + 8 disabled bays

#### **Dunster**

2 pay and display – Total number of spaces 175 + 8 disabled bays

#### **Minehead**

7 Pay and display - Total number of spaces 478 + 28 disabled bays

#### **Porlock**

2 pay and display - Total number of spaces 102 + 7 disabled bays

#### **Watchet**

5 pay and display - Total number of spaces 181 + 15 disabled bays

#### **Wellington**

3 Pay and display - Total number of spaces 340 + 24 disabled bays

#### **Williton**

1 pay and display - Total number of spaces 69 + 10 disabled bays

### **The Service Continued ...**

There are also a number of free car parks within the district within Wiveliscombe, Wellington, Milverton, Taunton, Crowcombe, Kilve, Wheddon Cross and Withypool.

The parking assets are inspected monthly for maintenance and health and safety checks, these are carried out by the Council's highway's inspector. Any works required within any of the locations are reported, actioned and a record is kept of works carried out and when the inspection has taken place.

Our parking enforcement partner NSL enforce the above locations daily. NSL provide a full and comprehensive range of end-to-end parking service, they support the enforcement element, the Council back-office software system Chipside which allows officers to view cases issued, the case status, workflow activity and a record of events on each of the Penalty charge notices issued.

During the year the parking service has faced challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted on staff, loss of income and a drop in footfall to the towns, parishes and villages. During this time the Council chose to offer free parking to residents and visitors to the area from 23rd March – 30th August. Office staff were redeployed to other essential services ensuring the Council were still able to offer key services to the public. Enforcement staff were redeployed to local vaccination centres.

## **Innovation and new developments**

In 2019/20 the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to working towards achieving carbon neutrality and climate resilience by 2030. Somerset West and Taunton also agreed to work in partnership with the other local authorities in Somerset to develop a Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and simultaneously develop our own Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan as an action plan for the district.

A public consultation was undertaken on a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience framework for our District, containing our early ideas for action. It incorporated many of the ideas that have been suggested by the community into an action plan which will add to the initiatives that are already underway.

Somerset West and Taunton has been encouraging the installation of electric vehicle charging points in communities throughout the district. The Council offered all parish and town Councils in the district the opportunity to apply for grants of between £500 and £1,500 from a one-off budget of £20k set aside to support community led action to tackle the climate emergency.

Electric vehicles are becoming an increasingly affordable and popular choice for drivers. They do not use conventional fuel but instead utilise an electric motor powered by rechargeable battery packs. Electric vehicles contribute significantly less carbon emissions into the atmosphere than conventionally fuelled vehicles over their life cycle even when the electricity comes from fossil fuels.

Somerset West and Taunton recognises it is essential to have a reliable and extensive public charging infrastructure to keep the plug-in electric vehicles moving. Therefore, the Council has facilitated the installation of a number of charge points across the district within our Council owned car parks.

In 2020/21 the climate change directorate undertook an Electric vehicle installation project, the project consisted of two phases which included site selection, site feasibility, selecting the installation contractor using a national framework and bidding for government funding and budget monitoring.

### **Innovation and new developments continued ...**

The Council also installed rapid EV charging bays within the leisure centres owned by the authority. This has allowed our leisure centre users to charge their vehicles whilst taking full advantage of the leisure facilities we offer.

Due to the demand for increasing numbers of EV charge points the studies have highlighted unfortunately it is not possible to install them in every requested location due to physical and electrical safety constraints. The council has however planned to install a mixture of both fast and rapid chargers within 12 of its council owned car parks within 2021/22.

The EV charging bays will be more accessible than the standard size bay which means that many of our disabled drivers will be able to park and make use of the scheme, this also means each vehicle using the bays can charge safely without any equipment encroaching onto the next bay.

During the install stage the car parking location will be reviewed for relining, signage visibility, disability, and motorcycle bay percentage against standard bay. This review will ensure we have the correct facilities within the location to meet the needs of our customers.

At the end of 2020/21 a car park review project was started, this has outlined the requirement to record and update an asset register which has highlighted the need to review the authority owned car parks current and note the conditions, any legal restrictions that maybe associated with each location. This process has enabled us to create a 30-year plan of each asset which includes maintenance costs, income generation, legal considerations, and site value.

### **Innovation and new developments continued ...**

As part of this review, it has been identified that 25 of the West Somerset pay and display machines are in need of upgrading, Somerset West and Taunton Council and Somerset County Council have worked in partnership to procure IPS MS1 payment terminals. The public will have the opportunity to pay for their parking via coin, card and contactless card payments. The machines are easier to use and offer additional benefits including improved security features and online machine monitoring so that appropriate advice may be given to users should they enquire to Parking Services.

