

	<p style="text-align: center;">Environment Committee</p> <p style="text-align: center;">24 July 2014</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Title</p>	<p>Response to an item raised on Parking Measures by a Member of the Committee</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Report of</p>	<p>Declan Hoare, Lead Commissioner for Housing and Environment</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Enclosures</p>	<p>None</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Officer Contact Details</p>	<p>Paul Bragg – Infrastructure and Parking Manager paul.bragg@barnet.gov.uk 0208 359 7305</p>

Summary

This report provides details of the implications of implementing each of the three issues identified within the Member's item on Parking Measures;

- To introduce at least 30 minutes free parking in all town centres
- To introduce cash meter parking for all current card-only meters
- To scrap the free Councillors parking permit perk

Recommendations

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| 1. That Committee consider the implications of introducing 30 minutes free parking in all town centres as detailed in this report, noting that each town centre has particularities that warrant suitably tailored schemes for each, and agree that a standard 30 minute free parking scheme is not appropriate for all the town centres. |
| 2. That Committee note the decision of Cabinet to re-consider the possible reintroduction of cash pay and display meters in the 2015/16 municipal year and defer consideration of this item until the review of the Parking Policy (Cash meters) Task and Finish Group at the Committee's April 2015 meeting. |
| 3. That Committee consider the options set out in this report in relation to Members Parking Permits and agree which option to implement. |

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 This report was requested following a Members item request from Councillor Alan Schneiderman.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking each of the three issues in turn:

2.1 To introduce at least 30 minutes free parking in all town centres

A great deal of work has been undertaken in the last year to gather specific intelligence in relation to the demand and supply of parking in each of the Town Centres.

In September and October 2012 the Council undertook a parking review of Town Centre and Shopping Parade areas. This review sought to obtain knowledge of the on and off-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 specific requirements of each of the town centre and shopping parade communities.

The review consultation was undertaken by writing to all businesses and traders within each town centre and shopping parade area and seeking their views through an on-line questionnaire, which they were encouraged to complete and return.

As a result of the comments and feedback received, the Council, throughout 2013 introduced various changes in a number of town centres and shopping parades in the borough. These changes, amongst other measures, included reduced parking tariffs, the introduction of free 15 minute parking in some locations and the provision of additional parking bays.

This exercise demonstrated that the “one size fits all” approach which had been adopted up to that point was clearly not the correct approach as each area has its own specific issues and required specific tailored solutions to best meet those needs.

At this time it was considered that the best approach was to introduce the changes initially on a pilot basis and once it had been demonstrated that any changes had a positive impact, increased patronage evidenced by an increase in transactions whilst not leading to oversubscribed capacity, they would then be made permanent.

It is further recognised that situations change and as such it is important that the changes in parking charges are monitored on an on-going basis and further future investigations take place, especially in respect to the areas where no changes have been proposed to date. The reason for some areas not having changes proposed was due to the low level of response from the businesses and traders in those areas which made it difficult to identify a consensus on the current concerns.

This reflects the Council’s recognition of emerging local needs and pressures, whilst still in keeping with the objectives of encouraging different travel choices and balancing the needs of different user groups. In this way, the limited resource of parking within each Town Centre and shopping parade can be managed effectively.

It is acknowledged that 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 improves local economy and convenience for motorists.

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 the parking charges are set too low the most desirable spaces can be oversubscribed meaning that 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 in time deter motorists from coming to an area if they think there will be no parking availability at the end of their journey. Conversely setting local charges too high acts as a deterrent resulting in too many spaces underutilised 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 optimum occupancy that helps balance demands between use and availability. It is acknowledged, that in order to achieve this, the prevailing charging structure can be subject to regular monitoring and review and it also supports the ethos that one size does not fit all.

There is currently an absence of adequate and useful data relating to the parking characteristics of all our town centres which means that parking utilisation and turnover levels are not known.

Increased intelligence can be achieved in a number of ways including undertaking on-foot site surveys, interrogating PaybyPhone transaction data and/or with investment made in technology such as bay monitoring equipment.

Bay monitoring technology is relatively new and once installed it continues to provide intelligence on when vehicles park, how many park and how long they stay. This would provide much more accurate data than any other review or monitoring method and therefore investment in such technology should be seriously considered. This will allow constant interrogation of 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 this source would assist in determining whether changes to the charges are necessary and appropriate (subject to legislation) to encourage the 85% occupancy target. It will also enable a gradual approach to be made to ensure that the negative impact of oversubscribed places does not occur.

