

CABINET

18 July 2023

Title: Parking and Cost-of-Living Proposals	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: No
Report Author: Daniel Connelly, Parking Design Manager	Contact Details: E-mail: daniel.connelly@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: Gary Jones, Operational Director, Enforcement and Community Safety	
Accountable Executive Team Director: Alison Stuart, Chief Legal Officer	
Summary <p>The cost-of-living crisis is an ongoing issue across the country and especially in Barking and Dagenham due to its high level of deprivation. Times are very challenging right now in regard to household finances i.e. rising energy bills, cost of food, fuel and mortgage and rent payments, which can also lead to wellbeing related issues for residents who are at the heart of our decision-making.</p> <p>The Council is already committed to providing support, advice and guidance to residents during this difficult time and the Parking service has identified two practical options to contribute to the package of support. These options relate to extending the periods of free-parking at Council-owned car parks and secondary shopping parades, as well as offering residents in new Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) areas 10 free visitor permits in the first year.</p>	
Recommendation(s) <p>The Cabinet is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Agree to extend the 'free' parking periods at Council-owned car parks from 1 hour to 2 hours and at secondary shopping parades (on-street) from 30 minutes to 1 hour in respect of all existing and future pay-by-phone locations; and(ii) Agree that households within future Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) areas be offered 10 free visitor parking sessions in the first year.	
Reason(s) <p>To assist the Council in achieving its priorities of "Residents are supported during the current Cost-of-Living Crisis" and "Residents live in, and play their part in creating, safer, cleaner, and greener neighbourhoods".</p>	

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Since July 2018, CPZ coverage across the borough has been expanding following consultation with ward members, emergency services, TfL, residents, businesses, schools and other community establishments. At the heart of this ongoing project is the Council's aim to improve safety, congestion and air quality across the borough, as well as providing a safer, fairer, consistent and a more transparent parking service.
- 1.2 The cost-of-living crisis is an ongoing issue within Barking and Dagenham with rising fuel, heating, food and mortgage and rent bills. We are mindful that in this current climate the decisions we take to implement new parking schemes or how we operate existing ones does have an impact on our local residents, particularly financial as residents are required to pay to park when visiting shopping hubs, local green spaces and other local services and amenities via car. Residents are also required to pay for their visitors such as family and friends within a CPZ which are currently sold at a rate of 75p for 4 hrs, £1.38 (1 day) or via a scratch card booklet which is £7.50 for 10 half day sessions and £13.80 for 10 full day sessions . A full list of permits prices can be found here. <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/parking/parking-permits/parking-permit-prices>
- 1.3 The Parking service remains committed to the vision to achieve all the benefits CPZ provides, which is often accomplished via our emissions-based permit pricing structure which discourages “gas guzzlers” and unnecessary journeys being made. We are also currently supporting a number of other initiatives to help facilitate a change to cleaner, healthier and reduced-rate types of travel which link directly to the Council's priority of ensuring “Residents live in, and play their part in creating, safer, cleaner, and greener neighbourhoods. For example:
- All parking permits and on street parking such a pay by phone are emission based with electric and very low emission vehicles being free of charge. Although capital cost for healthier vehicles can be higher the industry is working towards a lower price point for electric vehicles and low emission vehicles
 - Car Clubs – Parking are also committed to the car club project which aims to provide a platform for more accessible and sustainable travel within the borough and act as a cheaper alternative to actually owning a vehicle given all the costs associated with this such as car payments, insurance, fuel and maintenance etc.
 - Active travel – through the introduction of CPZ, residents are encouraged to choose active travel options such a cycling and walking to their desired destination which is not only healthier but comes either free or reasonably low in cost
 - E- scooter pilot across the borough
- 1.4 However we recognise this is an opportune moment to consider how we may support our residents during the cost-of-living crisis by easing the financial impact for residents as well as promoting a more positive CPZ programme. This is especially relevant given 62.4% of households in Barking and Dagenham are deprived which is the highest in England and Wales as identified within the Office of National Statistics Census 2021 (updated 5 April 2023). In addition, the proposed introduction of the Mayors Ultra Low Emission zone from 29 August this year which will likely further impact some resident's household budgets.