The review also identified that the Crescent Car Park within Taunton Town centre is in need of regeneration, this asset comprises a flat surface car park with 224 car parking spaces and 9 disabled parking spaces. The site is physically confined by a range of buildings at all edges, spanning between 1-6 storeys in height. The site is dissected by a private car park at its centre separating the site into a northern and southern split.

The works as part of the review will be commissioned within the 2021/22 financial year.

## **Education, enforcement, and appeals**

As mentioned within 'the service' section of this report, NSL parking enforcement partner, enforce the Councils off-street car parks on a daily basis, the contractor carries out the below tasks on behalf of the Council.

- Parking enforcement through the issue of PCNs for Off Street Parking contraventions
- Cash collection, counting and banking services
- Maintenance of parking equipment
- Suspension of parking bays
- Blue badge enforcement

Somerset County Council carry out the PCN processing services from administration, letter printing and publication, call centre services and payments of PCN's, through to appeals and representations and debt recovery functions on behalf of Somerset West and Taunton.

Somerset West and Taunton parking services team are passionate in delivering an excellent parking enforcement service to the residents and visitors that use the parking facilities within the district. The Councils overall aim is to achieve parking compliance through education and enforcement whilst being fair and consistent. As part of this we aim to improve our economy by providing both long and short stay parking restrictions to ensure a high turnover of vehicles to support local business and our climate change objectives by installing electric charging points.

### **Education, enforcement, and appeals continued ...**

To achieve compliance, we focus on the safety of delivering the enforcement service, this includes ensuring our car parks are safe for users and for staff enforcing within these locations, improving road safety for all road users and pedestrians is key in our service delivery.

Enforcement Officers will issue penalty charge notices (PCN's) to any vehicle breaking a contravention within any of the locations. This includes vehicles blocking access to other car park users and emergency vehicles, vehicles parking out of bay and users exceeding stay times permitted by the parking order or paid parking sessions. Warning notices may be issued to vehicles if restrictions are charged within the off-street parking order. The warning notices have a different prefix and outline to the driver that this is a warning rather than an enforcement notice and no charge is payable on the occasion. The Civil Enforcement officers' (CEO) issue PCN's in line with the Traffic Management Act 2004.

The Enforcement Officers currently use Samsung handheld devices to carry out enforcement to the car parking areas, these handhelds integrate with the Chipside patroller operating system, the pay by phone system to enable VRM recognition for pay by phone sessions and Mi-Permit back-office software for virtual parking permits.

NSL also play an ambassadorial role for the Council by guiding people to available parking spaces and providing visitors with directions to the many events that take place each year throughout the district.

To view the Somerset West and Taunton Off Street Parking Order, click [here](#)

## **Education, enforcement, and appeals continued ...**

### **A day in the life of a CEO**

#### **Prior to morning deployment:**

- Collect equipment from the office or deploy from home. Handheld, printer and machine keys.
- Sign into the device using their username and password. This ensures no one patrols under the wrong name or collar number.
- Carry out a test print to ensure the equipment is in order and to verify date and time is correct.
- Check their respective zone clip for any information or exemptions.
- Carry out a radio check with the control centre.

#### **Whilst on patrol:**

The officers make their way to their respective area for the day and start patrolling. Unless we have received complaints, they are left to patrol the area as they wish. They are required to patrol the car parks at least twice a day.

Upon entering car parks, the officers will make their way to the parking machine(s) and ensure they are in working order before they commence enforcement duties.

These checks include;

- Checking the correct time and date is displayed.
- Open the machine up and inspect the working parts are in order.
- Check Printer roll levels.

## **Education, enforcement, and appeals continued ...**

### **A day in the life of a CEO continued ...**

#### **Issuing of PCN:**

Once a vehicle has been seen in contravention the vehicle will then be logged by the Enforcement Officer for the contravention that has occurred.

The process is started by entering the contravention code and vehicle registration into the handheld device. Depending on the contravention the penalty could be an instant PCN issue or require an observation period.

The Instant codes include:

Code 87 - parked in a disabled space without clearly displaying a blue badge or

Code 81- parked in a restricted area.

Once the two pieces of information that are required are entered the penalty issuing procedure is in process. The next field requires the make and colour of the vehicle to be entered. Once this has been entered the PCN is ready to be issued to the vehicle.

The first printed PCN will be inserted into the envelope/bag and attached to the windscreen. A re-print is requested and kept with the officer for records. At this stage the software then allows the officer to take photos and make any accompanying notes for the PCN to ensure all evidence of the contravention is gathered.

## **Education, enforcement, and appeals continued ...**

### **A day in the life of a CEO continued ...**

Other contraventions that require an observation period such as contravention code 83 - Parked in a car park without clearly displaying a valid pay & display ticket or voucher or parking clock, the vehicle will be logged in the same manner as an instant contravention, but the device will start the required countdown. The officer can continue to patrol the area whilst the timer runs in the background. The handheld device will not let the officer print the PCN until the countdown has reached 0. The same process then applies with entering the make and colour of the vehicle with the opportunity to add additional evidence where required.