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 potential negative impacts this could have.

The Council has a responsibility under the Traffic Management Act (TMA) 2004 to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on its road network in the borough, and particularly so in many locations due to TfL's interest in high streets that are part of the Strategic Road Network. Providing free parking in town centres is likely to result in more spaces being utilised, which could result in motorists 'cruising' around the area looking for spaces, to the detriment of traffic flow, and also resulting in increased local emissions and ultimately difficulty in meeting the duties outlined in the TMA 2004.

It is therefore suggested that, for those town centres where changes have as yet not been implemented following on from the 2012 review:

- Consideration should be given to investing in bay monitoring technology in order to increase knowledge to allow informed decisions to be taken and provide the opportunity to react to changing patterns as they arise
- Carry out surveys to establish parking turnover
- Follow up with additional surveys, and adjust parking charges accordingly with a view to establish an 85% occupancy rate

For those town centres where changes have already been implemented:

- Further monitoring should be carried out to fully determine the impact of the changes and to identify whether any further adjustments are necessary

Implementing a free 30 minute parking period across all town centres in the borough will also have a financial consequence as noted in paragraph 5.2.1 of this report and Environment Committee will, as a result, need to consider (and recommend to Policy & Resources Committee) where funding for the other projects will come from.

2.2 To introduce cash meter parking for all current card-only machines

In February 2014 a Task and Finish group of the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee reported on an examination of Parking Policy in relation to the re-introduction of Cash Meters. As a result of that work Cabinet considered a range of recommendations and in particular endorsed recommendation 1 of the Task and Finish Group, with an amendment that Cabinet recommend that the Environment Committee re-consider the possible reintroduction of cash pay and display meters in the 2015/16 municipal year.

It is difficult to assess the likely demand for using the cash option and as such it is difficult to be certain on the costs of collecting the cash. It is important that the value of cash held in the machines does not build up and as such the collection regime needs to match usage.

In determining possible costs of collection two different assumed usage volumes have been assessed and costed accordingly.

It may be useful to review how the council has reached its current position:

In August 2011, the Cabinet Member for Environment took a decision under delegated powers to remove the existing 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. The machines were replaced with new payment options which included Pay by Phone and PayPoint.

In November 2011, scratch cards were introduced 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.

In July 2012, a number of new parking initiatives were introduced including increasing 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.

December 2012, saw the first phase of credit and debit card machines in council managed car parks and on a trial basis on-street in North Finchley Town Centre.

In April 2013, following the Town Centre reviews and discussions held with traders the priority of the roll out of credit/debit card machines moved from council managed off street car parks to on-street locations

In July 2013, a further 40 credit and debit card machines at different locations were agreed, 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 card machines being located throughout the borough.

Despite the installation of these machines the number of cashless PaybyPhone parking transactions has been steadily increasing and residents / visitors are becoming more familiar and confident with pay by phone as a payment method for parking in high streets and car parks.

Pay by phone was introduced in 2004 and has now become a widespread payment method with around 93% of parking revenue derived from the use of this payment option. The advantages of using pay by phone are as follows:

- avoids the need for small change
- provides a reminder facility when time is up
- allows for parking to be extended from a remote location (no need to return to the vehicle) up to the time limit relevant for the parking place
- for the council it is cheaper and safer than cash
- elimination of the problems of machine maintenance, vandalism and theft
- smartphone apps and VAT receipts are further enhancements

As the installation of the credit/debit card machines was not completed until December 2013, it is considered that it is too early to conclude whether they will prove to be well utilised and hence cost effective investment. Early indications point towards an increasing number of transactions occurring since the introduction of these machines, however PaybyPhone continues to be used for over 90% of payment transactions. It needs to be acknowledged that there will be no guarantee that converting the current machines to accept cash would lead to an increase in parking churn and footfall and as such it is difficult to assess whether such a conversion would increase turnover.

The table below provides a summary of the annual financial implications of implementing this proposal in all of the current machines borough wide. As can be seen from the breakdown this is not simply a case of taking account of the costs of converting the machines to enable the cash payment option, there are other complimentary implications which need to be considered and these also have significant financial impacts. These include the changes required to the infrastructure, the cost of maintenance and most significantly the cost of collecting the cash. In addition the one-off capital cost to modify the machines would be approximately £20,000.

