

Car Park Pressure at Honiton Leisure Centre

Report summary:

1.1 This topic was raised at the 14th January 2025 Leisure Delivery Forum, minuted as follows;

An ongoing issue had been identified with parking at Honiton Leisure Centre particularly when matches were taking place on the adjacent pitches. LED staff had observed inconsiderate and dangerous parking and there had been increased cancellations as well as complaints from users of the Leisure Centre who were unable to park and were therefore missing sessions which they had paid for.

The Assistant Director – Place, Assets & Commercialisation responded that he and the leadership team had been aware of the issues and following discussion, had decided in summer 2024 that it was not appropriate to intervene by introducing charging and parking enforcement; however, due to evidence recently provided by LED, the matter would be reviewed again in the coming weeks, to consider how the issues can be addressed.

1.2 Following the Forum, upon request, LED have provided evidence of health and safety concerns and customer feedback expressing dissatisfaction with the current arrangements and cancelling memberships as a result. They have also sought to allay concerns around income retention stating that this is not a commercial decision to raise income, but a community one to protect users of the facilities.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That the Forum notes the progress being made on the car parking arrangements and that a more detailed report will come to the next Forum Meeting.

Reason for recommendation:

To reflect and where possible reduce concerns relating to the existing car park arrangements at Honiton Leisure Centre.

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- ☐ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☐ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Economy and Assets
- ☐ Finance

- ☒ Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☒ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Any change in car parking arrangements needs to consider accessibility for all people and groups. A full equalities impact assessment will be completed as part of any car park approach agreed.

Climate change Medium Impact

Risk: Low Risk; At this stage the overall risk is considered to be low as there is no commitment to capital expenditure.

Links to background information

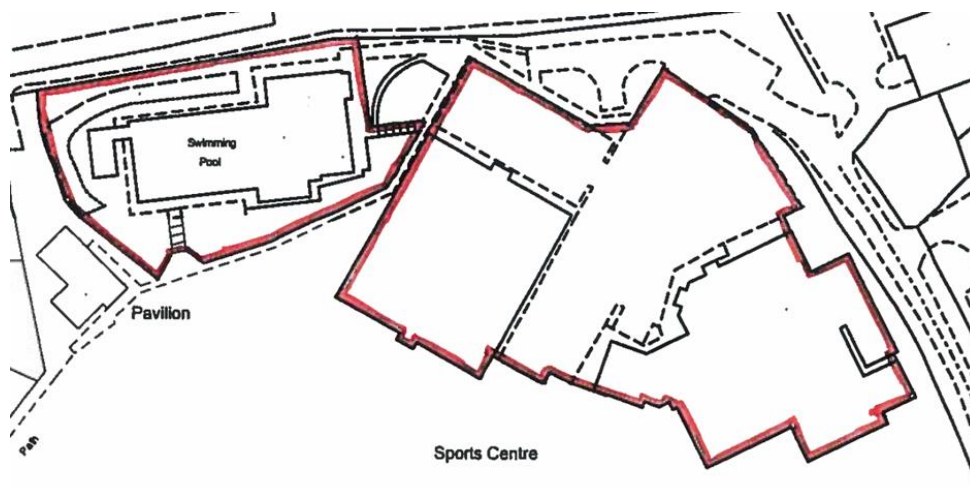
Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
- ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
- ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services

1.0 Honiton Car Park

1.1 The car park at Honiton sports centre is included within the lease to LED as shown below:-



1.2 . With approximately 75 spaces at the site, since the Centre opened over 30 years ago, the centre management have had issues with people using the car park who are not using either the swimming pool or the sports centre.

1.3 The issue is particularly bad during peak times, when multiple activities are running simultaneously or when the rugby club have matches.

1.4 . The Centre usage is illustrated by the table below

Activity	Peak Use	Number
Gym – 55 Stations	5pm – 8pm Evenings Weekends	50/60% capacity so 25/30 people Steady flow of users = 5/10 people
Studio Classes – 30 Max	5pm – 8pm Evenings	75% capacity so 25 people

Sports Hall	6pm – 8pm Evenings	Between 4/8/16 players depending on activity (i.e. Badminton / 5 a side)
Squash Court	6pm – 8pm Evenings	4 players
Virtual Cycling Studio	6pm – 8pm Evenings	4/5 people using it at a time
Swimming	4pm – 6.30pm Evenings Saturday mornings Saturday afternoons	4 lessons across pool = 32 kids per 30 minutes – changeover times a challenge 4 lessons across pool = 32 kids per 30 Fun and Splash / Parties = 30 kids
Netball League	6pm – 9pm Mondays and Wednesdays	2 courts = 28 players plus subs / spectators at one time.
Rugby Club	Saturdays and Sundays Saturday afternoons Tuesday and Thursdays	Junior Rugby = 20/30 per session Adult Matches = Players and spectators Adult Training - 20/30 per session

