

	<p>CHIEF OFFICER IN CONSULATION WITH COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DELEGATED POWERS REPORT</p>
<p>Title</p>	<p>Changes to Parking Permits to support COVID-19 Parking Services Recovery</p>
<p>Report of</p>	<p>Interim Executive Director, Environment</p>
<p>Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p>Enclosures</p>	<p>Initial Equalities Impact Assessment</p>
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Summary

This report sets out some changes to parking permits which are proposed to be made in order to enable service recovery, and to provide relief to residents who may be experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19. These changes are recommended to be approved in accordance with the scheme of delegation approved by the Urgency Committee.

Decisions

1. To approve the temporary parking arrangements for school staff as outlined at paragraph 1.9 to be put in place until 31 August 2020.
2. To approve the temporary measures for parking permits as outlined at paragraph 1.9 to be put in place until 1 September 2020:
 - b) Introduction of a three month resident permit duration
 - c) Introduction of a one month business permit duration

d) Removal of £10 diesel vehicle surcharge where it applies to resident and business permits

3. To approve the temporary measures for parking permits, as outlined at paragraph 1.9, to be put in place until 31 December 2020:

- e) Increase in price for printed, scratchcard style visitor vouchers by 15p
- f) Removal of online purchase option for printed, scratchcard style visitor vouchers, which would make virtual visitor vouchers the default option for customers purchasing vouchers online
- g) Providing additional time on existing resident permits at no cost for residents in financial hardship
- h) Providing a dispensation to park at no cost for residents in financial hardship, where no existing parking permit is held

A) WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 During the Coronavirus pandemic, the Parking Service have taken several decisions in response to the pandemic following announcements by the Government and enforcement advice from London Councils. The Council as a whole has taken urgent decisions as required following announcements by the Government and directions from the London Strategic Coordination Group, London Local Authority Gold and legislative changes.
- 1.2 The Council's Urgency Committee convened on 27 April 2020 and ratified the emergency decisions taken by officers since the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic and provide a delegation to Officers (in consultation with the Committee Chairmen) to take decisions on business critical matters normally reserved to theme committees.
- 1.3 Services have had to respond quickly adapt services due to the Government-mandated lockdown restrictions. The Government has now announced the first steps to lifting lockdown restrictions, and the parking service has produced a recovery plan which outlines a phased approach to the reinstatement of parking enforcement and customer services.
- 1.4 In accordance with government guidance on social distancing and lockdown restrictions, the Parking Service made several changes to its services which were reported to Urgency Committee at its meeting of 27 April 2020. This included the relaxation of parking restrictions to allow residents who are working from home, self-isolating, shielding, and critical workers and volunteers, to park without needing a permit where COVID-19 related constraints may have made this difficult or impossible.
- 1.5 Other changes made to parking enforcement include:
 - 1.5.1 Only approving requests for parking bay suspensions where they are required for essential work, in order to preserve resident parking space as far as possible.
 - 1.5.2 Changes to staff deployment for on street Civil Enforcement Officers, to protect their health and wellbeing and to comply with social distancing guidance

