

Task and Finish Group Review:

Parking Policy (Cash Meters)

Final Report

February 2014

Executive Summary

The Parking Policy (Cash Meters) Task and Finish Group was set up to explore the cost and potential benefits of reintroducing pay and display parking meters which accept cash payments within the London Borough of Barnet.

This report provides details the reviews findings, including the public consultation and research that was undertaken in order to inform recommendations. As part of the review, the Group undertook to consult with residents, traders and businesses in order to obtain an insight into local views on parking policy in relation to cash meters. Additionally, the Group reviewed national trends and policies in other London Boroughs. The Group also considered evidence from the Cabinet Member for Environment and senior officers from the Council.

The Council's Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be requested to consider and scrutinise this report, before its recommendations being formally received by the Cabinet at their meeting on 2 April 2014.

The Cabinet will be requested to provide a formal response to the recommendations when the report of the Group is presented to them. In order to track approved recommendations, the relevant thematic committee in the new governance structure (post Annual Council 2014) will monitor the implementation the above recommendations (if accepted).

The Recommendations made of the Task and Finish Group are as follows:

Recommendation One:

Reintroduction of Cash Pay and Display Machines

Conservative Group Recommendation –

That the Environment Committee re-consider the possible reintroduction of cash pay and display meters early in the 2014/15 municipal year.

Labour Group Recommendation –

That Cabinet be recommended to bring back cash parking with immediate effect by converting the recently introduced credit/debit card pay and display meters (59 machines in total borough-wide) to accept cash payment.

Recommendation Two:

Publicity – *the Group recommends that a Communications Plan be developed to publicise borough-wide parking arrangements following the recent town centre reviews. It is recommended that this includes a front page article on Barnet First which includes details of the following schemes: 20 minutes free parking in loading bays; restrictions being amended to allow free parking in some locations; the introduction of some limited free parking at specific on-street locations and at Moxon Street Car Park; the locations of the credit/debit card payment machines; the locations where payment can be made by PayPoint and where scratch cards can be purchased.*

Recommendation Three:

Signage – *Officers be instructed to undertake a review of all parking signage in town centre locations to ensure that all regulations are clearly detailed.*

Recommendation Four:

Enforcement – *the Cabinet Member be requested to undertake a review of the enforcement approach undertaken by NSL to ensure that it is fair and appropriate and meets the parking objectives of the Council.*

1. Background

- 1.1 At a meeting of the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 October 2013, a Member's Item was received from Cllr. Schneiderman calling for a review into the benefits of reintroducing cash metres into High Streets in the Borough. The Members item explicitly stated that the review should take evidence from residents, traders and local businesses, and other Councils where cash meters have been maintained and removed.
- 1.2 At their meeting on 6 January 2014, the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report which sought a decision regarding whether the Parking Policy (Cash Meters) Task and Finish Group review should proceed, taking into account the current projected timetable for the internal Parking Improvement Project which included the development of a borough-wide parking policy.
- 1.3 At this meeting, the Housing & Environment Lead Commissioner outlined the scope and timetable for the internal Parking Improvement Project and clarified that payment methods were not currently in scope for the Project.
- 1.4 Following consideration of the report, the Committee instructed that the proposed Parking Policy (Cash Meters) Task and Finish Group review should proceed (as per the decision of the committee on 7 October 2013) and would be focused on the costs and benefits of reintroducing cash meters in high streets and car parks, not the wider parking policy of the Council. The Committee resolved that the Task and Finish Group should proceed with the following scope:

"To review the costs and benefits of reintroducing cash meters in Barnet high streets and car parks, with the review to take evidence from residents, traders and local businesses, and other Councils where cash meters have been maintained and removed."

- 1.4 The Members appointed to this Task and Finish Group were:

Councillor Brian Gordon
Councillor Joan Scannell
Councillor Hugh Rayner
Councillor Ross Houston
Councillor Alan Schneiderman

The substitute Members were:

Councillor Maureen Braun
Councillor Pauline Coakley Webb
Councillor Claire Farrier

2. Context

2.1 Implementation of Cashless Parking in Barnet

- 2.1.1 In February 2009, the Acting Director of Environment and Transport took a decision in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment to review a trial of cashless parking in off street car parks and authorised the implementation of a borough-wide cashless parking scheme with effect from 22 March 2009. The decision also appointed Verrus (UK) Ltd to provide cashless parking services borough wide for a two year period.
- 2.1.2 In March 2011, the Interim Director of Environment and Operations and the Director of Commercial Services authorised the acceptance of a quote from a single supplier (Verrus UK Ltd) in order to continue the cashless parking service on existing terms, and to purchase the cashless parking service until new arrangements for delivery of the entire parking service were in place.
- 2.1.3 In August 2011, the Cabinet Member for Environment took a decision under delegated powers to remove pay and display parking machines in the borough and implement a policy of 'cashless' parking across the borough. The report (Delegated Powers Report, 1375: *Re-Provision of Parking Services*) noted that the then existing pay and display machine infrastructure was not operating efficiently due to an aging stock and a lack of maintenance contracts with the suppliers. The report also detailed the high maintenance and running costs of the pre-existing pay and display stock and highlighted the impact of this on income. The report detailed that new payment options would include Pay by Phone and PayPoint.
- 2.1.4 In November 2011, the Interim Director of Environment, Planning and Regeneration used their delegated powers to implement scratch cards as a cash method of paying for parking which acted as an alternative for people who wished to park in the borough who did not have a mobile telephone and/or a credit/debit card.