### **End of shift:**

At the end of the day the team will return to their base and hand their equipment back in. Handheld and printers are plugged in to be charged and PCN data is downloaded and an end of shift report is attached to the duplicate penalties printed for the day to be filled away securely. This data is kept in line with the Council's privacy notice policy.

### **Other duties the Enforcement officers undertake:**

- Opening/locking of closed car parks within the district, Sweeping the car park levels where possible, checking gates and locks ensuring no tampering of these has occurred.
- Observing occupancy data for the pay on foot car parks to ensure the linked Variable Message Signage is showing the correct data.
- Retrieving lost parking tickets and payment cards from pay stations and barriers.
- Reporting missing or damaged street furniture to the Council, passing on any hazards found like needles and potholes within the parking locations and surrounding areas.
- Carry out first line maintenance where appropriate to all parking related equipment. Enforcement officers are trained to undertake these repairs.
- Manning or cordoning off areas that are closed to the public to ensure safety standards are met.

## **Education, enforcement, and appeals continued ...**

### **Appeals and challenges**

Once a PCN has been issued to a vehicle, each individual has the right to challenge the decision. If a PCN is paid within 14 days of the issued date a 50% discount rate is available.

The informal/formal challenge must be in writing and submitted within 28 days of the date of issue. If the appeal is rejected and/or remains unpaid a Notice to Owner will be served on the person or company registered with the DVLA as the owner of the vehicle.

At the notice to owner stage the appellant has the right to appeal the PCN issued to The Traffic Penalty Tribunal (TPT) service, the TPT is an independent adjudication service available for parking appeals. Once the TPT reach their decision the appellant and the council are notified of the outcome.

During 2020/21 a total of 8 appeals were submitted to the TPT.

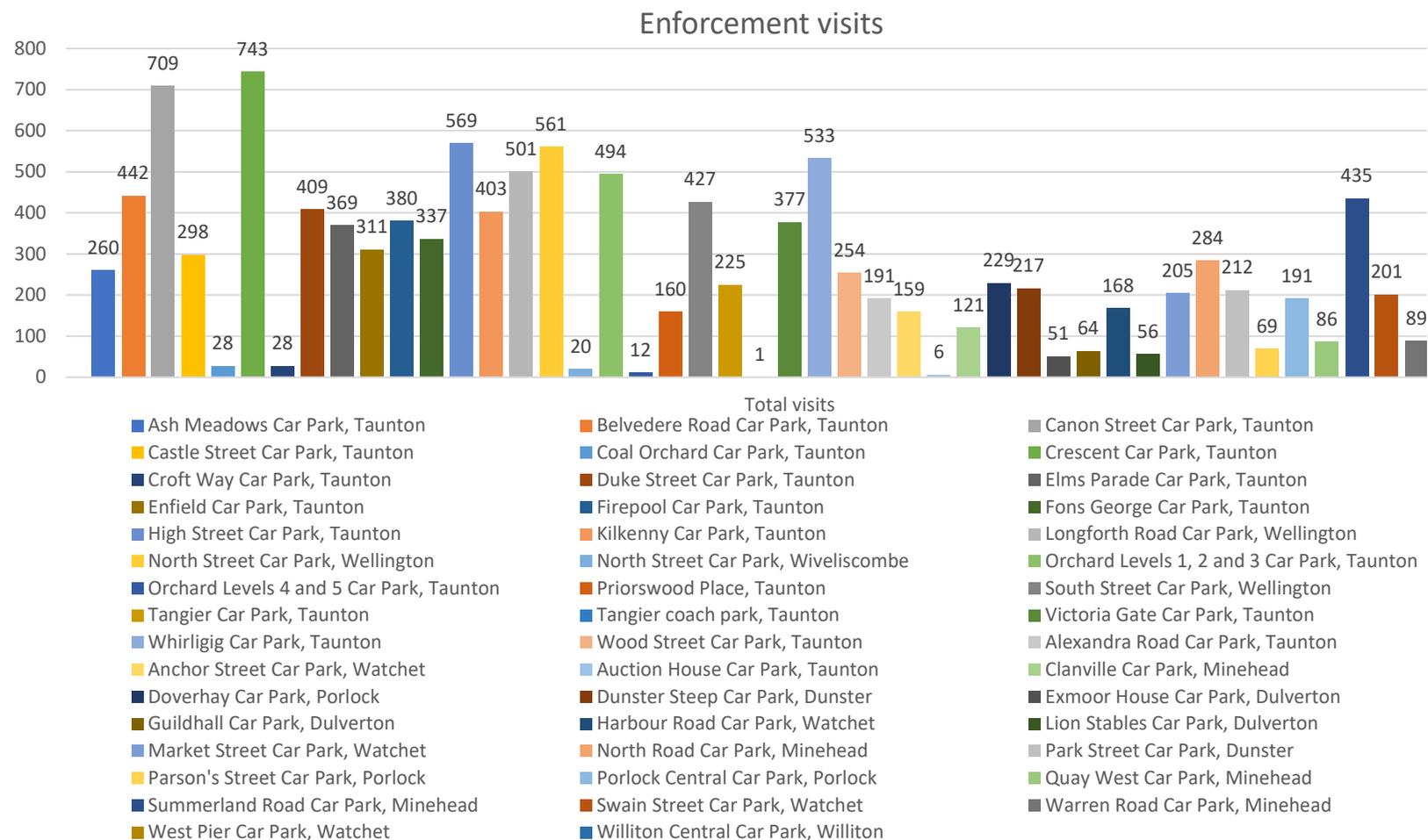
All the required forms and information on how to appeal to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal are sent out with the Notice of Rejection. Further information on the tribunal service can be found using this link

