



# Title of report: National Parking Platform

**Decision maker: Cabinet Member Roads and Regulatory Services**

**Decision date: 24 July 2026**

**Report by: Parking Services Manager**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

## **Key**

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

## **Wards affected**

All (all (All Wards);)

## **Purpose**

This report seeks approval for the Council to join the National Parking Platform (NPP).

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) The Cabinet member approves the Council entering into a contract with the National Parking Platform (NPP), and**
- b) Delegates all operational and financial decisions to the Chief Operating Officer - Resident Services to progress the council's application to join the NPP.**

## **1. Alternative options**

Retaining the existing single-provider cashless parking arrangement and re-procuring a parking payment app through a traditional competitive tender process. This is not recommended. While this approach would result in lower direct annual costs, it would require repeated procurement exercises over time, ongoing contract management, and continued reliance on a single supplier. This model also offers less resilience in the event of supplier failure and provides limited flexibility to respond to market change or introduce additional payment providers without further procurement activity. On balance, officers consider that this option would be less robust and less financially sustainable over the longer

term, particularly when assessed against the Council's objectives for risk management, service resilience and value for money.

### **Key considerations**

**2.** The National Parking Platform (NPP) is a not-for-profit national digital platform that connects council car parks to multiple approved parking apps at the same time. Instead of a council choosing one parking app through a contract, the NPP allows several approved apps (such as RingGo, PayByPhone, or JustPark) to work in the same car parks and on-street pay for parking locations. Drivers can then use the app they already prefer, rather than downloading a new one. The NPP itself is not an app. It is shared national digital infrastructure that connects local authority parking systems with different app providers. It handles data exchange, reconciliation, national standards and payment management.

**3.** The NPP administers a digital infrastructure that enables payment for parking sessions to be made through various parking payment apps. It allows drivers to use their preferred payment app, eliminating the need to download multiple apps, not only in Herefordshire but across the country, where parking providers are registered with the Platform. "Drivers will be able to use a wider range of parking apps, including those they already use elsewhere. Cash and card payments will still be available. The change provides more flexibility, better resilience and a simpler experience for residents and visitors.

**4.** Currently, motorists are restricted to the use of the Council's single cashless payment provider, JustPark, for payment of parking sessions. That contract commenced in January 2025 following the expiration of the previous contract with RingGo. The current contract is due to expire in January 2027 although the contract allows for extensions of up to 2 years. Because JustPark are part of the NPP, we can withdraw from this current contract at no cost in order to join the NPP, as the NPP supersedes the individual authority contracts.

**5.** Providers on the platform currently include, JustPark, RingGo. Pay by Phone, Apcoa Parking, Appyparking and Caura. Additional authorities have applied to join the platform and work is continuing to bring these into effect.

**6.** There are currently 15 authorities operating via the platform including:

- I. Oxfordshire County Council
- II. Manchester City Council
- III. Coventry City Council
- IV. Tower Hamlets Council
- V. Stevenage Borough Council
- VI. Buckinghamshire Council

A further 16 authorities have signed up to the platform and these are currently being implemented.

**7.** The NPP is designed to eliminate fragmentation of the App available to customers. Customers can park, pay, and manage their parking across multiple towns and cities without changing apps or creating new accounts. Customers will benefit from choosing the cashless app that they have installed and the app that they are more familiar with and prefer. The cashless parking availability will be more resilient and enable customers to use a different provider in the event of downtime on a particular provider. This will also ensure that customers, who are more familiar with the process for obtaining a session by their preferred app, will be less likely to make mistakes. The implementation of the platform will provide further choice for customers and not replace current payment options. Clear signage will ensure that customers are aware the platform is not an app and the available cashless payment providers are highly visible.

**8.** The platform supports fair and transparent pricing across all app providers registered with the platform. All Service Provider commissions are included in the price the customer pays for the parking

session at no cost to the council. There is no additional fee charged to the customer for using any App on the platform. The current options to pay by card or cash will be unaffected in the event the council join the platform.