2.2 Parking Policy Reviews in Barnet

- 2.2.1 In July 2012, the Leader of the Council approved via delegated powers changes to fees and charges and new parking initiatives including: introducing a reduced rate for visitors voucher; proposals to increase the number of retail outlets stocking scratch cards; a reduction in off-street parking charges; and the introduction of credit card meters in council managed car parks. This decision was called-in by the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However, the Committee resolved not to refer this decision back to Cabinet for reconsideration.
- 2.2.2 The Council undertook a review of parking in North Finchley and findings were reported in November 2012 via Delegated Powers Report 1847 in the name of Cabinet Member for Environment. As a result of the review, the following parking changes were introduced on an experimental basis:

- A reduction of parking charges;
- Encouraging medium and long stay parking in off-street car parks;
- Introduction of dedicated business parking bays within off street car parks;
- Standardised hours of operation within on street bays;
- Introduction of a 15 minute 'paid for' period at specific locations;
- Allow free parking for 15 minutes in loading bays;
- Introduced new 'Pay by Phone' short-stay parking bays at specific locations on the High Street to provide additional parking spaces.

2.2.3 In December 2012, the Interim Director of Environment, Planning and Regeneration approved via delegated powers the acceptance of a quotation from Parkeon Ltd to supply and install credit and debit card machines in council managed car parks and on a trial basis on-street in North Finchley Town Centre.

2.2.4 As part of the Borough Wide Town Centre and Shopping Parades Review, the Council undertook a review of parking in Edgware Town Centre and the findings were reported in January 2013. As a result of the review, the Cabinet Member for Environment authorised the following changes in Edgware Town Centre on an experimental basis:

- Reduced parking tariffs;
- Convert existing double yellow lines area into a 20 minute free bay;
- Limit blue badge holder parking to national standard of three hours;
- Review provision of disabled bays;
- Introduce credit/debit card machines to introduce alternative payment options;
- Promote scratch cards as an alternative payment method.

2.2.5 As part of the Borough Wide Town Centre and Shopping Parades Review, the Council undertook a review of parking in Chipping Barnet Centre and the findings were reported in January 2013. As a result of the review, the Cabinet Member for Environment authorised the following changes in parking changes on an experimental basis:

- Convert some long stay parking bays on the High Street to short stay parking bays with reduced tariffs;
- Enable some residents to purchase town centre CPZ permits;
- Introduce restrictions to business permit holder parking in the High Street, Moxon Street and Stapylton Road car parks;
- Convert a long stay parking bay in Fitzjohn Avenue to a short stay parking bay with a reduced tariff;
- Convert a long stay parking bay in Union Street to a short stay parking bay with a reduced tariff;
- Changes to areas where business permit holder can park on the High Street;
- Changes to charges and the maximum stay duration in the Moxon Street and Stapylton Road car parks;

- Adapt loading bays to all 15 minutes free parking;
- Reduced tariffs in certain locations (High Street, Park Road, Moxon Street, Hadley Green, Stapylton Road and Bruce Road);
- Consult with business permit holders on changes to parking arrangements and charging policy.

2.2.6 In April 2013, the Cabinet Member for Environment undertook a decision which saw a change in priority of the roll out of credit/debit card machines from council managed off street car parks to on-street locations following the Town Centre reviews and discussions held with traders.

2.2.7 In July 2013, the Cabinet Member for Environment authorised the procurement and installation of up to 40 credit and debit card machines at locations set out in the report, in addition to the 19 already procured and being placed at designated on-street locations, resulting in a total number of 59 credit and debit cards being located throughout the borough.

2.3 Analysis of Current Position in Barnet

2.3.1 Whilst this Task and Finish Group review has a narrowly defined remit to look at the costs and benefits of reintroducing pay and display machines which accept cash payments, Barnet's position on cashless parking cannot be disaggregated from changes in parking policy locally, trends in local authority management of parking regionally and the economic situation.

2.3.2 The decision to remove pay and display machines and make Barnet predominately a 'cashless' borough (with PayPoint and scratch cards retained as cash payment options) was implemented around the time that there were also significant increases in parking charges across the board.

2.3.3 Since the introduction of cashless parking and parking charges increases in 2011, the current Cabinet Member for Environment has been reviewing town centre parking arrangements. As outlined in section 2.2 above, changes were initially implemented in North Finchley and were then rolled out in other town centres and shopping areas. North Finchley was the first of all of the Town Centres that were reviewed as part of a Borough wide Town Centres and Shopping Parades Review.

2.3.4 In addition, the number of cashless parking transactions has been steadily increasing and residents / visitors are gradually becoming familiar with pay by phone as a payment method for parking in high streets and car parks. This is illustrated in Figure 2, section 3.2.2.

2.3.5 As detailed in section 2.4 below, other London boroughs have introduced pay by phone and credit / debit card machines to complement existing payment methods and some have been considering moving towards a cashless system due to the costs associated with collecting cash, vandalism, and the general cost of maintaining pay and display machines. Most of these boroughs have retained cash as a payment option.

2.3.6 Nationally, high streets have faced challenging circumstances with the increase in online retail and the economic situation which has impacted on trade. A number of national studies have considered issues which impact on high streets and parking which will be explored in section 2.5 below.

2.4 Review of Other London Boroughs

2.4.1 In order to obtain an understanding of trends in London, the Task and Finish considered the parking arrangements in other Boroughs with specific reference to payment methods.

London Borough of Brent

2.4.2 The London Borough of Brent provides a choice of methods by which motorists can pay for parking which includes pay and display by machines that accept cash, and pay by phone (which is supported by a smart phone application). Brent has a total of 722 pay and display machines which all accept cash. 13 pay and display by machines that accept cash are situated in nine council managed car parks.