2. Proposal and Issues

2.1 The proposed changes focus specifically on two key areas:

- a) Extending free parking periods at pay by phone locations (Council car parks and within shopping parades); and
- b) Providing 10 free visitor parking sessions (per household) for residents

2.2 These two proposals are being put forward as the most common feedback themes we receive about the CPZ programme is based on the programme being imposed to make additional income for the Council and residents' concerns about their visitor parking and when using pay-by-phone locations. The proposals do not suggest a change to the fee structure for permits / parking but instead looks to provide additional value for money.

2.3 Extending free parking periods at pay by phone locations (Council car parks and within shopping parades)

2.3.1 Currently all users of Council car parks can obtain a 1-hour free parking period and 30 minutes free within secondary shopping parades, which must be registered via pay by phone. Our proposal seeks to essentially double the free parking period to 2 hours within car parks and 1 hour for secondary shopping parades for all users of existing pay by phone locations and future locations. With regards to the parking needs of some of our more vulnerable motorists such as blue badge holders we already have blue badge parking both within car parks and on street to facilitate safe and accessible parking and will continue to do so as we introduced new schemes. Blue badge holders can park within Council car parks for free within designated blue badge bays "as signed" and within any pay by phone locations for free all day.

2.3.2 It is also understood that some members of the community, particularly older people or those with hidden disabilities, may find it challenging to register their pay by phone parking via the app, which is why we also offer the following options:

- Pay by phone (telephone call) – motorists looking to park can use the automated telephone line which will support them in registering their parking. Parking colleagues also provide advice sessions within libraries for members of the community who would like additional support.
- Pay point – Motorist can pay for parking within local newsagents and nearby shops. To assist motorists in doing this we have a 10-minute observation period from when people park to when they have to have paid for their parking before enforcement is carried out.
- In addition to this, pay by phone parking session can be booked in advance with the help of friends and family.

2.3.3 However, it should be noted that this proposal does not suggest any changes to the existing pay by phone arrangement in terms of how motorists pay to park, instead considers only an extension to the free operating period as outlined. We have not operated a pay and display service since prior to the Covid 19 lockdown period, although machines remain onsite (until formally removed) but have been switched

off and unusable.

2.3.4 This will also help to address concerns raised previously about women's safety, particularly in town centres where they will be encouraged to park for longer and access parking spaces closer to essential amenities and services without having to walk alone for long periods through quieter locations.

2.4 **10 free visitor parking sessions (per household) for residents**

2.4.1 To ease the financial pressure and anxiety from residents about visitor parking when new CPZ's are introduced, we are proposing to offer 10 free visitor parking sessions. The specific criteria that will apply is:

- All properties with a registered address within the new CPZ scheme may apply for a maximum of 10 free visitor parking sessions (per household) to be used within 1 year of a new CPZ being implemented. These will not be applied automatically and must be requested by or on behalf of the resident as required. The resident does not need to be a resident permit holder, nor do they have to own a vehicle.
- Applies to new schemes only and not those that are already in operation.
- These can be applied for online via their individual permit smarti account or for those residents not confident using online facilities may contact the parking customer care team who can assist with either booking the free sessions on their behalf or provide the resident with a free scratchcard booklet containing the 10 free parking session to be used as required.
- Visitor parking sessions may only be used when visiting resident within the designated CPZ and may not be used across the borough for other means.
- After the 10 free sessions have been used further session will need to be purchased if visitor parking is required.