**9.** Joining the platform for an initial period of 3 years at a net cost to the council of £71,000 will remove the risk of procuring a new supplier and the transitional difficulties faced by users as has recently been experienced in the change of supplier from RingGo to JustPark.

**10.** Understanding the costs and benefits of joining the National Parking Platform Joining the National Parking Platform (NPP) is not free of charge. Although the NPP operates on a not-for-profit basis, a commission is applied to parking transactions processed through the platform in order to cover the cost of operating and maintaining the national system. This commission is 2.2% of income received from cashless parking payments and is paid by the local authority, not the driver. Based on current levels of cashless parking income, this is estimated to equate to approximately £48,000 per year. This cost is not a transaction fee paid to a commercial provider, but a platform participation charge that replaces a number of costs, risks and activities that would otherwise fall to the council. The commission includes:

- I. All relevant parking signage
- II. All Payment Service Provider (PSP) fees
- III. Connection of council parking systems to the national platform
- IV. Secure, resilient national digital infrastructure
- V. Governance, assurance, compliance, technical support and reporting tools
- VI. Ongoing system development and resilience following the end of central government pilot funding
- VII. A simplified procurement model which removes the need for a competitive tender exercise for a single parking app
- VIII. The ability for additional approved payment providers to join the market without further council procurement or engagement.

**11** In practical terms, the council is paying for access to a managed, competitive national parking payments market, rather than procuring and managing a single supplier through a traditional contract. This reduces long-term dependency on one provider, avoids repeated procurement exercises, which considerably reduces officer time engaged in procurement, improves resilience if a payment provider experiences technical issues, and gives drivers greater choice over how they pay for parking. While the annual cost represents a new budget pressure, it should be viewed in the context of the procurement, contract management, supplier risk and system resilience costs that the council currently absorbs under a single-provider model in addition to potential cost savings estimated to be in the region of £23,000 per year.

**12.** The NPP therefore represents a strategic shift from managing individual parking app contracts locally to participating in shared national infrastructure designed to support competition, resilience and future integration. In addition, participation in the NPP removes the requirement to procure and manage an exclusive parking payment provider through a competitive tender process. This avoids repeated procurement cycles, legal and commercial advisory costs, internal officer time, and the risks associated with contract transitions and supplier change (approximately £15,000 to £25,000 per tender process). The NPP model also allows additional approved payment providers to be onboarded without further council procurement activity, preserving competitive tension in the market over time.

**13** From a value-for-money perspective, the annual cost represents a fixed and predictable charge that provides cost certainty over the medium to long term. This contrasts with the traditional single-provider OFFICIAL model, where costs are partially embedded in procurement activity, contract variation, supplier dependency, and operational risk, and are therefore less transparent and more difficult to forecast. While the NPP option is higher in direct annual cash terms than maintaining a single-provider arrangement, it materially reduces:

- i. long-term supplier concentration risk,

- ii. exposure to service disruption,
- iii. contract management overhead,
- iv. future procurement costs.

On this basis, the proposed expenditure can be regarded as supporting financial sustainability, risk mitigation and cost transparency, rather than delivering short-term savings. The decision therefore represents a strategic value-for-money judgement over the longer term, rather than a purely budget-minimisation exercise.

**14.** Regular monitoring will take place of the total number of transactions made through the NPP. This will help to evaluate the number of transactions made through the App compared to cash and card payments. It is anticipated that the number of cash transactions will reduce in addition to the benefit to customers of the preferred payment provider.

**15.** Early engagement with the communications team is planned to ensure wide publicity of the implementation of the NPP together with vivid and numerous on-street and car park notices of the NPP and the process for its use. Subject to approval by the Cabinet Member implementation date for joining the Platform is anticipated to be December 2026.

## **16. Community impact**

This decision aligns to the Herefordshire Council Plan (2024 - 2028) through our transformation priority, where we have a stated objective to be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money. There will be no change to the current process for obtaining a free parking session, which requires the customer to obtain a pay and display ticket from the adjacent payment machines.

## **17. Environmental impact**

None identified.

