



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND COMMUNITIES**

**to
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
11 JUNE 2026**

REPLACEMENT OF PAY AND DISPLAY PARKING MACHINES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Members' approval to replace the Council's existing pay and display parking machines

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) that the replacement of the existing pay and display machines with fit for purpose, modern and updated alternatives be approved;
- (ii) that the rationalisation of machine provision from twenty-one (21) to twelve (12), informed by current usage data and reflecting the increasing uptake of parking app payments be approved;
- (iii) that the machines are procured via capital purchase (not leased) as the most cost-effective option and that capital funding to the value of £100,000 is approved;
- (iv) that the transition toward contactless and, where appropriate, ticketless parking operations be endorsed;
- (v) that the intention to align parking systems with wider Mid Essex arrangements be noted.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Council generates approximately £2 million in annual revenue from the management of its car parking operations. This income is supported by effective pay and display machine provision, alongside the use of parking app's and the active recovery of debt where appropriate.
- 3.2 The Council's current pay and display machines were installed in 2018 and are now approaching the end of life. The supplier has confirmed that key components are obsolete, resulting in increased failure rates, extended repair times, and declining reliability. This is creating operational and financial pressure on the service.
- 3.3 These failures have resulted in:
- Lost income where machines are unavailable
 - Increased customer complaints and reputational impact

- Additional officer time required to manage faults and refunds

- 3.4 The Council's Car Park Strategy (June 2025) commits to improving customer experience by enhancing parking services through the use of technology, clear signage, user-friendly payment systems and well-maintained facilities, ensuring a positive experience for visitors. This will be achieved by adopting modern payment methods, including ANPR, account-based parking for regular users and parking applications.
- 3.5 A direct like-for-like replacement is not possible, as the manufacturer no longer produces these machines. Replacement options will be assessed for each car park, which may result in either a tailored provision reflecting the specific characteristics of individual sites or a standardised approach across the portfolio.
- 3.6 Car parking operations generate nearly £2 million in annual income, representing a significant and reliable revenue stream for the Council. Investing in the service will protect both machine-based and digital payment channels, ensuring income continuity as user behaviour evolves. Without this investment, a critical source of revenue would be placed at risk, potentially impacting the Council's ability to fund essential frontline services – see table below for breakdown on parking income.
- 3.7 Income – Pay and Display Machines (2025/26):

| Total Machine Income | RingGo Payments | Season Tickets | Total Income |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| £1,112,928 | £820,623 | £52,360 | £1,985,911 |

- 3.8 Car parking machine usage data demonstrates a significant shift in customer behaviour, with nearly 50% of payments now taken through digital channels. This provides an opportunity to realign machine provision with demand.

| Car Park | Spaces | Machines (Current) | % Machine Use (balance is web-based) | Spaces per Machine (Current) | Machines (Proposed) | Spaces per Machine (Proposed) |
|----------------------|--------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| | a | b | c | d = a/bxc | e | f |
| White Horse Lane | 195 | 4 | 58% | 28 | 2 | 57 |
| Butt Lane | 177 | 3 | 65% | 31 | 2 | 47 |
| Friary Fields | 59 | 2 | 55% | 13 | 1 | 26 |
| High Street East | 66 | 2 | 65% | 19 | 1 | 37 |
| Promenade Coach Park | 37 | 1 | 53% | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| Promenade Main | 750 | 8 | 50% | 47 | 6 | 63 |

- 3.9 The table above illustrates the relationship between car park capacity, current machine provision, and actual usage levels, highlighting how many spaces are effectively reliant on pay-and-display machines.
- 3.10 The data demonstrates that the current number of machines exceeds operational need when compared with actual usage levels. Across all car parks, between 50% and 65% of transactions are made via machines, meaning a significant proportion of customers are using alternative payment methods.
- 3.11 The reduction from 20 to 12 machines represents a more efficient deployment of assets, aligning supply with demonstrated demand. It ensures that machine provision

remains available for those who need it, while recognising the continued shift towards digital payment methods and reducing unnecessary maintenance, lifecycle, and replacement costs associated with underused equipment.

3.12 The proposal is to install 12 pay and display machines which are fit for purpose, modern and updated alternatives to our current pay machines. These new machines will provide the following functionality:

- **Operate on a contactless-only basis:** to improve transaction speed and reliability while reducing maintenance requirements; removing PIN pads and card readers also lowers the risk of card skimming and other fraudulent payment activity.
- **Require Vehicle Registration Number (VRN) entry:** to enable more accurate enforcement, reduce misuse of tickets, and support seamless integration with digital and back-office systems.
- **Integrate pay-by-phone systems:** to deliver a modern, flexible digital payment solution that supports multiple payment providers, improves user choice, and ensures future scalability while aligning with wider industry standards.
- **Explore pay-by-phone options available in line with the end of the RingGo contract and review adoption of the National Parking Platform (NPP):** the NPP is a not-for-profit, open-access digital platform that enables seamless interoperability between Parking Operators (e.g. Local Authorities) and a wide range of Service Providers (PayByPhone, RingGo, Just Park, etc.)
- **Enable ticketless operation:** to reduce paper use and maintenance costs, minimise machine downtime, eliminate issues with lost or failed tickets, and enable a more streamlined and user-friendly parking experience.
- **Meet rigorous accessibility and inclusivity regulations:** ensuring equitable use for individuals with varying levels of physical and visual ability, and include carefully calibrated terminal heights, angled touchscreens and colour contrasted user interfaces.