[www.trafficpenaltytribunal.gov.uk/](http://www.trafficpenaltytribunal.gov.uk/)

If the customer fails to submit an appeal or pay the outstanding PCN and all attempts to recover outstanding charges have failed, the council will apply to the Traffic Enforcement Centre (TEC) for a Warrant of Control. This enables the collection of the unpaid debt to the authority; these warrants are issued to the enforcement agents who work on the council's behalf to recover the outstanding debt at no cost to the authority. Further information on the Traffic Enforcement Centre can be found using this link [www.find-court-tribunal.service.gov.uk/courts/traffic-enforcement-centre-tec](http://www.find-court-tribunal.service.gov.uk/courts/traffic-enforcement-centre-tec)

## Education, enforcement, and appeals continued ...

A total of 12280 enforcement visits were carried out between September 2020 – April 2021

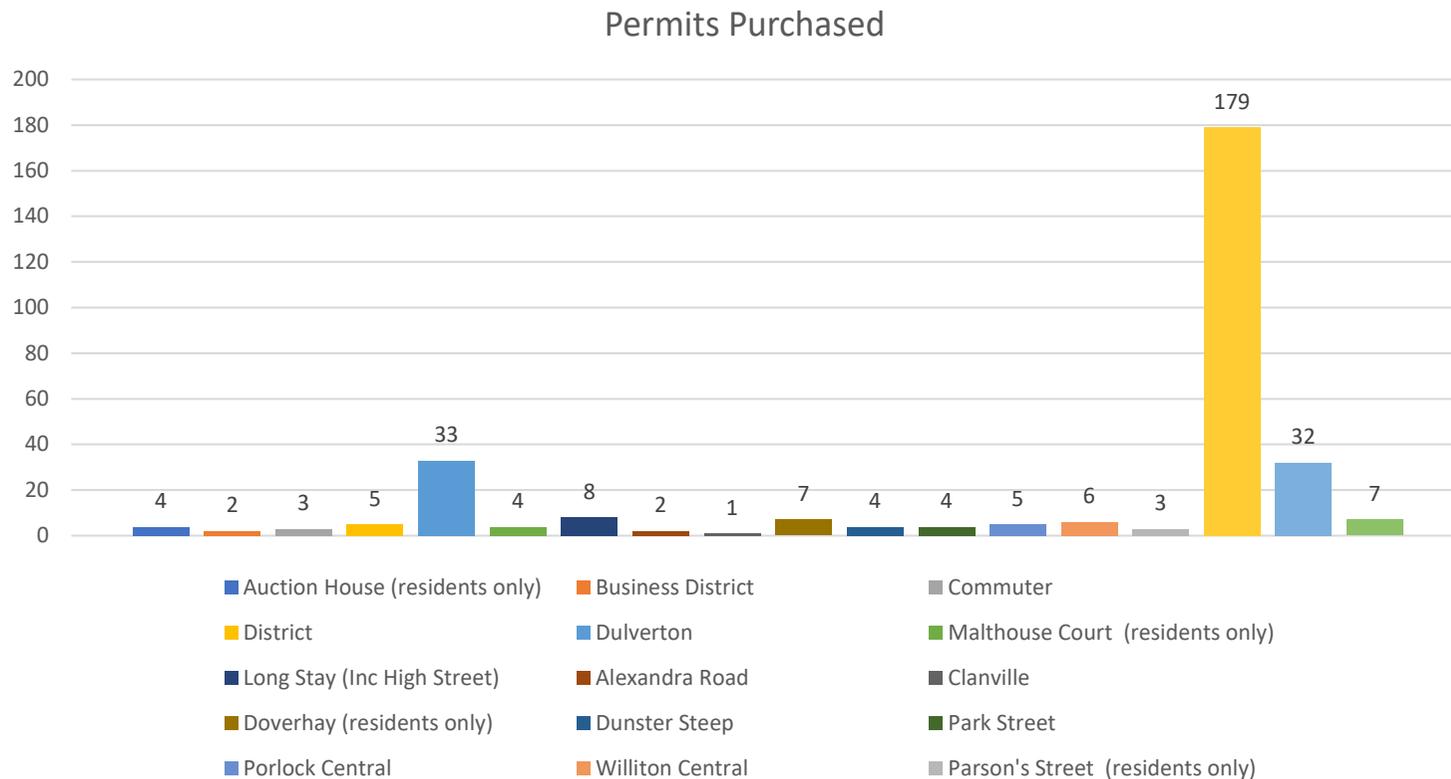




## Education, enforcement, and appeals continued ...

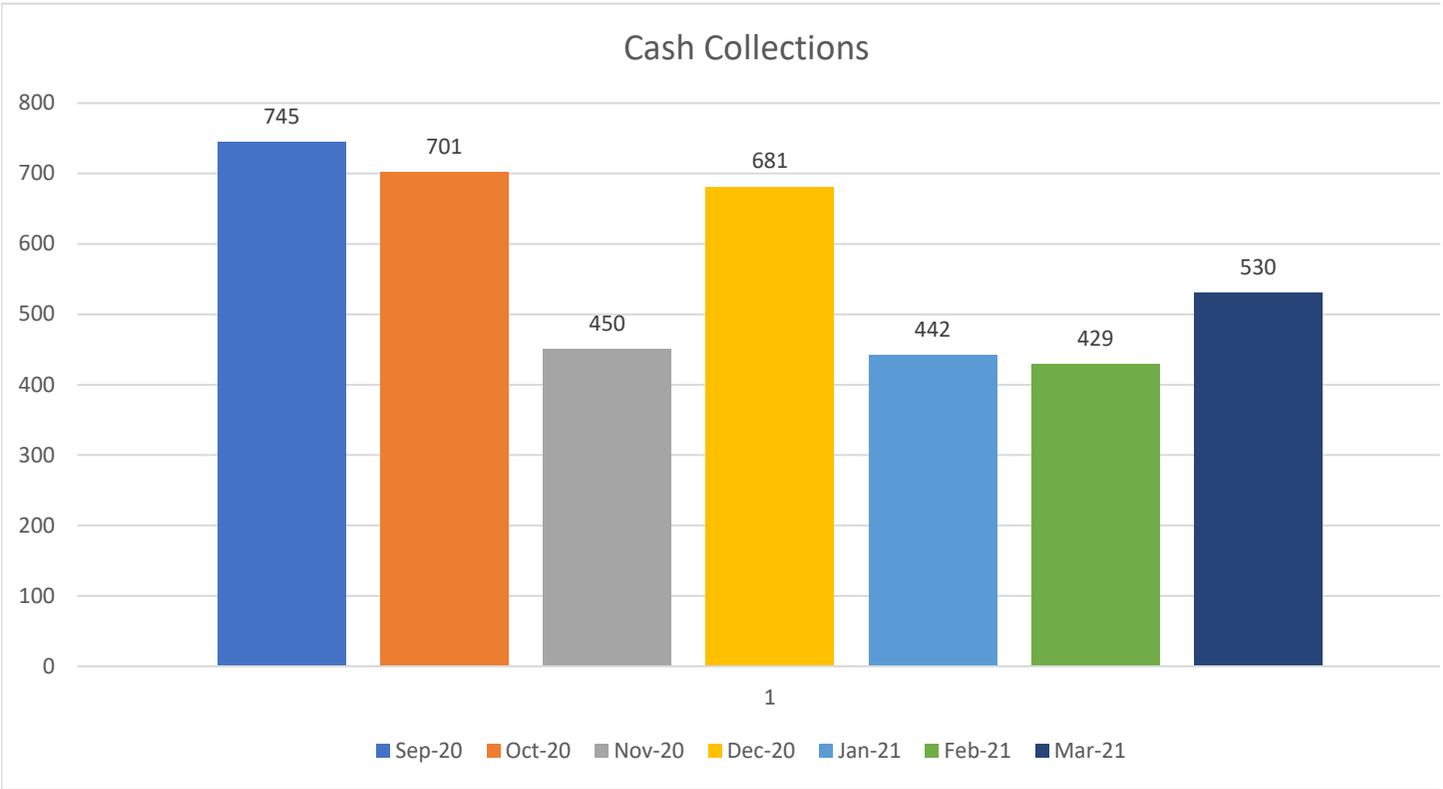
A total of 309 permits were purchased between September 2020 – March 2021