## **18. Equality duty**

The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this activity and it has been found to have low impact for equality. However, the implementation of the NPP will not impact on the other payment methods currently available, i.e. card and cash to ensure continuity of options for customers who do not have a smart phone or choose not to use cashless payments.

## **19. Resource implications**

The net costs to the revenue budget of the Council joining the National Parking Platform are set out in the table below, £32k in 2026/27, and £25k from 2027/28 onwards. This net cost can be funded from the Parking Service current approved revenue budget.

| Revenue or Capital cost of project (indicate R or C) | 2026/27<br>£'000 | 2027/28<br>£'000 | 2028/29<br>£'000 | Total<br>£'000 |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Cost of National Parking Platform (NPP) ®            | 16               | 48               | 48               | 112            |
| Parking Software hosting implementation              | 5                | -                | -                | 5              |
| <b>Total</b>                                         | <b>21</b>        | <b>48</b>        | <b>48</b>        | <b>117</b>     |

| Funding Streams (indicate whether base budget/external/grant/capital borrowing) | 2026/27<br>£'000 | 2027/28<br>£'000 | 2028/29<br>£'000 | Total<br>£'000 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Potential cost savings from reduced cash collections and banking fees           | -                | (8)              | (8)              | <b>(16)</b>    |
| Cost savings of officer time relating to reduced procurement requirements       | -                | (15)             | (15)             | <b>(30)</b>    |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                    | <b>-</b>         | <b>(23)</b>      | <b>(23)</b>      | <b>(46)</b>    |

|                                             | 2026/27<br>£'000 | 2027/28<br>£'000 | 2028/29<br>£'000 | Total<br>£'000 |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Revenue budget implications                 |                  |                  |                  |                |
| Net cost of National Parking Platform (NPP) | 21               | 25               | 25               | <b>71</b>      |
|                                             |                  |                  |                  | <b>-</b>       |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>21</b>        | <b>25</b>        | <b>25</b>        | <b>71</b>      |

## 20. Legal implications

This is a contract for services and as such must be procured in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023 and the council's Contract Procedure Rules. From market research carried out by the parking team and from legal advice obtained from the provider, NPP appears to be the only provider of this service currently in the market.

Under the Procurement Act 2023 there are direct award justifications set out in Schedule 5.

Paragraph 6 of Schedule 5 contains the following justification:

*"The following conditions are met in relation to the public contract—*

*(a) due to an absence of competition for technical reasons, only a particular supplier can supply the goods, services or works required, and*

*(b) there are no reasonable alternatives to those goods, services or works.*

A direct award would be permissible under the Procurement Act 2023 if the above justification is met.

## 21. Risk management

| Risk / opportunity                | Mitigation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Negative impact on revenue budget | The implementation of the NPP will widen the payment options for the benefit of users and enable cost savings to be made. The success or otherwise of the platform will be regularly reviewed at service level to assess the success of the scheme and evaluate the value for money. |

## Consultees

### 22. Political Group Consultation

A Political Group Consultation regarding the intention to join the NPP took place on 21 April 2026. The meeting was attended by 14 Councillors.

The Conservatives sought assurance that the ability to pay for parking by cash would remain and was pay on exit being considered? The Conservatives also sought confirmation that multiple vehicles could be registered on an app and the council do not pay anything towards each customer transaction .

The Independents for Herefordshire party referred to how the expenditure of £48k could be recovered if the council joined the platform and would the app link to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) to check the legitimacy of vehicles such as having a valid MOT or Road Tax? The Independents also sought confirmation of the savings if cash collections reduced as a result of an increase in customers using the app and it was felt some customers were sceptical of the benefits of the app and adding a layer of digitalisation.

The Liberal Democrats advised that more information would be helpful in relation to how the expenditure could be recovered as this was considered a budget pressure and this was a worthwhile initiative bearing in mind the number of visitors and tourists but keep channels open with the NPP to seek to reduce the commission if possible. The procurement renewal process were also raised.

An unaligned member sought assurance that the commission charge of 2.2% would not increase.

## **23. Appendices**

None

### **Background papers**

None