2.4.3 At the time of the last tariff change in October 2013, the existing 27 pay and display machines which accepted credit/debit card payments in addition to cash had been disabled. Brent only accepted cash or pay by phone as payment methods. Officers from Brent reported that there was an expectation that they would move towards a cashless-based payment system over time.

London Borough of Croydon

2.4.4 The London Borough of Croydon has a total of 871 pay and display machines all of which accept cash payments and none of which accept credit/debit card payments. Croydon provides both cash and pay by phone as payment methods. In certain areas, Croydon provides areas of free parking for 30 minutes in one and two hour bays.

City of Westminster

2.4.5 The Group considered the City of Westminster Council as an example of a borough that has a relatively similar policy to Barnet in respect of parking payment methods. The City of Westminster is a predominantly a 'cashless' borough where pay by phone is the predominant method of paying for parking. By the end of 2012/13, pay by phone transactions accounted for 90% of all income, compared to the card only pay and display machines which accounted for 9.7% of income. Like Barnet, Westminster also has scratch cards which made up the remaining 0.3% of parking income that year.

London Borough of Lambeth

- 2.4.6 There are 16 Controlled Parking Zones in Lambeth which are mainly located in the North of the borough. Lambeth introduced pay by phone approximately one year ago to supplement existing cash pay and display machines. Some cash pay and display machines in Lambeth have been subject to high levels of vandalism and/or theft and in these locations, Lambeth have temporarily decommissioning the cash pay and display machines (via temporary covers) and are introducing PayPoint as an alternative cash payment method.
- 2.4.7 Lambeth will be monitoring the impact of decommissioning pay and display machines and roll-out will be on an incremental basis. Lambeth do not have a policy on the removal of pay and display machines. The number locations where PayPoint is an accepted payment method varies across the borough. Some are areas having a higher usage of pay by phone than others. For example, in Waterloo approximately 60% of transactions are pay by phone, whilst in Brixton the majority are cash transactions.
- 2.4.8 Lambeth have previously considered the replacement of coin operated parking meters upon the following basis: *“Replacement of coin operated parking meter machines with pay by phone linked parking. This will reduce the potential for theft and out of operation meters and lower maintenance and cash collection costs. This is planned for introduction in November 2011.”* This decision was subsequently abandoned.

Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames

- 2.4.9 The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames have approximately 400 parking machines across the borough. Off street parking payments can be made by cash and credit/debit card and for on street parking payments are made by primarily by cash.
- 2.4.10 Kingston have a wide range of parking payment methods. They have introduced pay by phone on a borough-wide basis. Additionally, motorists have the option of purchasing season tickets which can be used in six out of the 15 borough car parks. The cost of season tickets range from approximately £1,000 – £1,800 per year. Council managed car parks also have pay by foot as a payment method (where motorists take a ticket as they enter the car park and pay on the way out). The pay by foot machines are cash and credit/debit card except for one, which is cash only.
- 2.4.11 Officers at Kingston have advised that the borough will be getting 15 new machines that will be cash and credit/debit card. Kingston expects to be in a position to be in position where motorists can pay by cash, credit/debit card, phone and via a permit.

London Borough of Southwark

- 2.4.12 Controlled parking zones cover approximately 50% of Southwark. Zones operate predominately to give priority to local residents and short-stay visitors

to shops and local businesses. Around 30% of bays in parking zones can be used by visitors. Payment can be made via pay by phone or at pay and display machines.

2.4.13 Southwark have approximately 360 pay and display machines which accept cash payments Pay and display machines are clustered around major centres such as Southwark, Borough, Stoke Newington, Camberwell, Bermondsey, Peckham and Herne Hill.

2.4.14 Southwark have a number of old style 'lollipop' pay and display machines which are gradually being phased out. These old style machines accept fewer denominations of coins than the new style pay and display machines. Southwark Officers have been unable to ascertain the number of the lollipop machines in operation vs. the number of new style pay and display machines.

Analysis of Case Studies

2.4.15 While the case study examples only provide a limited sample from the 32 London Boroughs, they do provide an indication of the current mix of payment methods in these boroughs and the general policy direction. Most boroughs provide pay and display machines which accept cash payments and this is complemented by one or more alternative payments methods. All boroughs considered as part of this review have implemented pay by phone. Officers from the case study areas have reported that they are looking at ways to reduce the number of pay and display machines, although none have a formal policy in this regard.

2.5 National Context

Department for Transport Guidance

2.5.1 The Department for Transport, Operational Guidance to Local Authorities: Parking Policy and Enforcement, Traffic Management Act 2004 sets out the operational framework for the management of parking controls. Whilst there is no specific reference to payment methods, the Guidance states that "...local authorities need to develop a parking strategy covering on- and off-street parking that is linked to local objectives and circumstances..." and that this strategy should "...consider the needs of the many and various road users in the area, the appropriate scale and type of provision, the balance between short and long term provision and the level of charges."

2.5.2 The Guidance highlights that "...parking policies and their enforcement are complex. They can confuse the public if they are not explained clearly..." and "...Consultation and communication are the foundation of a fair and effective parking policy. They help to ensure that the public understands and respects the need for enforcement. Consultation should be an on-going process that takes place whenever an authority proposes major changes and at regular intervals after that."