- 1.5.3 Introduction of a vehicle removal and relocation service on a pilot basis, in order to support essential services through the ability to remove or relocate vehicles parked in obstruction
- 1.6 The Council's Customer Support Group service operates the customer contact centre for parking permit enquiries, which is the first point of contact for residents and businesses. The Customer Support Group closed parking permit services to all enquiries on 24 March 2020 in order to prioritise COVID-19 related enquiries. Customers were signposted to help and advice online during this period, and advised of the relaxation of parking restrictions. Customer Support Group staff were set up to work from home on COVID-19 related enquiries and the contact centre building in Coventry was closed.
- 1.7 The Parking Service is now working on the recovery of services now that the Government has announced a phased plan to lifting lockdown restrictions. A recovery programme has been established which acknowledges the fact that during lockdown, movement has been severely curtailed for the vast majority of people and led to a much reduced role for parking enforcement. The lifting of lockdown restrictions will lead to antisocial parking becoming a significant problem to our residents and businesses again. The recovery programme sets out a phased plan for the restoration of parking enforcement, with a clear focus on the below aims:
- i. Resuming full parking enforcement to protect residents and businesses
 - ii. Clear communications to the public
 - iii. Restoring contact routes for the public
 - iv. Helping those in hardship
 - v. Protecting vulnerable residents
 - vi. Relieving the pressure on debtors
 - vii. Helping those who are helping others
 - viii. Protecting our staff and the public
- 1.8 The recovery programme sets out a detailed mobilisation plan for the phased resumption of parking enforcement, and restoration of customer services via telephone and email. It has been established that the Customer Support Group contact centre building will not reopen and so alternative options for the printing of physical (paper) permits and visitor vouchers is being explored as a matter of urgency.
- 1.9 Some changes to the current parking permit offer are being proposed on a temporary basis to support the recovery programme. These changes are:
- a) Temporary parking arrangements for school staff**
- 1.9.1 It is proposed to put in place temporary parking arrangements for school staff who are returning to work, to allow them to park in permit holder bays at no cost. School staff will be required to display a letter from the headteacher clearly in the windscreen of the vehicle. This arrangement is proposed to be put in place until 31 August 2020 and communicated to relevant stakeholders. A review of the current school parking permits scheme will take place prior to the Autumn school term commencing.
- b) Introduction of a three month resident permit duration**
 - c) Introduction of a one month business permit duration**

d) Removal of £10 diesel vehicle surcharge where it applies to resident and business permits

- 1.9.2 These changes are being proposed in order to help residents and businesses to spread the cost of a parking permit. Residents and businesses will be able to choose a preferred duration for their permit, and the current annual duration will remain. Pricing would be set according to existing emissions-based pricing, on a pro rata basis, and any existing discounts offered would also apply. It is proposed to temporarily remove the diesel vehicle surcharge of £10 in order to facilitate these proposed new permit durations and the greater flexibility they provide for residents and businesses to budget for their permit, without needing to pay the diesel surcharge upon each renewal of the permit. The system changes required to maintain the diesel surcharge could not be rapidly implemented at a reasonable cost.
- 1.9.3 The above temporary measures b), c) and d) are proposed to be put in place until 1 September 2020, and to be reviewed prior to that date and recommendations as to their continuation made to the Executive Director and Committee Chairman.

e) Increase in price for printed, scratchcard style visitor vouchers by 15p

- 1.9.4 These changes are proposed because the facility previously provided by the Customer Support Group for the print and dispatch of printed visitor vouchers has closed due to COVID-19 and is unlikely to reopen. An alternative printing service is being commissioned by the Parking Service and will result in increased service costs to the Parking Service. Therefore a price increase is being proposed from £1.10 per voucher to £1.25 per voucher to reflect the increased costs of printing, handling and postage of the vouchers.

f) Removal of online purchase option for printed, scratchcard style visitor vouchers, which would make virtual visitor vouchers the default option for customers purchasing vouchers online

- 1.9.5 In the current circumstances, due to COVID-19, the Council's printing service for visitor vouchers has been closed. A new printing service is being sought and will be mobilised as soon as possible.
- 1.9.6 It is proposed to remove printed visitor vouchers from the online order menu to encourage residents to use the virtual voucher option, and preserve available customer contact resources to where it is needed most, to ensure a telephone point of contact remains available as a clear pathway for residents who need it to order printed visitor vouchers over the telephone.
- 1.9.7 Residents are able to order visitor vouchers online using the web based system NSL Apply, which is provided by the Council's parking enforcement contractor NSL. The system was launched in September 2019 and offered a virtual visitor voucher option alongside the printed, scratchcard style vouchers. Both vouchers were offered at the same price of £1.10 per voucher, and vouchers are valid all day. Virtual vouchers are available for use immediately after purchase, can be assigned to the customer's 'Favourite' visitor vehicles if this feature is being used, or any vehicle registration entered by the customer, and can be activated for use instantly or pre-booked in advance of a planned visitor. Virtual vouchers also provide greater visibility with

regard to audit of usage, and remove the problem of vouchers being delayed or lost in the post.

1.9.8 COVID-19 has severely limited the level of customer support available and the Council's contact centre has closed for those services which are not classified as critical. An assessment has been made by Customer Support Group of capacity, and it has been agreed to reopen the telephone lines and email enquiry route for parking according to the mobilisation plan set out within the Parking Services recovery programme.

