

**LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT  
HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE 20<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2004**

REPORT NO : /04 FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT

FOR INFORMATION / ACTION

NAME OF WARD:

<b>REPORT TITLE :</b>	<b>CONSULTATION ON WESTERN EXTENSION TO THE CONGESTION CHARGING SCHEME</b>
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## **1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Transport for London have requested London Borough of Brent to submit their views on the Western Extension to the Congestion Charging scheme in central London by 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2004. This report summarises the Congestion Charging proposals, the issues that the Mayor has requested the views of the London boroughs and the specific issues that Brent Council would wish to raise for further discussion with the Mayor's office.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The committee approves Brent Council's response to the Mayor's consultation, as detailed in section 9 of this report, so that it may be forwarded to the Mayor before the deadline on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2004.

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 At this stage, there are no immediate financial implications on our borough. However, the Western Extension to the Congestion Charging scheme will, no doubt, have some adverse affect on traffic and parking in Brent and therefore, further financial implications will be considered if the scheme progresses to the next stage. .

## **4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no staffing implications at this stage but, these proposals will have transport and traffic implications for our borough and, will no doubt, have some staffing implications which need to be considered in the future.

## **5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The principle of extending the Congestion Charging scheme is likely to reduce the level of traffic travelling through that part of London, thus relieving congestion and possibly reducing air pollution. However, we do not anticipate a similar reduction in our borough. Indeed it may cause an adverse effect on parking and traffic movement generally, particularly in the south of the borough.

## **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no specific legal implications at this stage.

## **7.0 DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The Mayor's Transport Strategy states that transport initiatives and plans should support social inclusion by taking account of the needs of all Londoners to access jobs, facilities and addressing the needs of groups with specific travel requirements.

7.2 The consultation on Western Extension to the Congestion Charging scheme has been subject to screening and officers believe that there are no diversity implications arising from it. However, all specific proposals that may arise from this scheme will be reported as part of the implementation programme, to be presented to this committee in due course.

## **8.0 DETAIL**

8.1 On 16<sup>th</sup> February 2004, TfL launched a consultation on behalf of the Mayor of London, on a revision to the Mayor's Transport Strategy which includes a new proposal to extend the current central London Congestion Charging scheme westwards, to cover most of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. The consultation period ends on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2004.

8.2 We are advised by TfL that a decision on whether to publish a variation to the Mayor's Transport Strategy will not be made until after the Mayoral election in May 2004. If the decision is made to proceed, then there will be a further consultation on the "scheme order" for the proposals. Following this second consultation, should a decision be made to proceed, the earliest the western extension could be introduced is 2006.

8.3 It is proposed that the western extension be broadly bounded by Harrow Road, Scrubbs Lane, West Cross route, the Earls Court one-way system and Chelsea Embankment. Vehicles would not be charged for using the boundary roads or the A40 Westway.

8.4 The hours of operation would be 7 am to 6.30 pm, Monday to Friday, which are the same as for the existing scheme. The charge would be £5 per vehicle per day for the enlarged zone, with discounts and exemptions as for the existing scheme.

8.5 In addition to consulting on the principle of the Western Extension as a means of tackling congestion, TfL has requested views on a number of operational issues which include:

- The boundary of the western extensions,
- The use of free routes through and around the zone,
- A single resident discount zone

8.6 The basic rationale put forward by TfL for an extension is that the central London Congestion Charging scheme has delivered reductions in congestion in line with the objectives of the Mayor's Transport Strategy. That congestion is a problem in other

areas of inner London and that the introduction of CCS in these areas would deliver reductions in congestion too.

- 8.7 The result of the monitoring carried out by TfL on the scheme do indicate that there have been reductions in traffic levels of 15% and reductions in the level of congestion of 30%. These details were published by TfL in February 2004. The ALG is carrying out an independent monitoring of traffic levels inside and outside the zone, and the results will be available in due course.
- 8.8 The results from TfL's monitoring of the central London scheme demonstrates significant reductions in levels of congestion inside the zone. However, questions remain over the precise nature of some of the impacts, whether they will be sustained and the impact of the scheme on travel levels outside the zone. Questions also remain about the impact that the scheme has had on business particularly in the retail and leisure sectors. Further monitoring by TfL and ALG will be required before a full assessment can be made about the impact of the existing scheme. This has to be borne in mind when formulating a view on the consultation on the proposed western extension. However, as one of the key priorities of the Mayor's Transport Strategy is to reduce congestion, it is difficult to identify any other measure, which is likely to meet the traffic reduction targets that are set out in the Strategy.
- 8.9 TfL have looked at possible geographical extensions to the north, east, south and west. Issues considered before each area were:
- Intensity of traffic congestion,
  - A possible boundary and/diversion routes for an extended zone,
  - Public transport provision to allow car users to transfer to alternative modes
- 8.10 Another determining factor in TfL's decision to select a particular area of limited size of an extension is the ability of the camera based technology to operate over an enlarged area. TfL state that congestion occurs in all the areas around the existing zone. The North and South Circular Roads might form suitable boundary routes for an enlarged zone however, this would be too extensive an area for the current scheme technology.
- 8.11 The supplementary information produced by TfL identifies that congestion is not a day long problem in the areas to the north, east and south of the present scheme and is confined to peak hours only. It is only in the area to the west that congestion is identified as an 'all day' problem. It would be impossible to introduce an extension to the existing scheme that would operate only during peak hours.
- 8.12 Extensions to the east, north and south are discounted by TfL on the basis that they do not have suitable diversion routes and public transport provision in the east and south are identified as potential issues. The area to the west is identified as one that high level of congestion across the working day, with good public transport provision and suitable diversion routes. TfL therefore conclude that a western extension could provide the most promising opportunity to extend the benefits of the central zone with the least likelihood of significant operational and implementation problems.
- 8.13 TfL estimates that circulating traffic in the proposed western extension zone would reduce by 5% to 10% with reduction in congestion of 10% to 20%. This compares with the reduction in traffic level of 15% and 30% reduction in congestion levels that have

been recorded inside the congestion charging zone to date. Traffic and transport benefits of the western extension are therefore less than those for the existing scheme.