2.4.2 It is anticipated that by offering initial free visitor parking sessions, this will transition residents and their visitors into the new scheme rather than having to pay straight away which, in turn will help to ensure residents are safe, protected, and supported at their most vulnerable by encouraging resident support networks to continue such as visits from family and friends, healthcare professions, carers etc., for which these visitors' session permits are often used. It is also envisaged that with this additional, upfront support will encourage residents to obtain visitor permits in the future and realise the benefits from doing so.

2.5 Both elements of this proposal are designed to provide better value for money for residents and visitors. In addition to reducing the financial impact, there are also other benefits to this proposal, such as improved access to free parking which enables more residents and other visitors, particularly those who are most affected by the ongoing cost of living crisis, to utilise local services and amenities at no cost during the extended free-parking periods. This will mainly be realised when residents are using local amenities which take longer than 30 minutes (secondary shopping parades) or an hour (Council car parks) such as local green spaces for dog walking and other recreational activities, attending doctors surgeries, medical centres, churches or getting a haircut or undertaking a weekly shop to name a few. In turn, this will encourage the use of local business which again has been raised as an issue as business owners feel charging people to park in pay by phone locations discourages custom, particularly where longer parking periods maybe required. It

should be noted that any additional parking required must be paid for in line with the existing emission based pay by phone tariff which remains unchanged as part of this proposal and can be viewed here <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/parking/parking-area/where-you-can-park#c44d572c>

- 2.6 It should be noted that of these proposals are agreed, they will be continually reviewed in line with the ongoing cost of living crisis to ensure the above CPZ priorities are being met.

3. Options Appraisal

- 3.1 Make no change – the main consideration of this paper is to provide residents within new schemes to obtain free visitor parking, as an additional benefit during the cost-of-living crisis, making no change will not provide any additional benefits in this regard and may be seen as a missed opportunity to support our residents during a challenging time.
- 3.2 Extend free parking period to just **residents permit holders only**– This option was considered but was seen as not beneficial to other users who aren't resident permits holders as all residents may require the need to access local services. Even within CPZ not everyone requires a resident permit to park, most notably those who have a dropped kerb, or access to private parking. This option was also deemed to be unmanageable from a software perspective as the pay by phone system and permit smarti systems are not set up to link the two aspects. Furthermore, signage on street would become very confusing resulting in lack of compliance, increased appeals and ultimately a poorer customer service being provided to all users.
- 3.3 Provide 10 free visitor parking sessions to **all households which are located within a CPZ** (not just as part of new CPZ rollouts) – This option may be seen as fairer, particularly by existing CPZ resident permit holders and their visitors. However, this option was dismissed as existing permits holders have already been obtaining visitor permits. Restricting this to new schemes assists residents with the change in parking control and allows a longer period for visitor permits to be budgeted for and the process to be fully understood, which includes how to register a permit smarti account and effectively log visitor parking sessions and how scratchcard can be obtained and how these are used and the support that's available via the parking customer care team.
- 3.4 Both elements of this proposal are designed to provide better value for money for residents and visitors .However it is also important to remain focussed on the key CPZ priorities which are to:
- Reduce car ownership and the amount of motor vehicles journeys being made
 - Encourage active travel and use of public transport.
 - Improve air quality
 - Improve emergency access
- 3.5 Providing 10 free visitor parking sessions to all households located within CPZs will lead to these priorities becoming increasingly more difficult to achieve.

- 3.6 It is felt the recommended proposal offers a balanced approach by ensuring residents are supported during the cost-of-living crisis but, at the same time, ensuring residents live in, and play their part in creating, safer, cleaner, and greener neighbourhoods.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Consultation has already been carried out with local residents regarding the final eight schemes (CPZ project 1) and there is a programme of consultation for CPZ project 2 over the next two years. If agreed, the additional benefits set out within this paper will form part of the consultation for future schemes.
- 4.2 The proposals in this report were considered and endorsed by the Executive Management Team at its meeting on 29 June 2023.

5. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Afzal Hussain, Senior Accountant

- 5.1 This report seeks approval for the proposed changes focused specifically on two key areas:

Extending free parking periods at pay by phone locations (Council car parks and within shopping parades)

- 5.2 Currently all users of our Council car parks can obtain a 1-hour free parking period and 30 minutes free within secondary shopping parades, which must be registered via pay by phone. The proposal seeks to essentially double the free parking period to 2 hours within car parks and 1 hour for secondary shopping parades for all users of existing pay by phone locations and future locations.
- 5.3 It may be prudent to consider a 10% reduction in annual income which equates to circa £100k. There is a risk that this % reduction in income may be slightly higher due to proposal being open to all users.
- 5.4 This can be offset with the addition of new CPZ's as more pay by phone locations will be created.

Providing 10 free visitor parking sessions (per household) for residents

- 5.5 Additionally, to ease the financial pressure and anxiety from residents about visitor parking when new CPZ's are introduced we are proposing to offer 10 free visitor parking sessions.
- 5.6 Visitor scratch cards are sold at a rate of £7.50 for 10 half day sessions and £13.80 for 10 full day sessions. Based on the number of properties in the zone, if we assumed all would take one of each permit available to purchase we are looking at a potential income of £165k, however if we go with the assumption that potential average permit uptake of 37% and each permit holders, the income will be in the region of £61k.

- 5.7 Parking is forecasted to underspend in 23/24 and therefore the service will not be impacted by the potential loss of income from the above proposal.
- 5.8 Finance will monitor the income and expenditure during its monthly management meetings.

6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Dr. Paul Feild, Principal Standards & Governance Lawyer

- 6.1 The power to create Controlled Parking Zones is set out in section 45 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA). The revenue generated by charges for on-street and off-street parking is subject to the requirement that it be placed within a ring-fenced account, operating in accordance with section 55 of the RTRA.
- 6.2 The power to charge and the purposes for which the money may be used has been tested in the courts. They have determined that the power is not to be used as a source of generating revenue, instead the charging regime ought to seek to be self-financing including covering earlier deficits and when a surplus is generated the purpose to which it may be allocated is set out in statute. That does not mean that finances should be on a knife-edge as it is quite lawful to be prudent and to budget for a surplus to allow for unforeseen expenses, shortfalls in other years, and payment of capital charges/debts.
- 6.3 As long as the revised scheme is viable, and bearing in mind it has been tested with an Equalities Impact Assessment then it will be within the Councils powers to adopt the refreshed scheme. With these considerations in mind any new strategy and charging regime will inevitably take time to settle down. As a result, following a periodic review there need to be additional fine-tuning as the financial picture emerges to ensure both viability and compliance with statutory obligations.

7. Other Implications

7.1 Risk Management

It is preferable to provide 10 free visitor sessions to just those residents who will from part of a new scheme. We are very considerate of the current climate and appreciate that those residents wouldn't have necessarily budgeted for the additional cost of visitor parking. We are mindful that this will provide a balanced approach and to assist residents and their visitors in successfully transitioning to having no parking control to having to use a new service and budget for permits. The reason why this isn't being offered to everyone is because many other CPZ have been in place for a few years and in some cases over 10 years so visitor arrangement is already full in place.

- 7.2 **Corporate Policy and Equality Impact** – Please refer to Appendix 1 Cost of Living Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) which accompanies this report.

- 7.3 **Health Issues** – The parking team remain committed to promoting cleaner air, reduced car ownership, journeys, road safety and emergency access which all has a positive impact on health within the borough as more people will choose healthier

and active forms of travel. Its felt the proposal in this paper albeit not directly in support of these priorities are limited in a way that ensures this isn't hugely impacted and at the same time provides an added benefit of reducing money related stress during the cost of living crisis

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

- Controlled Parking Zone Strategy
<https://modgov.lbbd.gov.uk/internet/documents/s155023/Parking%20Strategy%20Report.pdf>

List of appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment