



Executive
13th November 2006

Report from the Director of
Environment and Culture.

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Review of Parking Charges

Forward Plan Ref: E & C 06/07 019

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals to increase on, off street parking charges and visitors' scratchcards.
- 1.2 The increase in parking charges will generate additional income and assist this authority to manage the loss of income resulting from a recent High Court Case..

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Executive instructs officers to proceed with increasing on, off street parking charges and visitors scratch cards to be effective from April 1st 2007 or as soon after that date as practical.
- 2.2 That the Executive instructs Officers to proceed with Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) to implement the proposed changes. Should there be any objection to the TRO's, the Director of Environment and Culture is authorised to resolve such objections unless it is of a substantial nature in which case a report should be submitted to a future meeting of the Executive to consider such objection.

- 2.3 That to avoid further inconsistency and parking demand problems, that the Executive agrees not to extend existing areas of free parking nor to create new areas.

3 Details.

- 3.1 Other (non permit) parking charges in Brent were formally reviewed in mid-2005 and increases were introduced. Since then, it has become apparent that neighbouring boroughs charge more than Brent and in order to maintain consistency with neighbouring boroughs officers propose that Brent's parking charges are increased to reflect the disparity between the borough and its neighbours. All proposals include a unified rate across the borough with the exception of three free parking areas outlined in the report. On our western boundary Brent will be marginally more expensive than our neighbours but slightly cheaper on our southern boundaries. Neighbouring boroughs, such as Camden, Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea maintain considerably higher charges than in Brent which can potentially lead to some displacement of parking into Brent at the borders. Increases to both on and off-street parking charges consistent with neighbouring boroughs would address this problem, whilst also addressing the environmental and congestion issues, set out below.
- 3.2 Brent currently charges £1.20/hour for on-street parking – some 30-40p cheaper per hour than comparable neighbouring boroughs. The charges made in other boroughs vary as set out in the appendix B to this report. Officers have considered the average charges per hour to make comparison easier. These include £1.60/hour in Hammersmith and Fulham, £1.80/hour in Camden, £0.50 - £3.00/hour in Kensington and Chelsea (£1.75/hr average) and up to £4.00/hour in Westminster (£2.60/hr average).
- 3.3 A possible problem with increasing charges is that it can have an adverse impact on businesses as people may be less inclined to use their local shops. Whilst the council would prefer people to travel by other means, the local shops provide an important focus for the community as well as offering local services, jobs and acting as a catalyst and support for other business activity.
- 3.4 The existing charges allow motorists to park for up to 3 hours at the same basic hourly rate.
- 3.5 This proposal maintains the existing charges for less than one hour stays but increases them for longer stays. This will help to promote a turnover of bays and this should help increase retail trade providing more people the opportunity to stop and shop.
- 3.6 Officers therefore propose to increase the current parking charges as set out in Section 4 of this report. The Traffic Regulation Orders will need to be advertised as detailed in this report. The Director of Environment and Culture will be requested to resolve any minor objections to the TRO's should they be received. However, should there be any major objections then a report will

need to be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee identifying a clear way forward.

- 3.7 The Council has a system whereby visitor parking permits (scratch cards) are available to enable residents' visitors to park all day in a resident permit holder bay. Visitor permits are validated by scratching out the day and month, and entering the motor vehicle registration number. They are supplied in books of 10 permits at £5 per book. A maximum of 15 books per year per household are supplied at this price; thereafter the cost per book £10. To prevent loss or theft visitors' permits have to be collected in person from the Parking Shop. Visitors parking permits are validated by scratching out the date and entering the motor vehicle registration number on the permit. Details of the terms and conditions of use of the permits are shown on the permit.
- 3.8 The scratch cards are due to be increased in price as the current charge is comparatively very low for all day parking and is open to abuse. The wide use of scratch cards is also giving rise to complaints that residents bays are occupied by scratch cards users. More details are set out in Section 4 of this report. There has been no increase in scratch cards since 1997.

4 Financial implications

- 4.1 A recent High Court decision, *Barnet v Moses*, has resulted in Brent being unable to enforce most outstanding PCN's issued before 15th August 2006. The financial implications for this council are that it will lose about £1.1 m of income from PCN's which we would have expected to collect prior to 15th August 2006 and will now not be able to collect or pursue. In addition, it is expected that some motorists will delay paying in the hope the council will not seek to collect. Whilst the council will seek to collect on notices on and after the 15th August 2006, it is expected that due to the added number of non-payments, the amount of time and effort will rise and so another £0.3 to £0.5m could be lost in costs or added non-payments. Therefore the total losses as a result of this decision are likely to be in the order of £1.5 although the actual losses will not be known until 2007/08 financial year.

Parking Charges

- 4.2 The Highways Committee agreed significant increases to off-street car parking charges in Brent on 25 January 2006, these charges were effective across the borough in March 2006. These charges are illustrated in the following table 4.3

The average increase was 134%

Duration	Charges before March 2006	Charges from March 2006	Percentage Increase
1 Hour	£0.30	£0.50	67%
2 Hours	£0.50	£1.00	100%
3 Hours	£0.90	£1.50	67%
4 Hours	£1.00	£3.00	300%

- 4.3 The number of Fixed Penalty Notices is on the decrease due to changing public behaviour with regard to the use of the car and the incentive to park legally. In addition, there is a government review on parking fines for overstaying at meters and other minor parking infringements and future reviews of the one hour free parking trials. The impact of such changes is expected to result in reduced income for the Parking Service.
- 4.4 Appendix A gives information on adjacent borough's on street parking charges. These vary greatly from area to area however for comparisons sake the table below gives simplified average information. The average figure has been calculated by taking the average of highest and lowest hourly rates in each authority as a crude representation of the average. The table below shows how the proposed average figure compares with other authorities. It is lower than all surrounding authorities with the exception of Ealing.