1.9.9 There is also a need to preserve telephone enquiry services for those who are unable to or prefer not to access services online (otherwise known as digitally excluded), in order to ensure that those residents who rely on the telephone as their primary source of information from the Council are always able to get through. Messages will be played on the telephone menu to callers to advise where information on parking can be found online, and the self service options available using NSL Apply. Callers will be advised that telephone lines may be busier than usual and that COVID-19 critical services are being prioritised.

1.9.10 The Council's visitor vouchers website page contains detailed instructions and "how to" videos to walk through purchasing and using virtual vouchers. Virtual vouchers can also be activated during business hours by a customer service agent over the telephone, and in some cases this may be a preferred option for residents who are shielding and do not want to handle printed vouchers.

1.9.11 The Government's planned approach to lifting lockdown restrictions does not suggest that social visits to family and friends will be allowed within the coming weeks, and therefore it is not anticipated that there will be a large number of residents seeking to purchase visitor vouchers once parking enforcement resumes. Existing parking arrangements for carers, critical workers and volunteers will be retained and communicated on the parking pages of the website, to ensure that wherever possible residents do use visitor vouchers where they are not required. However, virtual visitor vouchers will be available for purchase and scratchcard vouchers will be made available to those who need them once a new printing service has been commissioned.

g) Providing additional time on existing resident permits at no cost for residents in financial hardship

h) Providing a dispensation to park at no cost for residents in financial hardship, where no existing parking permit is held

1.9.12 These changes are proposed to provide financial breathing space to residents who are suffering financial hardship due to COVID-19. It is recognised that many residents will have suffered loss of income and need a temporary extension to their permit, or a dispensation to park, at no cost to tide them through. It is proposed to offer these options on a three month duration, with the ability to reapply or renew should this be needed, for those in hardship circumstances. Decisions will be made by Parking Services on a case by case basis and hardship is to be in the first instance defined as those who have lost income due to COVID-19, and made a claim for Universal Credit; those in receipt of Council Tax hardship fund; and those on list of vulnerable individuals as identified to the COVID-19 hub by NHS England.

1.9.13 The above temporary measures e), f), g) and h) are proposed to be put in place until 31 December 2020, and to be reviewed prior to that date and recommendations as to their continuation made to the Executive Director and Committee Chairman.

b) REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Council has complied with announcements and guidance by the Government and enforcement advice from London Councils during lockdown, which has included the relaxation of parking restrictions. The Council is now required to resume enforcement in a way which supports the phased lifting of lockdown restrictions, protects parking for residents and businesses, and provides assistance and financial relief for those experiencing hardship due to COVID-19.

c) ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 Alternative options which have been considered include not introducing the changes recommended to permits at paragraph 1.9.

3.2 This is not recommended because the changes support the wider COVID-19 recovery effort by providing relief for those in hardship, and enable customer services, most significantly the telephone lines, to be reopened and prioritised for those who are not able to obtain information online or from social media.

3.3 It is not recommended to retain the diesel surcharge of £10 as this will make it difficult for residents and businesses to take advantage of shorter permit durations being proposed. The removal of the surcharge will facilitate the proposed new permit durations and the greater flexibility they provide for residents and businesses to budget for their permit, without needing to pay the diesel surcharge upon each renewal of the permit. The alternative option, which is not recommended, would be to retain the diesel surcharge which would be charged upon each permit renewal in full, and would therefore require significant additional resources to process refunds to residents and businesses and handle the resulting additional correspondence.

3.4 It is also not recommended to retain the current pricing for printed, scratchcard visitor vouchers as there will be increased processing costs associated with these due to the need to find an alternative printing service. If prices remain as they are now this will not provide an incentive for residents who are able to use virtual vouchers to switch to the virtual option, thus preserving customer service resources for those who are digitally excluded, and in the longer term will cause a budget pressure for the Parking Service.

d) POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 If approved, the proposed changes to permits outlined at paragraph 1.9, will be formalised and advertised as necessary through the publication of a traffic management order.

4.2 The proposed changes will be advised to residents as part of the recovery programme communications plan which includes website content, social media announcements,

direct communications to all permit holders and direct communications to identified stakeholders and community groups.