Permit information and online application can be found <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/parking/parking-permits/>



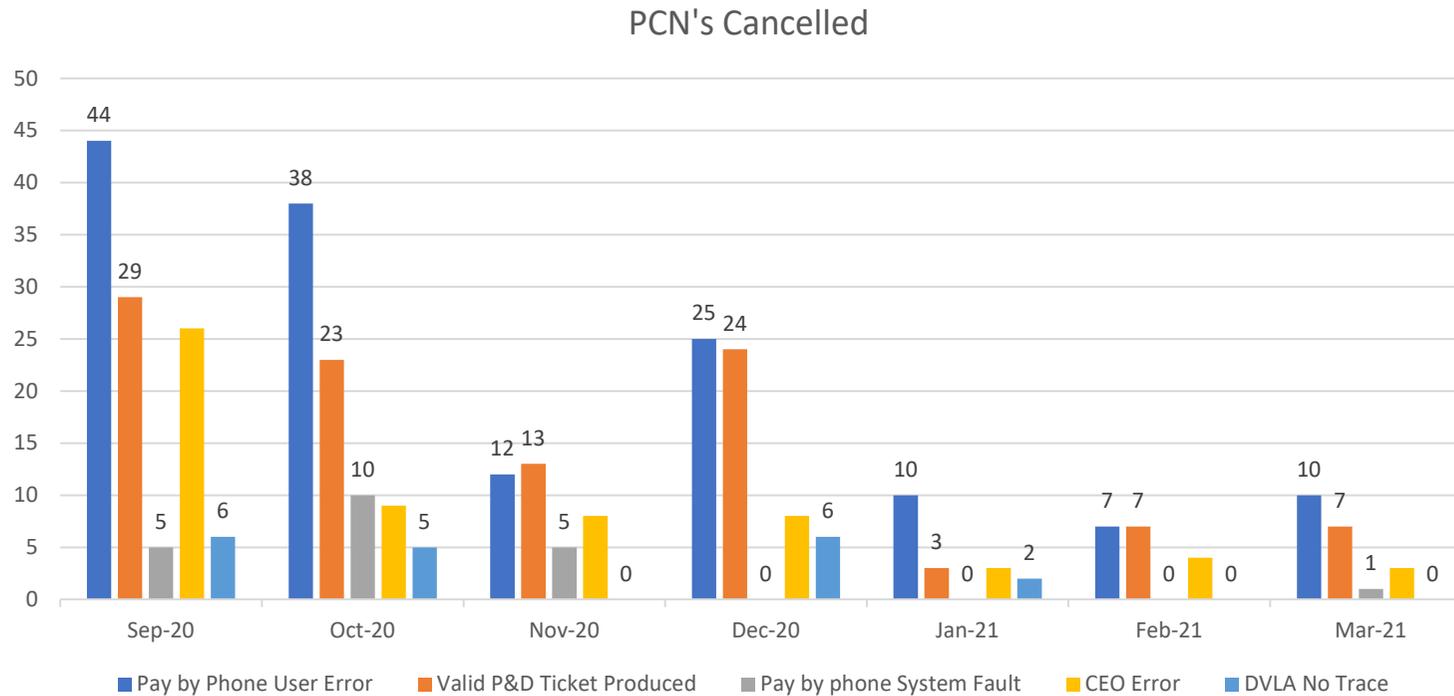
### Education, enforcement, and appeals continued ...

A total of 3978 Cash collections were carried out between September 2020 – March 2021