On Street Only		Brent's Proposal Converted to Approx Average Figure	% Variance compared with Brent
Table of Average Per Hour Parking Charge Compared with Adjacent Boroughs			
Borough	£/hr	Proposed	
	Existing	£ 1.22	
Brent	£ 1.10		
Barnet	£ 1.35		+11%
K and C	£ 1.75		+43%
Westminster	£ 2.60		+113%
Camden	£ 1.80		+48%
Ealing	£ 0.60		-51%
Harrow	£ 1.35		+11%
H & Fulham	£ 1.60		+31%

- 4.5 Proposed parking charges from 1st April 2007 or as soon after that date as practical:

On-Street Parking Charges:

Current Charges	Proposed Changes
30p for 20 minutes	Unchanged
60p for 40 minutes	Unchanged
£1.20 for 1 hour	£1.50 for 1 hour
£2.60 for 2 hours	£3.30 for 2 hours
£4.00 for 4 hours	£5.00 for 4 hours

On-street parking charges

Off-Street Parking Charges:

Existing Charge	Proposed Charge
50p for 1 hour	50p for 1 hour
£1.00 for 2 hours	£1.50 for 2 hours
£1.50 for 3 hours	£2.50 for 3 hours
£3.00 for 4 hours or more	£5.00 for 4 hours or more

Proposed off-street parking charge increases

The on and off street charges are not increased for short stays to help promote turnover of spaces.

Increasing the cost of visitor parking permit scratch cards.

- 4.6 There has been no increase in scratch cards since 1997. As discussed in Section 3, visitor parking permit scratch cards are due to be increased in price as the current charge is too low to park for a day and is open to abuse. Officers propose that the charge should be increased to £1.00 (or £10 for a book of ten). After a household has purchased a maximum of 15 books the existing price doubles to £10 and therefore to remain consistent officers also propose increasing this to £20 in future.
- 4.7 The table below shows the likely impact of the increases on the boroughs revenue from the parking account:

Additional revenue from increasing scratch cards	£164,280
Additional revenue from increasing on-street parking	£403,000
Additional revenue from increasing off-street parking	£119,600
Potential Additional (New) Income	£686,880

The above figures are linear projections based on off street parking income for 2005/6 and should be regarded as indicative only as the actual income will depend on driver behaviour and other factors.

- 4.8 The proposed increases in parking charges set out above will have a positive effect on the Council's income to the parking account. The anticipated increase in income will improve the ability of the Council to maintain the Controlled Parking Zone schemes and carry out further transportation schemes. It will also improve the Council's ability to attract other funds from external organisations, particularly with regard to match funding schemes. It will also serve to offset some of the losses resulting from the Moses judgement.

Free First 30 or 60 Minutes' Parking in Town Centres

- 4.9 Offering a period of free parking across the borough, as in Preston Road, Bridge Road – Wembley, Cumberland Avenue and neighbouring roads in Park Royal, will significantly reduce the on and off-street and parking income. It is estimated this could reduce on and off street parking income by £1.5m and the parking enforcement income could also decrease by £1m. Officers advise that any form of free parking is very difficult to enforce, and open to abuse. The current trend in parking income favours on and off street parking as PCNs are on the decline, mainly due to greater compliance by car users. This report has not taken into consideration the impact of this loss of income. Officers suggest that expanding free on and off street parking areas would further exasperate an anomalous situation.
- 4.10 Expanding these areas would be unfair and create further inconsistencies. Turnover in these areas is low and spaces are in short supply.

5 Legal implications

- 5.1 Any changes to the existing parking charges and charges for parking permits require alterations to the current Traffic Orders under Sections 45, 46 and 46a of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The statutory processes are set out by the Secretary of State
- 5.2 The changes in parking charges will require a period of statutory consultation which includes a time where comments and objections can be received. These objections can be considered by the Director of Environment and Culture if the Executive so authorises if they are considered to be of a minor nature under delegated powers but it is felt to be appropriate for major objections to be reported back to the Executive to be resolved.
- 5.3 Any special treatment to one area of the borough (for example providing free on-street parking to visitors in one part of the borough) which differs from the approach taken elsewhere could be perceived as an inconsistent approach by the Council and therefore may result in objections to the relevant TROs or even a legal challenge by way of judicial review on the grounds of inconsistency.

6 Diversity implications

- 6.1 There are no diversity implications arising from this report.

7 Staffing / accommodation implications

- 7.1 The proposed changes to the existing Traffic Regulation Orders will be undertaken using existing staffing resources from Transportation and Streetcare Service Units.

Background Papers

Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
Brent Council's 'Parking Strategy' 2002
Highways (Special) Committee – January 2003
Voucher & Parking Charges Review – January 2005
Review of Charges in Brents Car Parks – July 2005

Contact Officers

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