- 4.3 Planned communications will be made prior to the resumption of parking enforcement in controlled parking zones to allow time for residents and businesses to purchase or renew permits, or make alternative parking arrangements.
- 4.4 Other permit and voucher options will remain available and the Parking Service will work closely with Capita to support the restoration of first contact points and answer any queries about the proposed changes outlined at paragraph 1.9
- 4.5 The temporary measures as outlined at paragraph 1.9 are proposed to be put in place until varying dates as detailed in that paragraph. The Parking Service will review the temporary measures as to their success and recommendations as to their continuation will be made to the Executive Director and Committee Chairman.

e) IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 During the emergency period where the Council have moved to delivering critical services only and undertake additional responsibilities required by Government. The Parking Service have supported other services by volunteering with the COVID-19 hub and deploying Civil Enforcement Officers to patrol in parks and open spaces during lockdown restrictions. The Parking Services recovery plan is being reported to the Environment Recovery Group and contributes to the wider Council COVID-19 recovery planning process.

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

5.2.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact to the Council's finances and this is likely to continue in the short to medium term. Parking Services continue to work with their finance business partners to estimate and report the impact of lost parking income. The decisions in this report will help limit the extent of lost income.

5.2.2 The changes proposed in this report and their anticipated resources implications are detailed below:

a) Introduction of temporary parking arrangements for school staff

There is little anticipated impact on resources; school staff are likely to be required to drive to work where they may previously have used public transport, and the arrangements intend to provide for this in a temporary basis. There may be a small loss of paid parking revenue, however not all schools are situated near Council-operated car parks or on street paid parking spaces which would have presented viable options for school staff to park. The scheme will require communication and briefing by the Parking Service which will be incorporated within the wider recovery programme activity.

b) Introduction of a three month resident permit duration

No anticipated impact on resources; configuration, testing and training in regard to new permit duration to be carried out by Parking Service within existing resources. There may be a small increase in enquiries from residents in regard to the new permit duration which will have a resource impact on the Parking Service and Customer Support Group

c) Introduction of a one month business permit duration

No anticipated impact on resources; configuration, testing and training in regard to new permit duration to be carried out by Parking Service within existing resources. There may be a small increase in enquiries from businesses in regard to the new permit duration which will have a resource impact on the Parking Service and Customer Support Group

d) Removal of £10 diesel vehicle surcharge where it applies to resident and business permits

Estimated financial impact is a loss of £5k per month in permit revenue. This is estimated based on the current vehicle profile in Barnet. There may be a small increase in enquiries from residents in regard to the removal of the diesel surcharge which will have a resource impact on the Parking Service and Customer Support Group, however this is anticipated to be far less than the resources which would be required to process refunds and handle the additional correspondence which would result if the diesel surcharge is retained.

e) Increase in price for printed, scratchcard style visitor vouchers by 15p

The impact on resources is likely to be neutral as a new printing service is currently being commissioned and the price increase being recommended is intended to cover the additional costs of this new service. There is likely to be a small increase in enquiries from residents in regard to the price increase which will have a resource impact on the Parking Service and Customer Support Group.

f) Removal of online purchase option for printed, scratchcard style visitor vouchers, which would make virtual visitor vouchers the default option for customers purchasing vouchers online

The impact on resources is likely to be neutral as it is anticipated that the majority of residents will opt to purchase virtual vouchers as needed. It is not expected that there will be a sudden increase in virtual voucher orders as the Government advice is to avoid non-essential travel, and the current concessions available to critical workers and volunteers are likely to be retained which means visitor vouchers should not be required by most residents. There is likely to be a small increase in enquiries from residents seeking assistance on ordering and using virtual vouchers, which will have a resource impact on the Parking Service and Customer Support Group.

g) Providing additional time on existing resident permits at no cost for residents in financial hardship

h) Providing a dispensation to park at no cost for residents in financial hardship, where no existing parking permit is held

The proposals are likely to have a financial impact but it is not possible to estimate the potential numbers of applicants and associated loss of parking permit revenue. The Parking Service is still in the processing of obtaining advice from the Information Management team on information sharing agreements between departments which would allow us to assess the number of cases already identified to the Council as being in financial hardship due to COVID-19.