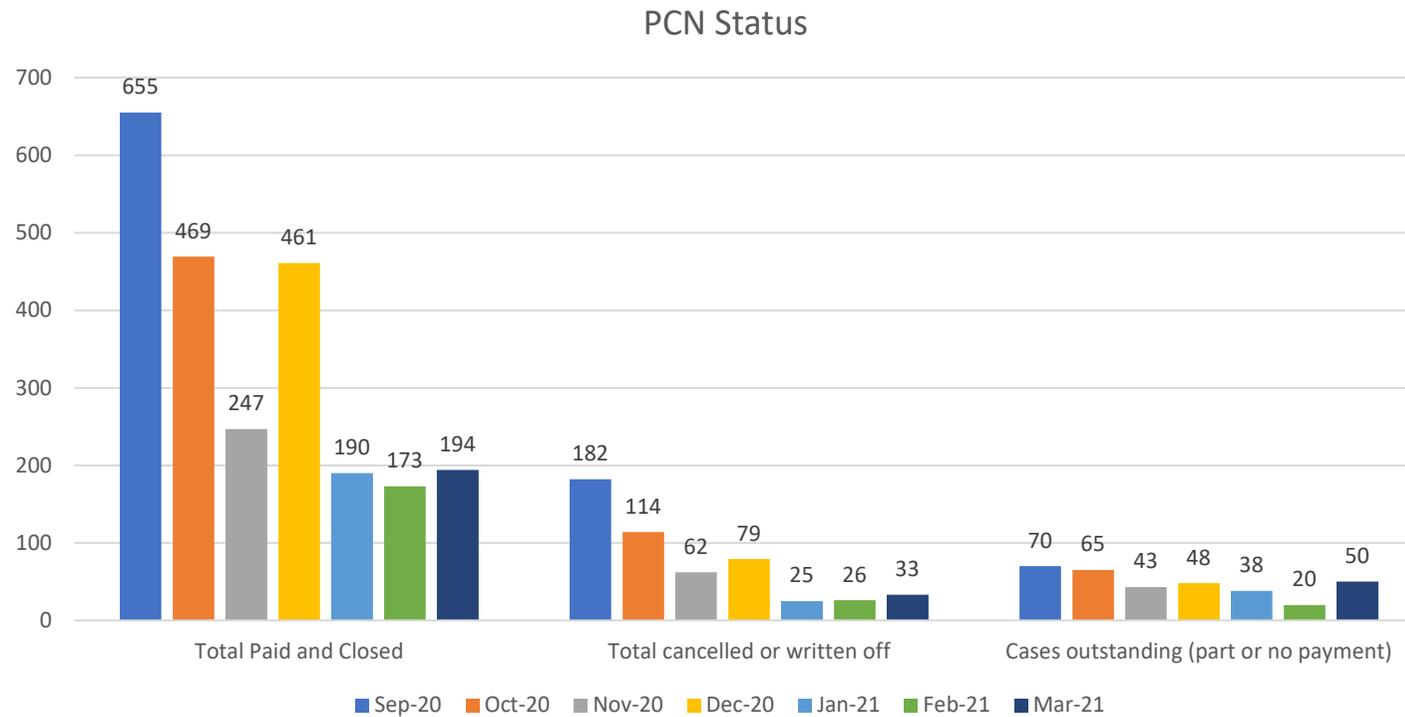
## Education, enforcement, and appeals continued ...

A total of 521 PCN's were cancelled between September 2020 – March 2021, below are the top 5 cancellation reasons



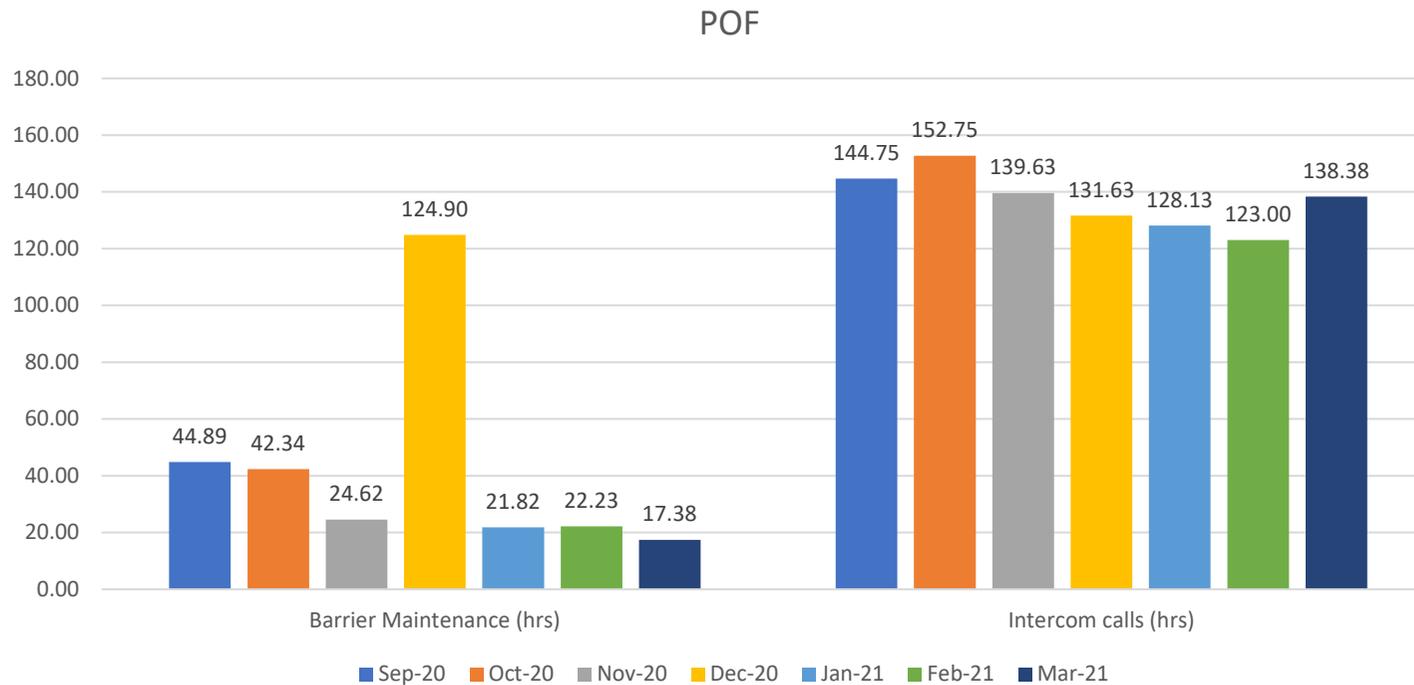
## Education, enforcement, and appeals continued ...