The Portas Review

2.5.3 In 2011, Mary Portas was commissioned by the Government to undertake an independent review into the future of the high street. Portas identified a number of issues affecting the high street including:

- a decline in the retail spending on the high street and an increase in out-of-town and online / mobile spending;
- the global recession impacting on households disposable income;
- increased competition from supermarkets;
- the rise in the number of out of town retail units;
- increased numbers of chain stores;
- a high retail unit vacancy rate on high streets;
- high rents and business rates;
- regulatory barriers; and
- parking arrangements

2.5.4 In relation to parking, Portas identifies that local authority parking policies can place the high street at a competitive disadvantage to out of town retail centres which offer free parking. She adds that parking charges can limit the "...appeal of that location to the shopping consumer and therefore the longer term economic viability and wellbeing of the area."

2.5.5 The Portas reviews recommends that local areas should "...implement free controlled parking schemes that work for their town centres" to increase the appeal of the high street.

Spaced Out: Perspective on Parking Policy (RAC Foundation)

2.5.6 In 2012, the RAC Foundation published 'Spaced Out: Perspective on Parking Policy' which considered a wide range of issues in relation to parking including supply, demand, the management of parking, public attitudes towards parking, other parking issues, and parking and car ownership. Issues relating to high street parking, charges and payment methods are detailed below.

2.5.7 Pay by phone was introduced in 2004 and has now become a widespread payment method. Referring to the advantages of pay by phone, the report recognises that payment by phone avoids the need for small change, provides a reminder when time is up and generally allows for parking to be extended up to the time limit on the parking place. For the council it is generally cheaper and safer than cash, although some local authorities feel that the charges by the commercial companies are too high and offset many of the benefits, which include the elimination of the problems of machine maintenance, vandalism and theft. Smartphone apps and VAT receipts are further enhancements. The report recognises that there remains, however, the issue of how those without credit cards or mobile phones can pay.

2.5.8 The report acknowledges that paying for parking is a nuisance, involving either finding small change for machines or paying by credit card over the phone. It

is highlighted that there is a "...general inconvenience associated with most current parking arrangements (such as poorly functioning machinery, restricted payment opportunities, machines not delivering change...)" and highlights the importance of a clear pricing structure.

- 2.5.9 It goes on to say that a "...properly conducted parking policy should be able to reduce the stress of searching for parking, provide capacity where it is needed, and – within limits – act as a sensible constraint on demand. Concomitant with this should go appropriate information systems, indicating charges and available capacity (in real time)."

Analysis of National Research

- 2.5.10 Research undertaken into the national context in relation to high street parking and payment methods highlights the following:

- High street retail has been impacted by a number of factors over recent years which includes managing parking. In order to support high streets, local authorities need to develop parking policies which support local retailers.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of pay by phone users – this increases convenience for some people and can reduce costs for local authorities. However, there needs to be a way for people without credit/debit cards and/or mobile phones, or those who struggle with the pay by phone concept to pay.
- Local authorities should have a clearly articulated parking policy and pricing policy

3 Review Format

- 3.1 The Task and Finish Group met three times in February 2014. The first meeting took place on 4 February 2014 where the Group considered a Feasibility Assessment and agreed their approach to public consultation. A further meeting took place on 11 February to consider verbal and written submissions from the residents, traders and businesses. A final meeting took place on 13 February to enable the Group to consider the evidence received and develop their conclusions and recommendations.

First Meeting (Review Scope), 4 February 2014

- 3.2 At their first meeting on 4 February, the Group considered a Feasibility Assessment which detailed relevant previous decisions, the progress of the Internal Parking Improvement Project, issues with cash pay and display meters, details of the Borough Wide Town Centre and Shopping Parade Parking Review, and the scope of the Task and Finish Group Review.
- 3.3 The Group determined they would hold their future meetings in public. It was agreed the meeting on 11 February 2014 would be to receive evidence from residents, businesses and traders, and officers issued a press release inviting

written submissions and verbal representations at this meeting and promoted the meeting on social media channels. Members agreed to hold another meeting on 13 February 2014 in order to evaluate all of the evidence received, and draw conclusions with a view to determining their recommendations.

- 3.4 On 4 February, the Group received a presentation from the Housing & Environment Lead Commissioner and the Infrastructure and Parking Manager. The Group were informed that in 2011, the then Cabinet Member for Environment had taken a decision under delegated powers to remove all pay and display meters in the borough. Officers advised the Group that at the time of the decision, the existing pay and display machines were reaching the end of their life and there were significant financial implications associated with replacing them. Members were aware that the decision to remove the meters had been partly motivated by the number of pay and display machines that were out of order at any one time, as well as the cost of collecting money from the machines. The Group agreed that the review should consider both the financial implications of implementing different policy options, alongside the issue of fairness to residents wishing to park in high streets. The Group also instructed that the current Cabinet Member for Environment be invited to the next meeting of the Task and Finish Group.
- 3.5 In considering the costs and benefits of the return to pay and display meters which accepted cash payments, the Group questioned the number of people using the various methods of payment available. The Group were advised that based on the current financial year (2013/14) from week 1 to week 43, 93% of people used Pay by Phone, 4.9% used a credit/debit card, 1.35% used scratch card and 0.8% used Pay Point.

Second Meeting (Evidence Session), 11 February 2014

- 3.6 Following the issue of the press release referred to at 3.3 above, details of the evidence gathering session had been publicised in the Barnet & Whetstone Press and the Hendon & Finchley Times. A total of 26 written submissions (**Appendix A**) and five requests to speak at the meeting were received.

Public Comments

- 3.7 The following members of the public spoke at the meeting: Ms Barbara Jacobson; Mr Bob Jacobson; Ms Helen Michael; Mr Paul Shea; Mr Spyros Spirou and Ms Gail Laser. Their comments covered the following points:
- Traders and residents had witnessed people seeing pay by phone signs who had driven away;
 - Cash was considered quick and easy payment method;
 - Not everyone owns a mobile phone;
 - That pay by phone provided no proof of payment;
 - Scratch cards were not always convenient and drivers could get a Penalty Charge Notice whilst waiting to buy one;
 - Visitors to the borough might not be familiar with the parking arrangements;

- Members of the public considered that cash meters were essential for the survival of the high street;
- Finchley High Road had been damaged by the removal of cash meters
- A trader in North Finchley attributed a reduction in turnover due to the council's parking policy;
- The re-introduction of cash meters would increase turnover for businesses;
- There was opportunity to advertise on ticket rolls to raise revenue;
- Consumers were shopping online and therefore staying away from the high street.
- The owner of a garage in North Finchley advised that the changes in parking arrangements had had a devastating effect on his business;
- Motorists were incorrectly receiving parking tickets related to the enforcement of parking measures.
- The parking policy in North Finchley and High Barnet was not working;
- Others areas of the Borough had a period of free parking;
- One option could be to allow half an hour free parking, and then charge £1 for the full hour, and then increase it further for more time.
- Motorists were unclear as to the parking policy of a given area.

Written Submissions

- 3.8 Members of the Group considered the written submissions that had been received and circulated in advance of the meeting. The following **themes** arose throughout the written submissions:
- 3.9 A large number of submissions reported that people were having **difficulty using pay by phone**. Many of the written submissions from the public linked the implementation of pay by phone and the removal of cash meters with a reduction in the number of people parking, and therefore using the high streets, with some submissions reporting that they would not shop in areas where cash meters were not in place. In considering this information, some Members of the Group questioned whether this was down to the fact that it was a relatively new system that people would get used to. It was reported in some submissions that instead of paying to park by phone, or by any available card meters, members of the public were choosing to use shopping centres such as Brent Cross, which have free parking, at the detriment to the high street. It should be noted that many of the submissions from traders made a direct link between the removal of cash meters and a reduction in turnover in their business.
- 3.10 A number of the submissions cited **concerns over safety** as an issue that warranted the return of cash meters. Several submissions expressed feeling vulnerable when having to have both a mobile phone and credit/debit card out when paying for parking. The use of mobile phones and credit and debit cards in the dark was highlighted as a particular issue.
- 3.11 It was reported **that older people who were less comfortable with technology** were finding the existing parking payment methods difficult. It

was also highlighted that a number of people, which included both younger and older people, did not have mobile phones and debit cards, meaning that that cash would be the only feasible way for certain people to pay for parking.

- 3.12 The submissions revealed a general theme that the public felt **that high streets and town centres** would be directly benefitted by the reintroduction of cash meters.
- 3.13 Submissions also requested that motorists were provided with a choice of how parking can be paid for, beyond that of PaybyPhone, scratch cards and PayPoint, with the majority requesting to be able to pay for parking by a cash meter.
- 3.14 A number of members of the public contributing to the evidence of the review advised that motorists felt unclear as to the parking policy of the area, which in turn, could lead to motorists receiving parking tickets.

Third Meeting (Members Conclusions), 13 February

- 3.15 In considering the responses that had been collated following the call for evidence, a Member noted that that one possible problem of the pay by phone system was that people were not yet familiar with the system.
- 3.16 It was highlighted that in the written submissions to the Group only one response had not been in favour of a return of pay and display meters which accepted cash. In addition, there were some people who do not have a credit or debit card, and some people who may not wish to use it to pay for their parking.
- 3.17 A Member advised that in order to help the high street, the public felt that they should be given a choice as to how they can pay for parking. Some Members of the Group referred to the costs associated with the reintroduction of pay and display meters which accepted cash as set out in the submission by officers at the first meeting of the Group on 4 February.
- 3.18 The Group highlighted that the evidence received showed that there needed to be a better understanding of current parking controls and pricing policy. It was suggested that there needed to be clearer signage, which would increase awareness and reduce the number of penalty charge notices issued. Members considered that if a motorist received a parking ticket, then they would be less likely to return to an area which would impact on that high street.
- 3.19 The Group noted that the capital cost to modify the machines would be approximately **£20,000**. There would be additional associated costs, details of which are set out in Figure 1 and Figure 2 below:

Figure 1: Cost of Converting 59 Pay and Display Machines to Accept Cash (x2 Weekly Collections)

Credit / Debit Card and Coin Machine	Cost
Additional Annual Maintenance Cost (£229 x 59)	£13,511
Annual machine replacement allowance	£8,300
Coin collection costs	£92,040
Signage Cost – 1 st Year Capital	£6,000
Signs maintenance	£600
Ticket Rolls, including replacement	£32,000
Total Cost	£143,551 per annum

Figure 2: Cost of Converting 59 Pay and Display Machines to Accept Cash (x5 Weekly Collections)

Credit / Debit Card and Coin Machine	Cost
Additional Annual Maintenance Cost (£229 x 59)	£13,511
Annual machine replacement allowance	£8,300
Coin collection costs	£199,420
Signage Cost – 1 st Year Capital	£6,000
Signs maintenance	£600
Ticket Rolls, including replacement	£32,000
Total Cost	£259,831 per annum

Assumptions:

Additional Annual Maintenance Cost

Annual maintenance cost for existing credit/debit card machines = £382

Annual maintenance cost for credit/debit card and cash machines = £611

Additional annual maintenance cost as a result of enabling existing credit/debit card machines to accept cash payments = £229

X2 Weekly Collections

Assumes a transaction ratio of 20% cash and 80% Pay By Phone. Therefore the cost of Pay By Phone would reduce from current cost (£360,000) to £288,000.

X2 weekly collection regime would result in a higher 'per collection' unit cost. Coin collection costs are calculated on the following basis: £15 per collection x 59 machines x 2 weekly x 52 weeks = £92,040

X5 Weekly Collections

Assumes a transaction ratio of 50% cash and 50% Pay By Phone. Cost of Pay By Phone would reduce from current cost (£360,000) to £180,000.

X5 weekly collection regime would result in the following unit cost. Coin collection costs are calculated on the following basis: £13 per collection x 59 machines x 5 weekly x 52 weeks = £199,420

3.20 It is assumed that Pay By Phone would be retained in any circumstance as this currently the primary payment method for parking in the Borough. It is recognised that the re-introduction of cash as a payment method will have an impact on income from Pay By Phone transactions. Accordingly, estimates have been made on the reduction on income from this source as follows:

- Under Figure 1, the estimated reduction in Pay By Phone costs would be £72,000.
- Under Figure 2, the estimated reduction on Pay By Phone costs would be £180,000.

It is not possible to make assumptions around the take-up of cash payments and the subsequent level of income from this payment type. It should be acknowledged that there is a risk that the Council could incur costs from re-introducing cash as a payment method, but with a low take-up following reintroduction.

Pay by Phone Usage

3.21 Throughout the review period, members of the public and some Members of the Task and Finish Group expressed concern that large numbers of people were struggling to use, or simply did not wish to use pay by phone, instead stating a preference for cash meters as an alternative method of payment.

3.22 The Group were advised that this was not reflected in the data provided by the pay by phone providers and that statistics show an increasing number of people registering to use pay by phone for both on and off street parking. Whilst some Members of the Group interpreted this as positive uptake, other Members questioned if this was because motorists had little choice but to use pay by phone as the predominant payment method. The proportion on first time pay by phone users 2012/13 (on street) is highlighted in Figure Two. The proportion of first time pay by phone users 2012/13 (off street) is highlighted in Figure Three.

Figure Two: Proportion of First Time PaybyPhone Users (On Street) 2012/13

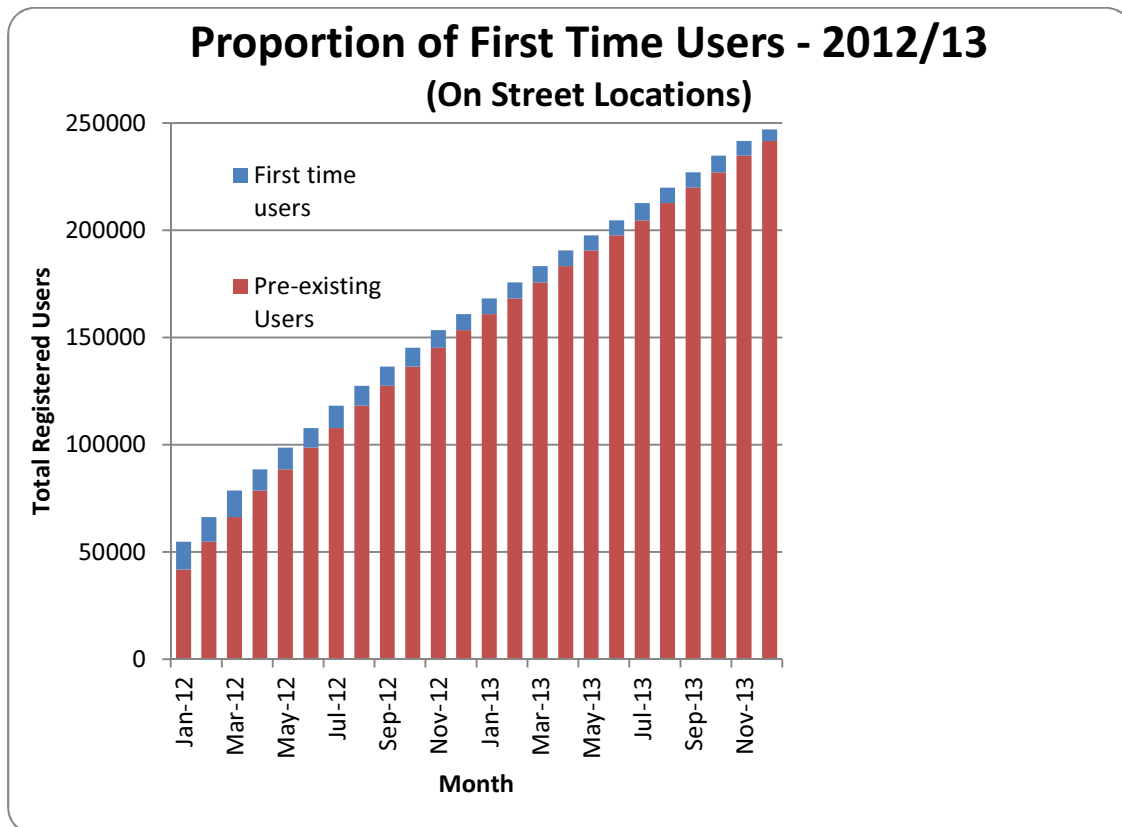
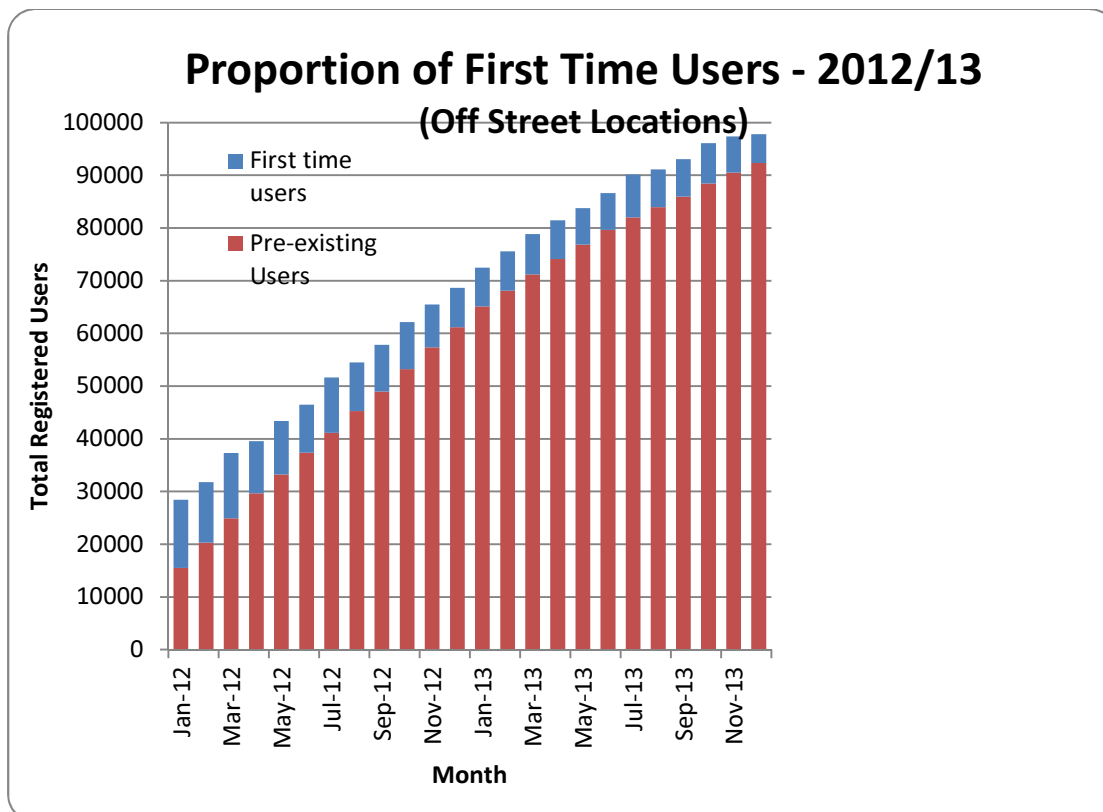


Figure Three: Proportion of First Time PaybyPhone Users (Off Street) 2012/13



Member Analysis: Credit and Debit Card Machines

- 3.33 As detailed in section 2.2.3 the Council accepted a quotation from Parkeon Ltd in December 2012 to supply and install credit and debit card pay and display machines in car parks and on a trial basis on-street in North Finchley Town Centre, resulting in the 59 credit and debit card machines that are currently in existence in town centres and shopping parades in the borough. During the review, Members questioned if data was available to indicate whether this alternative method of payment had proved successful. The Group were advised by officers that the roll-out of the credit and debit card machines had only taken place in December 2013, and that Officers felt that it was therefore too early to conclude upon their success. The Group were informed by officers that whilst they did not have the results, early indications pointed towards an increasing number of transactions on these machines.
- 3.34 The Conservative Members on the Group considered that there was no substantial data available at the time of the review on the success or otherwise of the new credit and debit card pay and display machines. As such, it would be inappropriate for them to recommend the conversion of the existing parking meters to enable cash when:
- a) the success of the recently implemented card meters was unknown; and
 - b) there was no guarantee that cash meters would lead to an increase in parking churn and revenue.
- 3.35 The Labour Members on the Group considered that the written and verbal submissions to the Task and Finish Group highlighted that residents and traders supported the re-introduction of pay and display machines which accepted cash payments. In addition, they highlighted that the evidence from other London boroughs contacted showed that most have retained cash as a payment option. Labour Members also noted the report of 16 September 2013 (Parking Pilot Schemes - Review of the Experimental North Finchley Town Centre Parking Measures) to the Budget & Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee from the Strategic Director for Growth and Environment stated that "It has been noted that the introduction of the credit/debit card pay and display machines have had a significant impact on patronage levels". Labour members, therefore, wished to recommend to Cabinet that the 59 credit and debit card pay and display which had recently been introduced by converted to accept cash payments with immediate effect.

4. Witness Evidence: Cabinet Member for Environment

- 4.1 At the public consultation meeting, the Group invited the Cabinet Member for Environment to attend and requested his contribution to the discussion as the relevant portfolio holder.
- 4.2 The Group noted that the Cabinet Member had consulted with traders throughout the tenure of his portfolio in order to ascertain their views on how to improve the parking situation in the borough. The Group acknowledged that a

great deal of consultation had taken place in North Finchley Town Centre with the resultant changes outlined in **Appendix B**.

- 4.3 The Cabinet Member for Environment noted that the submissions made to the Group as part of the call for evidence had highlighted concerns regarding using credit and debit cards to pay for parking, particularly at night, and that many people felt that the idea of paying for parking by cash was a safer option. He informed the Group that a statistic had been released which showed that 90,000 cash parking meters had been vandalised in London in 2010 and that he did not want that element of crime being brought into the Borough.
- 4.4 The Cabinet Member for Environment advised that whilst the Council did not have the figures for the number of transactions that took place when cash machines were in operation, an increasing number of people were registering for pay by phone each week as highlighted in section 3.22.
- 4.5 The Group noted the importance of increasing the turnover of people parking in high streets and car parks and some Members questioned if the reintroduction of cash meters would improve this. The Cabinet Member for Environment advised the Group that it was his opinion that better turnover could be achieved by other methods such as improved advertising of the council's parking policy and charges. Officers advised the Group that there was no guarantee that an investment in pay and display machines which accepted cash payments would increase churn and deliver economic benefits. Labour Members however advised that they believe that cash payments will increase churn and deliver economic benefits but noted the difficulty in quantifying this.