Figure 1: Cost of Converting 59 Pay and Display Machines to Accept Cash (x5 Weekly Collections)

Revenue

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
Signs maintenance	£600
Ticket Rolls, including replacement	£32,000
Total Cost	£253,831 per annum

Capital

Credit / Debit Card and Coin Machine	Cost
Signage Cost – 1 st Year Capital	£6,000

There are also concerns relating to vandalism and attempted theft from the machines.

2.3 To scrap the councillors free parking permit perk

Currently Members have the ability to apply for a Members Permit which allows them to park free of charge.

It is acknowledged that this could be considered as a perk, however there are similar arrangements in place which allows free parking permits to be issued free of charge to other organisations. There are also provisions to facilitate other council services to carry out business as usual duties such as Essential User Vouchers, although these are chargeable.

If Member Permits were not available would it be anticipated that members would pay for individual parking sessions and then be entitled to claim back the expenditure as expenses. If this were to be the case this would increase the administrative burden of processing many individual claims and would be more costly to the council than continuing to administer the Member Permits.

An alternative would be for members to pay an annual sum for the permit, and reclaim the sum on an annual basis thereby reducing the additional financial impact of claiming for individual parking transactions.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 Alternative options have been identified and commented on in the text within section 2.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Depending on the decision of the committee on each of the areas under consideration and the options agreed to be taken forward each may have a different timescale to implement. It would also be necessary to enter into a procurement process in relation to the cash meter item in order to receive competitive quotes for various requirements including coin collection services.

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 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)

- 5.2.1 For the financial year 2013/14, there is a surplus on the Special Parking Account (SPA) of £7,543,640, and this money has been earmarked to pay for permitted projects. If 30 minutes free parking is introduced in the borough, this is expected to have an impact on this surplus by reducing it by £3.2 million meaning that earmarked projects will not be viable or funding for these will have to come from the general fund.

- 5.2.2 The financial implications of introducing the coin option to the existing card machines is identified in section 2. There is currently no available budget

provision to accommodate the sums identified. It would be necessary to pursue a procurement process with regard to coin collection services and this will require resources and budget which again is not accommodated in existing budget provision.

- 5.2.3 The financial implications of scrapping the Councillor's free parking permit are identified in section 2.3. If Members were to pay for the permit, and reclaim the sum on an annual basis costs would be containable within existing budgets.

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 proposal to introduce 30 minutes free 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 aims of reducing pollution and to achievement of duties imposed by the Traffic Management Act.

There is no guarantee that introducing a cash meter facility will encourage a higher patronage and turnover of spaces in the Town Centre and Shopping Parades and having invested the required sums in conversion, this may prove to not be cost effective.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful 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 equality 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 and Shopping Parades 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. The proposal of a 'one size fits all' scheme with regard to the introduction of 30 minutes free parking borough wide does not complement the need for a tailored solution to suit individual needs of each area.

If committee were minded to recommend "30 minutes free parking" or to reintroduce cash pay and display machines these items would need to be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

Previously a EIA was undertaken in relation to the decision to remove cash meters.

5.6 Consultation and Engagement

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

5.6.2 A Task and Finish Group considered the viability of converting the card

machines to accept a cash option and this included requesting views from the public and allowing members of the public to address the Task and Finish Group.

- 5.6.3 If committee were minded to recommend “30 minutes free parking” or to reintroduce cash pay and display machines these items would need to be subject to a thorough consultation process with residents and businesses in the borough.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Leader of the Council’s Delegated Powers Report 1727 of 9 July 2012 approved new parking initiatives and charges in Environment, Planning and Regeneration.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 Cabinet Member for Environment Delegated Powers Report 1907 of 18 January 2013 approved the introduction of parking changes on an experimental basis following the completion of an Edgware Town Centre parking review.
- 6.4 Cabinet Member for Environment Delegated Powers Report 1910 of 24 January 2013 approved the introduction of parking changes on an experimental basis following the completion of a Chipping Barnet Town Centre parking review.
- 6.5 Interim Director of Planning, Environment and Regeneration Delegated Powers Report 1859 of 6 December 2012 approved the purchase and installation of Credit and Debit Card pay & display machines in paid for parking car parks and initial on-street locations.
- 6.6 Cabinet, 2 April 2014 (Decision item 5) – endorsed recommendation 1 of the Task and Finish Group, with an amendment that Cabinet recommend that the Environment Committee re-consider the possible reintroduction of cash pay and display meters in the 2015/16 municipal year. 2. Support recommendations 2, 3 and 4 of the Task and Finish Group.
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=120&MId=7519&Ver=4>