PCN status on all PCN's issued between September 2020 – March 2021



## Education, enforcement, and appeals continued ...

A total of 1256.44 hours were spent within the Pay on Foot (POF) car parks between September 2020 – March 2021 these hours consisted of maintaining the car parking barriers and answering the intercom services.

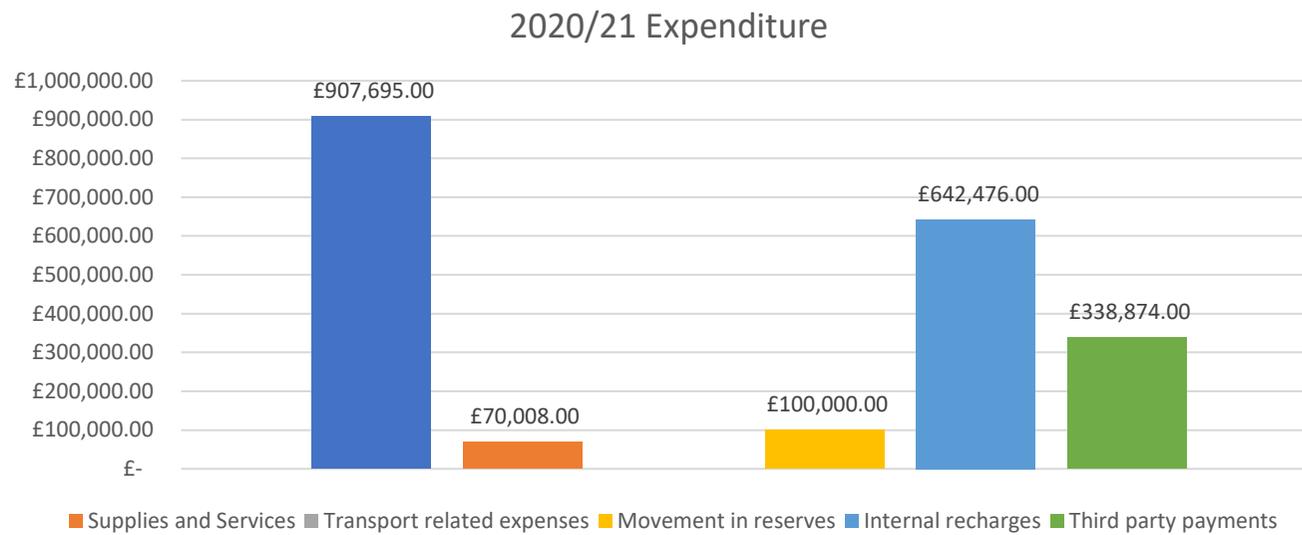


## Transparency in Finance

Revenue collected through pay and display, pay on foot and parking permit income is returned into the parking services budget to provide and enhance parking facilities within the district. The revenue ensures car parks are maintained to a high standard, create a safe environment to our residents and visitors, environment improvement and ensure locations are in line with current innovations.

### Expenditure data

The total expenditure for the financial year is £2,059,052



## Transparency in Finance continued ...

### Income data

The total income for the financial year is £ 1,389,765.00



Surplus income from the issuing of PCN's must only be used in accordance with Section 55 of the Road Traffic regulation act 1984 (as amended).

## Utilising digital channels

Somerset West and Taunton offer online services to make parking services more available online, however we have considered that not everyone has access to a computer so traditional methods to access services are still available. In March 2021 Somerset West and Taunton Parking Services team implemented the Mi permit virtual parking system which enables customers to purchase, renew and manage their parking account online. The new system will allow customers to apply for a permit 24/7 and receive their virtual permit instantly. They will no longer need to wait for a paper permit to arrive in the post for them to display in their car.

Enforcement officers use a handheld device with recognition software to link permit-holders to the number plate of their car.

Virtual permits are a quick environmentally friendly solution for those customers using the Somerset West and Taunton car parks.

The Mi permit portal can be accessed using this link <https://secure.mipermit.com/swt/application/home.aspx> or via the Mi Permit app which can be downloaded within a smartphone app store.

The council offer an insight into our parking account, information can be found using this link <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/open-data/car-parking-account/>