- 8.14 TfL estimate that if a western extension were introduced, around 1,500 to 3,000 extra bus passenger might travel to the new zone by bus. More detail on how these additional bus spaces are to be provided will be required. The results of both the ALG and TfL bus occupancy surveys have indicated that the additional bus capacity that was provided before the introduction of the scheme has been sufficient to accommodate the increased demand. However, questions remain about whether the pattern of bus service provision needs to be adjusted to take account of the change in demand that has occurred following the introduction of the existing scheme. TfL must learn from the experience with the existing scheme and ensure that any additional provision is optimised to meet demand.
- 8.15 TfL have funded a package of complementary measures to overcome any traffic management impacts of the introduction of the existing schemes. However, provision will have to be made for funding for local transport schemes to mitigate the impact of any displaced traffic resulting from the introduction of the western extension.
- 8.16 Brent officers have met the TfL team, responsible for the implementation of the Congestion Charging scheme and discussed the new proposals and agreed that a response to their consultation document will be forwarded following this committee's approval of this report.
- 8.17 On 30<sup>th</sup> March, officers organised a Members Meeting where all Council Members were invited to attend the evening meeting to hear a presentation from TfL's team on their new proposals.
- 8.18 Officers from Brent Consultation team organised a special Area Forum in the south part of the borough, on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 to include the area of Kilburn, Kensal Rise and Harlesden. Over 150 local residents and businesses attended the meeting to listening to a presentation given by a representative from TfL on the proposals.

Details of the publicity undertaken for the Area Forums, to include the following:

- press release on our Website - Brent.gov.uk as well as BRAIN - our community website (link via main website)
- letters mailed to over 1600 residents and community organisations - Harlesden & Kilburn/Kensal ACF forum databases
- meeting flyers have been distributed by Residents Associations in Queens Park, South Kilburn and part of Kensal Green.
- flyers distributed to local businesses in Harlesden/Kensal Green/Kilburn/Queens Park
- flyers/Posters distributed across our Libraries & One Stop Shops in the affected area
- letters & flyers sent to all Primary & Secondary schools in the forum area
- posters/flyers also distributed to Churches/Mosques, employment centres and community organisations in the area

At the Area Forum meeting a lively debate and discussion took place where opportunities were given to local residents to express their views and concerns. The main issues that were expressed include:

- The proposal would lead to an increase in traffic congestion on Harrow Road and Scrubbs Lane leading to increased accident and pollution
- Difficulties in access to local schools, Doctor Surgeries, shops etc. in the area of the proposals, by residents who live just outside the zone boundary
- The proposal would cause migration of traffic and parking problems in nearby residential streets in the south part of the borough
- The proposed zone boundary should be terminated either at A40 Westway or on A402 Bayswater Road, i.e. to exclude the northern end of the Kensington area from the proposal
- Local residents have expressed concerns on the consultation undertaken by TfL and that they have not been sent details of these proposals neither have they been given sufficient time to express their views.
- A suggestion of introducing a buffer zone was mentioned by a resident, to allow residents outside the zone to receive the discount payment of 90% when travelling into the zone.

9.0 Taking into account all the matters that have been discussed above, the proposed Brent Council's position on the variation to the Mayor's Transport Strategy is as follows:

Brent supports the principle of congestion charging and recognises the benefits of the present scheme in central London which aims to reduce the level of traffic congestion, reduce air pollution, reduce number of accidents and encourages motorists to use of more sustainable public transport system.

The acceptability of a western extension is dependent upon the detail of the proposed scheme and the complementary measures associated including public transport improvements. More information is required on the result of the impact monitoring of the existing scheme before a decision can be on whether the proposed western extension would represent an acceptable scheme in tackling traffic congestion.

Whilst Brent Council supports the case for a western extension it has not been demonstrated that the northern section of the proposed extension is significantly congested for it to be included in any proposal and there may be considerable disadvantages for our residents on the proposed northern boundary.

For the proposals to be considered acceptable, assurances would be sought from the Mayor of London that:

- The suggestion of reducing the zone boundary to A40 Westway or A402 Bayswater Road be seriously considered.
- Any diversion of traffic or migration of parking in the south part of the borough will be dealt with through funding an appropriate measure to overcome these problems. These measures would need to be suggested by Brent Council and funded by TfL.

- Undertake the appropriate measures to mitigate the possible increase in pollution resulting from diversions of traffic on Harrow Road or the adjacent areas through funding of appropriate schemes to overcome the problem.
- Undertake close monitoring of traffic before and after the implementation of any proposals and work closely with Brent Council's officers on identifying problems relating to congestion at junctions mainly in the area of Harrow Road and to fund appropriate measures to deal with such problems.

## 10.0 **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Details of Documents:**

- 10.1 Consultation material  
Letter from Transport for London
- 10.2 Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact Qassim Kazaz, Transportation Service Unit, Brent House, 349 High Road, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 6BZ, Telephone: 020 8937 5127

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