

	Environment Committee 24 July 2014
Title	Consideration of impact of request for 30 minutes free parking in Temple Fortune
Report of	Declan Hoare, Lead Commissioner for Housing and Environment
Wards	Garden Suburb and Golders Green
Status	Public
Enclosures	None
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Summary

This report has been provided at the instruction of the 10th June 2014 Policy and Resources Committee, which considered a 2,000+ signature petition “requesting free 30 minutes parking to save our high street” in Temple Fortune. This report provides details of the implications of introducing a free 30 minute parking scheme in Temple Fortune town centre.

The principle of regulating the time motorists can park for in Temple Fortune exists – there are currently short term parking bays in the town centre, which allow a 30 minute stay, although currently this costs motorists £1.

The introduction of a free 30 minutes would encourage more motorists to park, however it is concluded that the provision of a 30 minute free period across an entire town centre would cause issues to arise which would need consideration, which are explained further in the body of this report. In particular there would be an increase in local traffic and vehicle emissions, as less parking spaces would be available, which would result in motorists ‘cruising’ in the area looking for a space.

Recommendations

1. That the committee note the officer response to the petition as laid out in this report
2. That the committee agrees that officers arrange on-foot surveys of Temple Fortune town centre to establish parking utilisation and turnover in each parking area,
3. That the committee recommends to Policy and Resources Committee that, subject to the results of recommendation 2, parking tariffs be reduced in line with other town centres with known parking underutilisation issues (i.e. an initial 35% reduction) in appropriate parking bays;
4. That the committee agrees that subject to Policy and Resources Committee implementing recommendation 3 officers undertake additional surveys, and make further recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee to modify the charging strategy accordingly to establish 85% occupancy.
5. That the committee request officers to review programmes of work to enable these actions to be prioritised for funding within existing budgets and undertaken as soon as possible.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 In April 2014 a petition was received by the Council from Ms Loretta Paterson requesting 'Free 30 minutes parking to save our High Street' (Temple Fortune). On 23 May 2014 the number of signatures reached 2,000, which is the threshold for referral to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration. On 10th June 2014 the Policy and Resources Committee received the petition and as a result decided to refer the matter to the Environment Committee for their meeting on the 24th July 2014, where the Environment Committee would consider an officer's report on the request for 30 minute free parking in Temple Fortune.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Request for free 30 minutes

The level of support in the petition indicates the level of local concern about the patronage levels of the parking bays in Temple Fortune town centre and the perceived impact that the local parking regime has on business footfall.

Background

Temple Fortune town centre is situated along A598 Finchley Road between the A406 North Circular Road to the north and Portsdown Avenue to the south. The A598 Finchley Road is a main thoroughfare to and from central London, is subject to high levels of traffic particularly in the peak periods, and forms part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN), which is a network of borough roads, which Transport for London (TfL) hold a significant interest in.

On-street short stay parking bays have been available in Temple Fortune town centre in excess of 15 years, primarily on Finchley Road, offering motorists a stay of up to a maximum of two hours – designed to encourage a regular turnover of motorists visiting the local businesses and amenities. Currently these parking bays operate between 9am and 5.30pm, Mondays to Saturdays, and can accommodate approximately 157 vehicles at any one time. The primary method of payment is via 'Pay by Phone', although alternative methods such as credit/debit card machines, Paypoint and Parking Vouchers can be used.

The current tariff is as follows:

Up to 30 minutes:	£1
Up to 1 hour:	£2
Up to 2 hours:	£4

To the north of the town centre, the adjacent side roads to Finchley Road are not subject to any parking controls, whereas to the south, the adjacent side roads fall within either the Garden Suburb 'GS' Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ), the Temple Fortune 'TF' CPZ, or the Golders Green 'H' CPZ. Many of these roads restrict 'non resident' parking for an hour on weekdays.

Town Centre and Shopping Parades Review

In September and October 2012, the Council undertook a parking review of Town Centre and Shopping Parade areas where Pay by Phone facilities are located. This review sought to obtain knowledge of the on-street parking requirements from businesses and traders throughout the borough's Town Centre and Shopping Parade areas, with a view to establishing whether the current parking arrangements could be improved to better serve the town centre and shopping parade communities.

The focus of the review consultation was a letter and on-line questionnaire, circulated to all businesses and traders within each town centre and shopping parade area (hard copies were available on request) which businesses and traders were encouraged to complete and return. This review included Temple Fortune, which was included in the circulation of the letter and questionnaire to all businesses and traders within each town centre.

Because of the comments received in response to this questionnaire, the Council, throughout 2013, introduced various changes in town centres and shopping parades in the borough, depending on the feedback received from each area. These changes, amongst other measures, included reduced parking tariffs, the introduction of free 15 minute parking and the provision of additional parking bays.