The options have been proposed because they can be put in place with minimal processing effort required and so having a minimal impact upon current resource levels, and do not require additional investment in IT to put these in place.

8.1 Social Value

8.1.1 N/A

8.2 Legal and Constitutional References

8.2.1 Council Constitution, Article 10.4 – provides that Chief Officers in consultation with Theme Committee Chairmen have delegated authority to make decisions which are not key decisions and which have a value between £189,330 and £500,000. A written report will be prepared for each decision.

8.2.2 Further to provisions in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the council can designate parking spaces on and off the highway and can regulate their use through conditions and charges. Case law has confirmed that the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 is not a taxing statute and does not permit authorities to charge residents for parking with a view to raising a surplus on its Special Parking Account

8.2.3 In using the powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the authority has a duty, amongst other considerations, to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities both on and off the highway. This is pursuant to section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and includes having regard to matters including the national air quality strategy. This report is proposing the temporary removal of the diesel surcharge for parking permits in order to quickly facilitate greater flexibility for issuing permits for shorter durations, however this measure is proposed until 1 September 2020 and will be reviewed again before that date.

8.2.4 Pursuant to section 87 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, the Secretary of State has produced statutory guidance that local authorities must have regard to in connection with the exercise of their functions relating to civil enforcement of traffic contraventions.

8.3 Risk Management

8.3.1 The Council has an established approach to risk management, which is set out in the Risk Management Framework. Risks are to be reviewed quarterly (as a minimum) and any high-level risks will be reported to the relevant Theme Committee and Policy and Resources Committee.

8.3.2 In accordance with this framework, parking service and project risks are regularly reviewed at service level and reported to Directors as part of the risk review process. The Parking Services recovery programme has established a risk register and individual initiatives and actions within the programme are to be gathered, monitored and reported as part of the Council's risk management framework for Quarter 1.

8.4 Equalities and Diversity

8.4.1 Section 149 of the 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

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

8.4.2 Having due regards means the need to (a) remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it, (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

8.4.3 The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

8.4.4 An initial equality impact screening has been undertaken in respect of the proposals contained within this report and is appended.

8.5 Corporate Parenting

5.7.1 N/A

8.6 Consultation and Engagement

8.6.1 Consultation in respect of the proposed changes to permits as outlined at paragraph 1.9 will see an adjustment to the relevant Traffic Management Order carried out in accordance with the statutory process for traffic management order amendments where required. This may be achieved through an Experimental Traffic Management Order and advice is being sought on the appropriate procedure from Re Highways.

8.6.2 Information and communication in respect of these proposed changes to permits as outlined at paragraph 1.9, and the resumption of parking enforcement in controlled parking zones, will be provided in accordance with the Parking Services recovery programme communications plan as outlined at paragraph 4.2

5.9 Insight

5.9.1 N/A

6 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.9 N/A

Chairman:
Has been consulted

Signed



22 May 2020

Chief Officer:
Decision maker having taken into account the views of the Chairman

Signed



22 May 2020

REPORT CLEARANCE CHECKLIST

(Removed prior to publication and retained by Governance Service)

Note: All reports must be cleared by the appropriate Committee Chairman, Chief Officer, Legal, Finance and Governance as a minimum. Report authors should also engage with subject matter experts from other service areas where this is required (e.g. procurement, equalities, risk, etc.). The name and date that the chairman or officer has cleared the report must be included in the table below or the report will not be accepted.

Legal, Finance and Governance require a minimum of 5 working days to provide report clearance. Clearance cannot be guaranteed for reports submitted outside of this time.

AUTHOR TO COMPLETE TABLE BELOW:

Who	Clearance Date	Name
Committee Chairman	22 May 2020	Cllr Dean Cohen
Chief Officer	22 May 2020	Geoff Mee
HB Public Law	15 June 2020	Andrew Lucas
Finance	22 May 2020	Ben Jay
Governance	11 June 2020	Paul Frost

Notes:

This report is for decisions with a value between £181,302 and less than £500,000 but excluding all excluding all key decisions – if in doubt please consult the Governance Team.

The report must not be implemented until cleared by both the relevant Committee Chairman and Chief Officer. Both names should be listed on the cover page in the 'Report of' section.