5. Key Findings and Recommendations of the Task and Finish Group

- 5.1 In considering their conclusions and recommendations, the Group acknowledged that it was difficult to consider the issue of cash payments for parking without considering wider elements of parking policy such as charges, the availability of spaces and the balance between long term and short term parking space provision. It was also acknowledged that there were significant external factors (such as the economic downturn and changes in consumers shopping habits) that were affecting high streets. Whilst these were outside of the direct control of the council, it was acknowledged that parking policy should be designed to encourage visitors to high street locations.
- 5.2 Having considered both the written and verbal evidence submitted by the public, the evidence provided by the Cabinet Member for Environment, and the costings and evidence provided by the Housing and Environment Lead Commissioner and the Street Scene team, the Group agreed a series of recommendations:

Recommendation One:

Reintroduction of Cash Pay and Display Machines

Conservative Group Recommendation:-

That the Environment Committee re-consider the possible reintroduction of cash pay and display meters early in the 2014/15 municipal year

Labour Group Recommendation:-

That Cabinet be recommended to bring back cash parking with immediate effect by converting the recently introduced credit/debit card pay and display meters (59 machines in total borough-wide) to accept cash payment.

- 5.3 There was a party split when it came to the agreement of this recommendation. The Conservative Members on the Group considered that there was no substantial data available at the time of the review on the success or otherwise of the new credit and debit card pay and display machines. As such, it would be inappropriate for them to recommend the conversion of the existing parking meters to enable cash when:
- a) the success of the recently implemented card meters was unknown; and
 - b) there was no guarantee that cash meters would lead to an increase in parking churn and revenue
- 5.4 The Conservative Members requested that this investigation be reopened early into the new municipal year, advising that at that point, data on the usage of the recently introduced credit and debit card machines would be available. The Conservative Members explicitly stated that they required the data from the 50 credit and debit card machines in order to make an informed decision into the economic viability of the cash meters.
- 5.5 The Labour Group Members considered that the written and verbal submissions to the Task and Finish Group highlighted that residents and traders supported the re-introduction of pay and display machines which accepted cash payments and indicated that they wished to recommend to Cabinet that the 59 credit and debit card pay and display which had recently been introduced by converted to accept cash payments with immediate effect. Labour Members also wish to note that more substantial changes, including the introduction of a minimum of 30 minutes free parking across the borough are required. In addition, Labour Members highlighted the evidence from the other London Boroughs contacted showed that have most have retained cash as a payment option. As such, their Minority Group recommendation is detailed above.
- 5.6 Cabinet will be requested to consider these recommendations separately and indicate whether they are willing to accept or reject.

Recommendation Two:

Publicity – *the Group recommend that a Communications Plan be developed to publicise borough-wide parking arrangements following the recent town centre reviews. It is recommended that this includes a front page article on Barnet First which includes details of the following schemes: 20 minutes free parking in loading bays; restrictions being amended to allow free parking in some locations; the introduction of some limited free parking at specific on-street locations and at Moxon Street Car Park; the locations of the credit/debit card payment machines; the locations where payment can be made by PayPoint and where scratch cards can be purchased.*

- 5.7 The Group were encouraged by the parking measures that had been introduced to improve the parking situation following the borough's Town Centres and Shopping Parades review as outlined in section 2.2. The Group felt that these changes would have been well received by those who knew about them, but considered that there was scope to improve the public's awareness so that these measures were utilised fully, therefore increasing the churn of parking in high streets. Members considered that this would be a best value solution and would capitalise on improvements that had already been made by ensuring that the maximum number of people were aware of the council's parking policy.
- 5.8 During the evidence gathering session, the Group noted that the Cabinet Member for Environment shared the Group's view on the importance of encouraging more people to visit Barnet high streets and car parks. The Group and Cabinet Member alike were in agreement that encouraging an increased number of people to park, and increasing the churn of motorists parking was a priority.

Recommendation Three:

Signage – *Officers be instructed to undertake a review of all parking signage in town centre locations to ensure that all regulations are clearly detailed.*

- 5.9 Following review of the submissions made by the public as a result of the public consultation, the Task and Finish Group expressed concern that the signage of parking regulations was not clear enough. The Task and Finish Group considered that this could lead to confusion for motorists, and result in motorists receiving parking tickets, despite not intending to commit parking contraventions. Members were conscious that if a motorist received a parking ticket in a town centre, then there was a risk that they would be less likely to shop in the area which would in turn, lead to further detriment to the local economy.

Recommendation Four:

Enforcement – the Cabinet Member be requested to undertake a review of the enforcement approach undertaken by NSL to ensure that it is fair and appropriate and meets the parking objectives of the Council.

- 5.10 Both Members of the Task and Finish Group and members of the public who contributed to the consultation process expressed concern about what was considered a “zero tolerance” approach by Civil Enforcement Officers. The Task and Finish Group considered that motorists were not being given sufficient levels of grace, and that high levels of ticketing were putting people off returning to their town centres, and therefore reducing the spend in the local economy.

6 Acknowledgements

- 6.1 The Group would like to put on record their thanks to the Members of the public who participated to the review through submitted written or verbal submissions, or through attending public meetings. The Group would also like to thank council officers and the Cabinet Member for Environment for their contributions to this review.