No changes were made in Temple Fortune town centre as part of this process. This was because the response rate was too low (7%) to establish a consensus about what the issues were for businesses in the town centre.

Consideration of request and conclusions

Parking plays an important part in contributing to a vibrant town centre, and key to encouraging this is an appropriate parking and charging strategy which when achieved supports the local economy and convenience for motorists as well as ensuring traffic is properly managed.

Charging for parking is often the best way to manage demand for spaces as otherwise it can actually make it more difficult for motorists to park. If parking charges are set too low the most desirable spaces can be oversubscribed meaning that some motorists may not find parking readily available. This can lead to local congestion as potential parkers hunt for a space and can also create unnecessary additional emissions. This situation can deter motorists from coming to an area if they think there will be no parking available at the end of their journey. Conversely, setting local charges too high acts as a deterrent resulting in too many underutilised spaces to the detriment of the local economy.

As a general principle, and potentially as a future policy, the Council would seek to create an 85% occupancy rate for town centre and local shopping parades. This target percentage is a standard industry benchmark for occupancy that helps balance demands between use and availability. It is acknowledged, that in order to achieve this, the prevailing charging structure should be subject to regular review, and crucially, regular reviews and surveys would be undertaken to ascertain usage of paid for parking spaces to ensure wherever possible that the parking provision is meeting the needs of the local community. Information gathered from these surveys would assist in deciding whether further changes to the charges are necessary to encourage the 85% occupancy target.

As it stands, the absence of any surveys relating to the parking characteristics of Temple Fortune town centre means that turnover levels are not known, although pay by phone data and site observations do suggest that there is a varying picture on bay usage and hence patronage throughout the town centre parking provision.

The principle of a regulated 30 minute stay already exists in Temple Fortune town centre, albeit at the moment motorists wishing to park are required to pay £1 to do so.

A reduction in the 30-minute stay tariff to enable free parking would undoubtedly increase patronage, to the initial benefit of local businesses, although the Council needs to be mindful of the potentially negative impacts this could have. The Council has a responsibility under the Traffic Management Act 2004 to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on its road network in the borough, and particularly so in this instance given TfL's interest in Finchley Road as part of the Strategic Road Network. The provision of free parking could increase the risk of more spaces being utilised, which would result in motorists 'cruising' around the area looking for spaces, to the detriment of traffic flow, and resulting in increased local emissions.

Pay by Phone data for Temple Fortune town centre suggests that the parking bays in the central and southern locations are well utilised with good turnover and occupancy rates. However, this is not the case in a number of bays at the outer most locations to the north of the town centre. Summary data relating to

these bay locations are based on specific dates over a week. This indicates that there is low occupancy and hence an underutilisation of the available bays.

It would be sensible to extend the on foot surveys with a particular focus on these locations with a view to building up a more robust picture of the extent of bays which are being underutilised. Bay monitoring technology could be an alternative approach and this could be considered as a good trial site to install such technology. Costs would be in the order of £25K, with a rebate of £10K if the trial was not continued.

In other town centres where similar occupancy issues have been identified officers have implemented changes which particularly target an increase in occupancy in underutilised bays. This has included reducing tariffs and/or introducing short stay periods with appropriate charges. These changes have proved to be successful where implemented as there has been an increase in pay by phone transactions at these locations since the changes have been introduced. The decrease in charges may have been assumed to reduce revenue, however the increase in parking and therefore in transactions has meant that revenue levels have remained similar.

It is therefore suggested that the following actions be considered by Environment and Policy and Resources Committees:

1. That officers arrange on-foot surveys of Temple Fortune town centre to establish parking utilisation and turnover (Environment Committee),
2. Subject to 1. above reduce tariffs in line with other Barnet town centres with known parking underutilisation issues (i.e. an initial 35% reduction) in appropriate parking bays (Policy and Resources Committee);
3. That officers undertake additional surveys, and seek modification of the charging strategy accordingly to establish 85% occupancy - essentially treat this area as a pilot in line with the aspirations of the draft parking policy elsewhere on the agenda. (Policy and Resources Committee)

The Council constitution reserves the decisions on fees and charges to the Policy and Resources Committee. If Environment Committee wish to proceed on this basis recommendations will need to be made to Policy and Resources Committee.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

Alternative options have been considered as part of the discussion in section 2.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Depending on what the Committee decides, this will determine the next course of action, although a change of parking tariff in Temple Fortune would require a Notice of Variation under Section 46A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The process outlined in The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders

(Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 states that the local authorities are required to publish a notice of the intended tariff changes at least 21 days before the changes can come into force.

In addition, signage amendments, credit/debit machine reconfiguration and IT system reconfiguration would be required if the recommendations in section 2 are implemented.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 The Corporate Plan 2013/16 defines the Council's vision (under the priority to promote responsible growth, development and success across the borough) in delivering sustainable growth to ensure Barnet continues to be successful and a prosperous place where people want to live and work.