3.13 The figures below compare purchase and rental costs over five years and where the Council can achieve value for money.

| Installation of 12 Machines | Purchase Quote | Rental Quote |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Total five-year cost | £99,975 | £162,000 |
| Cost per machine (five years) | £8,331.25 | £13,500 |
| Upfront capital required | Yes | No |
| Ownership | Council owned | Supplier owned |
| Theft / vandalism risk | Council liable | Council liable |
| Banking fees | 5% transactions | 5% transactions |

3.14 Over a five-year period, the purchase option for 12 machines is £62,025 cheaper than rental and delivers better value per machine. While rental provides some short-term cashflow flexibility, it comes at a significant premium and does not remove the ongoing risk associated with asset loss. From a whole-life cost and value-for-money perspective, purchasing the machines is therefore the more economical and financially prudent option.

3.15 The introduction of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) in Council-owned car parks has been considered. A range of delivery options are available, with the

most common involving the installation of barriers and cameras at car park entrances and exits. Under this system, no physical tickets are required; users make payment at a pay station or via an app prior to exit, with cameras recognising the vehicle registration mark (VRM) and enabling barrier-free exit once payment has been confirmed.

- 3.16 Consideration would need to be given to the provision of additional weatherproofing and shelter. There would also be ongoing costs associated with the maintenance and repair of barriers and camera equipment. The introduction of ANPR would not remove the need for staffing, as personnel would still be required to ensure systems remain operational and to respond to issues such as equipment faults or barrier damage.
- 3.17 Local authorities are generally limited to using ANPR for compliance and targeted enforcement purposes. The size, location and configuration of Maldon's town centre car parks may not justify the additional investment or readily support a pay-on-foot model. Promenade Park, with a single-entry point and separate exit, may be more suitable; however, during peak periods such as summer months and events, the use of barriers could impede traffic flow. Common operational issues with ANPR systems include dirty number plates, misread registrations and errors caused by incorrectly entered vehicle details.
- 3.18 Chelmsford City Council currently owns and operates the machines under consideration for purchase, which are used across both on-street parking and off-street car parks. The same machines are also deployed within Brentwood Borough Council for on-street parking under a Service Level Agreement as part of the Southeast Parking Partnership Joint Agreement.
- 3.19 This alignment supports consistency of infrastructure and operations across neighbouring authorities and positions the Council favourably in the context of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), enabling greater opportunities for service integration, shared maintenance arrangements and potential economies of scale.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The existing pay and display machines are no longer sustainable due to age, obsolescence, and increasing maintenance issues. Without replacement, there is a growing risk to service continuity, a deterioration in customer experience and a potential impact on the Council's £2m annual parking income.
- 4.2 A replacement programme will provide a modern, reliable, and cost-effective solution which reflects current customer behaviour and supports future service integration. The capital purchase option represents the best value for money and ensures long-term financial efficiency.
- 4.3 The evidence clearly demonstrates that customer behaviour has already shifted significantly towards cashless payment methods, resulting in the current machines being underutilised. Rationalising the number of machines will better align provision with demand, increasing income per machine, reducing ongoing maintenance costs, and doing so without materially affecting accessibility.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

5.1 Supporting our communities

5.1.1 Maintains accessible parking options for all users, including those without access to digital payment methods.

5.2 Investing in our District

5.2.1 Provides modern infrastructure that supports town centre and visitor destinations.

5.3 Growing our economy

5.3.1 Supports local businesses and tourism through reliable parking provision.

5.4 Protecting our environment

5.4.1 Solar-powered machines and reduced reliance on ticketing support environmental objectives.

5.5 Delivering good quality services

5.5.1 Improves reliability, reduces downtime, and enhances the overall customer experience.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Improved reliability and ease of use will enhance customer experience. Machine provision will remain in place to ensure continued accessibility for non-digital users.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – The proposal maintains inclusive access to parking services by retaining pay and display options alongside digital solutions.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – Replacement reduces operational risk associated with failure of ageing equipment. Contactless-only systems reduce exposure to card fraud and skimming risks.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The five-year cost of purchasing 12 machines is £99,975 compared to £162,000 for rental, representing a saving of £62,025. The proposal protects approximately £2 million annual parking income. Where income levels are currently sub-optimal due to parking machine down-time/failure, it is reasonable to expect an increase in overall income arising from new machines. Over the proposed five-year period, the investment in new machines represents approximately 1% of incomes in the same period. The initial funding of the machines can be arranged through application of surplus funds arising in the previous financial year (2025/26).
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Reduced machine downtime will decrease officer time spent on maintenance issues, complaints, and refunds.
- (vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** - Alignment with neighbouring authorities supports future integration within Mid Essex Council and reduces long-term operational complexity.

Background Papers:

[Maldon District Council Car Park Strategy 2025](#)

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