- 1.5 . This has led to centre users cancelling booked classes during evenings and weekends as they haven't been able to park. In some instances, members have terminated their membership and gone to other gyms in the area.
- 1.6. In those instances, the car park is not adequately able to accommodate Leisure Centre members. The issue is particularly bad during peak times, when multiple activities are running simultaneously or when the rugby club have matches.
- 1.7. The centre management have expressed Health and Safety concerns as overcrowded parking leads to obscured sightlines, increasing the risk of pedestrian (especially children) collisions. There is also the potential for emergency vehicle access could be critically hindered, delaying response times in emergencies.
- 1.9. The pictures at the end of this report illustrates the severity of the parking issue, highlighting the congestion and pinch points experienced throughout the week. These images underscore the urgent need for a solution to manage the car park more effectively.
- 1.10. Honiton Community College: The introduction of pay and display parking at the college in early 2024 has led to more non-members who are visiting the College using the Leisure Centre car park to avoid fees. There is a planning application currently in progress for a full sized and floodlit All Weather Pitch at the College which could potentially impact on available car parking in the local vicinity.
- 1.11. Honiton Rugby Club: Additional activities at the rugby club during weekends and evenings have significantly increased the demand for parking spaces. The rugby club have been providing their members with information about alternative parking, and an arrangement to use part of the school car park at weekends. However, this does not seem to have solved the problem.
- 1.12. Sidmouth and Exmouth Leisure Centres being situated in seaside towns, have Pay and Display car parks operated by the Council car parking team at both leisure facilities. Leisure facilities on dual use sites share car parking facilities with the school and are free to use in evenings and weekends. The possible exception is Axminster Leisure centre which has a Pay and Display Car Park; however, enforcement seems to be minimal. The Tennis Centre has its own dedicated car park offering free spaces.

3.0 A Way Forward

Officers are in discussion with LED re possible solutions. These include;

- 3.1 . Hybrid Pay and Display / ANPR operation managed by private company.

The land in question is not currently included in the EDDC Off-Street Parking Order and therefore any agreement with a third party to manage the site will not conflict with our current enforcement arrangements. Legal have confirmed that a Parking Places Order is not required for this proposal.

3.2 . Car Park managed by Council

An alternative is to remove the car park from the LED lease and operate it as part of the Councils Car parking Service as a pay and display scheme. This would require resource in terms of set up costs and require the site to be included within the Parking Places Order.

3.3 Car Park monitored without Pay and Display.

Consider an option in which no charge is made, however parking is only available for users of the leisure centre which will be monitored and where necessary enforced.

Next Steps

4.0. For both parties to review the proposals received and consider the best approach to take.

4.1 . Under the constitution, the following is within Assistant Director – Place, Assets and Commercialisation delegations.

“Authority, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to agree variations to leases.” (3.32.53).

4.3 Once a decision has been reached and approved, ward members and PFH will be notified about the proposals and subject to feedback (particularly from PH), proceed through a deed of variation agreed with Legal and LED under their lease to implement the preferred scheme.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The car park at Honiton Leisure Centre is under significant pressure which is likely to increase with the development of a new 3G pitch within the Community College across the road from the Leisure Centre which already have Pay and Display arrangements in place.

5.2 Implementing a new car parking regime system is a crucial step towards alleviating this pressure, addressing health and safety concerns and enhancing the overall experience for users of the facilities by providing safe car parking space availability through a clear and effective parking strategy.

5.3 . It is important that all options are considered as the demand for using the site will not change regardless of the restrictions. There will be increased parking use of nearby residential streets and alternative car parks, potentially causing unrest and issues with traffic movement in the vicinity.

Financial implications:

The alternative solutions are being considered and the financial position will be considered as part of this assessment.