5.1.2 The London Mayor's Transport Strategy also addresses these areas through:

"Proposal 30: The Mayor, through TfL, and working with the London boroughs and other stakeholders, will introduce measures to smooth traffic flow to manage congestion (delay, reliability and network resilience) for all people and freight movements on the road network, and maximise the efficiency of the network. These measures will include ...c) "... keep traffic moving ..." , e) Planning and implementing ... improvements to the existing road network, ... to improve traffic flow on the most congested sections of the network, and to improve conditions for all road users. Appropriate parking provision and enforcement will positively contribute to ensuring that these aims and objectives are met.

5.1.3 Appropriate parking provision and enforcement will positively contribute to ensuring that these aims and objectives are met.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

There will be costs involved in implementing any changes including footfall surveys, Variation Notice or Traffic Management Order changes, signage amendments, credit/debit machine reconfiguration and IT system reconfiguration. The costs will depend on the extent of those changes but are likely to be approximately £12.5k

There would also be costs of the additional surveys of approximately £5K.

At present, no budget provision exists to cater for these costs.

5.2.1 The Council's Constitution (Responsibly for Functions, Annex A) gives the Environment Committee specific responsibility to develop fees and charges for those areas under the remit of the Committee for consideration by Policy and Resources Committee. Depending on what action the Environment

Committee decides to take on this matter, it should also identify where the funding for the actions should come from.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.3.1 The Traffic Management Act 2004 places an obligation on authorities to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on their road network. Authorities are required to make arrangements as they consider appropriate for planning and carrying out the action to be taken in performing the duty.
- 5.3.2 The Council is also subject to the general duty on local authorities under Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to exercise its functions under the Act (so far as practicable having regard to the matters specified in subsection (2) of that section) to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway.
- 5.3.3 Under section 45 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 a local authority has the power to designate parking places on the highway and can decide whether or not to charge for parking there.
- 5.3.4 The Council's Constitution (Responsibly for Functions, Annex A) gives the Environment Committee certain responsibilities related to the street scene including pavements and all classes of roads, parking provision and enforcement, and transport and traffic management including agreement of the London Transport Strategy Local Implementation Plan.
- 5.3.5 The Council's Constitution (Responsibly for Functions, Annex A) gives the Environment Committee specific responsibility to develop fees and charges for those areas under the remit of the Committee for consideration by Policy and Resources Committee.

5.4 Risk Management

It is considered that the issues involved are likely to give rise to policy considerations as failure to sustain and enhance Barnet's town centres will impair their key contribution to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the borough.

The introduction of free 30 minute parking may lead to problems in regard to supply and demand of spaces with spaces oversubscribed thereby causing problems such as congestion and adding to pollution as vehicles rotate the area searching for a parking space. This would be detrimental to the Council's responsibilities of ensuring the expeditious movement of traffic, imposed by the Traffic Management Act 2004, and to the Council's aims of reducing pollution.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

The Equality Act 2010 sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires

public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The relevant protected characteristics are age, race, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The duty also covers marriage and civil partnership, but to a limited extent.

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of the public sector duty into everyday business and keep them under review in decision-making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

The provision of a varied and appropriate mix of parking provision which is designed to suit the specific needs of a particular Town Centre aims to create the right environment for vibrant and viable town centres and shopping parades in Barnet. Integral to this is the need to respect the diversity of the town centre network and to take into account the different requirements of each town centre, and the different needs and preferences of those who use them.

Although a 30 minute free period would likely result in more people visiting Temple Fortune, it could result in less spaces being available, resulting in some cases, to the town centre becoming less attractive to visit, particularly for the more vulnerable members of the community, who may have become accustomed to finding a parking space near to the places where they needed to visit.

Subject to changes being recommended to Policy & Resources Committee for tariff changes, an Equalities Impact screening exercise will be undertaken and the outcome considered and acted upon.

Existing parking spaces for disabled drivers are unaffected by these proposals.

5.6 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.6.1 As has been described in this report in 2012/2013 a very detailed borough wide consultation of Town Centre and Shopping Parade traders and businesses has been conducted in order to identify specific parking issues.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Leader of the Council's Delegated Powers Report 1727 of 9 July 2012 approved new parking initiatives and charges in Environment, Planning and Regeneration.

Cabinet Member for Environment Delegated Powers Report 1847 of 5 November 2012 approved the introduction of parking changes on an experimental basis following the completion of a North Finchley Town Centre parking review.

Cabinet Member for Environment Delegated Powers Report of 14 August 2013 approved the introduction of parking changes on an experimental basis following the completion of the borough wide Town Centre and Shopping Parades parking review.