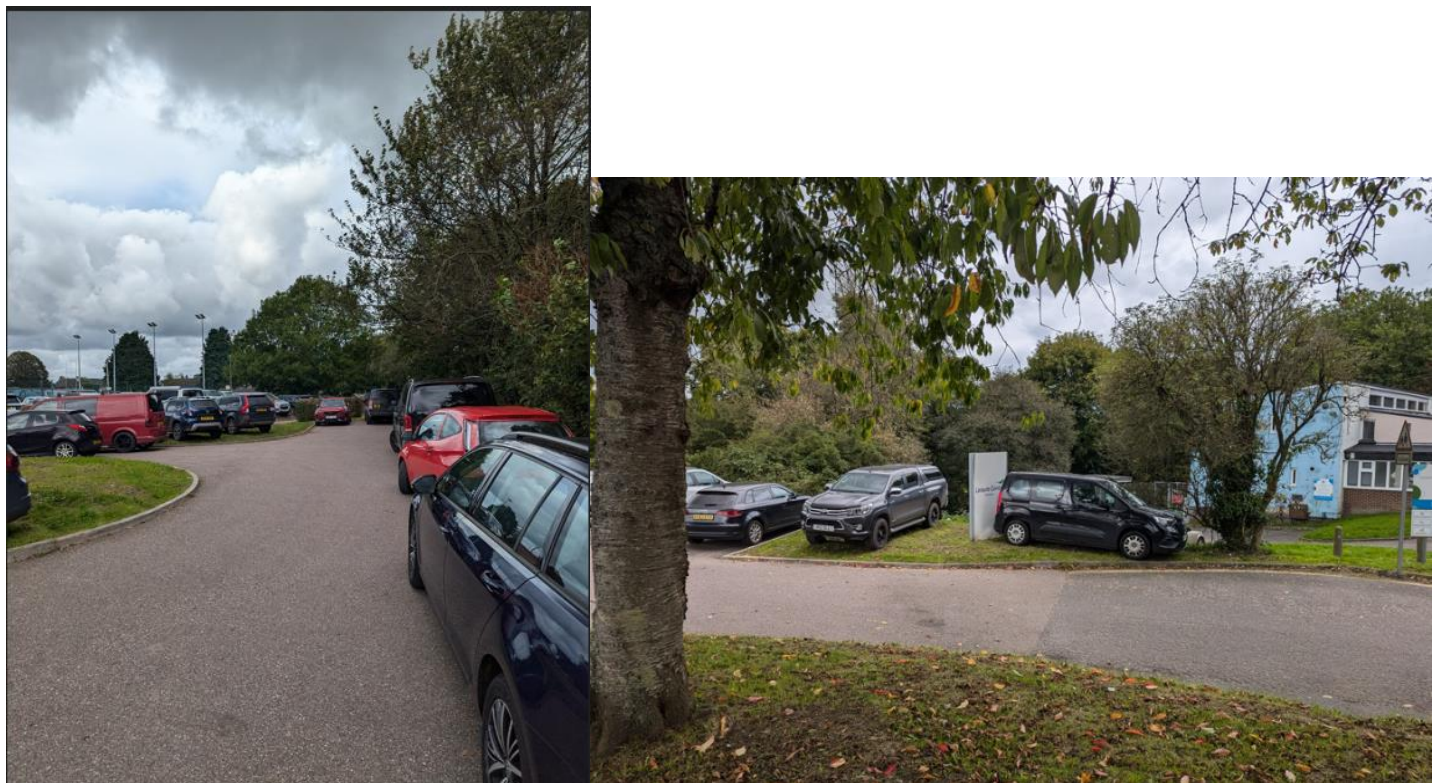
Legal implications:

Any deed of variation will be subject to approval by the legal team.

Net Promoter Score (NSP) Feedback to LED Management

Tag Groups	Comment	Date
Car Parking, Exercise Classes	Parking is problematic when the school term is on as year 6 use the gym car park as if it is their own.	8 months ago

	<p>We need more Substitute instructors for yoga etc so classes aren't cancelled so often.</p> <p>Padding out the class list on the app with virtual classes that don't get used is an irritant. Otherwise, everything is fine</p>	
Car Parking, Exercise Classes, Gym	<p>Hi parking is really difficult. I was close to having to miss a Pilates class due to a sports event and no parking available at the gym. A person doesn't expect parking issues in a Sunday. I also experience this during the week when there are school events on. Really the main reason I will leave the gym</p>	3 months ago
Car Parking	<p>Macy who taught Jack was wonderful. She was so lovely and made Jacks sessions so much fun! We are sceptical for leaving, but with the parking being a huge issue which needs resolving asap and now coming into the winter months Jack was coming out blue from being so cold, we hope to re join in the spring/summer!</p>	2 months ago



See the below example of the car park after Leisure Centre closed on a Saturday. This is full after a rugby game.

