



## London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

### COMMUNITY SAFETY, ENVIRONMENT & RESIDENTS SERVICES POLICY & ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

2<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER 2014

#### RESIDENTS' VISITOR PARKING OPTIONS

#### Report of the Executive Director for Transport & Technical Services

#### Open Report

**Classification:** For PAC Review & Comment

**Key Decision:** No

**Wards Affected:** All

**Accountable Executive Director:** Nigel Pallace, Bi-Borough Director, Transport & Technical Services

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council operates a Smart Visitor Permit scheme for use by residents' visitors. This report outlines the current system and discusses options for altering the system.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the report be noted and that the Committee consider whether recommendations should be made to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Residents Services.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2007, the new match day scheme in Zones X & Y initiated the need for a new visitor permit scheme. An electronic RFID (radio frequency identification) device was chosen and the necessary software developed by Parkmobile. The Smart Visitor Permit (SVP) offered additional parking benefits for residents' visitors compared with the pay & display ticket system. These benefits included; exemption from maximum stay rules, per-minute charging at a lower rate and a half price charging for visitors of disabled people. The SVP can be activated and deactivated online, by mobile telephone and land line, following a simple verification process.

- 3.2 The accounts associated with the SVP cards are topped up online or by telephone in a manner that is akin to the oyster card successfully used on London's transport network. A bespoke IVR (interactive voice response) telephony system was developed with ParkMobile capable of recognising the mobile or land line used to call thereby making the activation/ deactivation process as easy to use as possible.
- 3.3 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) ascertain whether the permit has been activated by scanning or entering the permit details into a handheld computer. Within seconds, the CEO receives a message advising as to whether the permit is activated or not.
- 3.4 The SVP offers users a reduced rate on the regular Pay & Display rates. The reduced rate is currently £1.80 in all zones compared to the £2.40 or £2.80 currently being charged for Pay & Display. The SVP also offers further discounts to visitors of those residents who are registered disabled. At present this discount is offered at 90 pence per hour on the first 240 hours each year.

#### **4. PRESENT PARKING PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BOROUGH**

- 4.1 The SVP scheme was gradually introduced borough-wide zone-by-zone between 2007 and 2012. Presently 13,015 SVPs are registered and used throughout the borough. Whilst during the roll-out process the Council was receiving some complaints relating to how the system worked that were addressed, the number of complaints has decreased significantly to around 1 or 2 per month, mostly relating to individual concerns that are easily resolved.
- 4.2 The 2012/13 fiscal year was the first year where borough-wide data was available with revenue being £534, 395. Revenue for the 2013/14 year increased to £901,724. The total number of parking transactions over the period May 2013 to May 2014 was 144,802, with an average duration of 225 minutes (3.75 hours). These statistics suggest an increase in the uptake of the SVP, which corresponds with Pay & Park who issue 200 - 350 new SVPs each month. The data would also SVPs are being used more frequently with 12,000 – 12,300 parking sessions a month. This equates to around 560 SVP parking sessions per controlled parking day (5.5 CPZ days per 7 day week on average in the borough).
- 4.3 There are around 1100 pay and display ticket machines in the borough approaching the end of their serviceable life. The technology is dated and current systems offer cashless transactions through pay-by-phone or machines that accept credit/debit cards. Officers are currently trialling card payment machines in Zone K and will initiate a trial of phone payment in Zone E by the end of 2014. These trials will inform a future decision on the technology that the Council will adopt going forward.
- 4.4 The outcomes of these trials will be compared with one another qualitatively (e.g. feedback from users) as well as quantitatively (e.g. data analysis relating to relative costs, feasibility and security). It would be pertinent to look at alternatives to the SVP as part of these proposals. For example, Westminster City Council will be introducing an electronic discounted visitor card to be

used with their Parkeon supplied ticket machines from November 2014. Westminster expect this scheme will replace the existing scratch card system which only accounts for 0.01% of all parking sessions. Any future residents' visitor parking scheme would be most economically viable as part of a fully-integrated solution, rather than as a 'stand-alone' system.

- 4.5 If the Council was to investigate a replacement to the SVP scheme to be introduced prior to, and independently of any borough-wide parking payment system then it may not easily integrate with any future replacement for the Council's stock of ticket machines..
- 4.6 In the meantime, a number of improvements could be made to the current SVP scheme as detailed below.

## **5. PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE THE EXISTING SVP SCHEME**

### **Auto-top up:**

- 5.1 One of the main criticism that residents have expressed in the past with regards to the Smart Visitor Permit (SVP) has been that they have to remember to top-up credit on the SVP system before their visitors arrive, if the credit on the account is low. In response we propose to offer an automatic top-up payment facility which residents will be able to opt in (or out) of easily.

### **Operating the SVP as pre-pay:**

- 5.2 Officers could also investigate whether the SVP system should be converted to a pre-pay system, whereby a set amount of parking time is purchased initially, rather than having to start and stop the parking session. This change would ensure that the SVP system operates in a similar fashion to the ticket machines and will no longer require residents' visitors to remember to stop the parking session. As part of this scheme the Council could also include an SMS message reminder service to inform users that their parking session is shortly to expire, and that they may wish to extend their parking session. It is likely that this service would be chargeable (around 10p per text message), and users would be able to opt in or out.

### **Residents' visitors paying with their own credit cards:**

- 5.3 Where residents wish for their visitors to pay for their own discounted parking, the SVP system could be amended to accept one off card payments from 3<sup>rd</sup> parties (this would include a verification process to ensure that the visitor is entitled to discounted parking). This would be especially useful where workmen, or home carers are required to park when visiting residents.

### **Costs and timescales:**

- 5.4 The three above amendments to the SVP system would cost in the region of £15,000 in IT changes, user testing and amendments to forms and information booklets. The changes would address the main concerns expressed by residents about the current SVP scheme. It would take approximately 6 – 8 months to implement these changes.

## 6. INVESTIGATING LONG TERM RESIDENTS' VISITORS VOUCHER SCHEME SOLUTIONS

6.1 In the long term there are three main potential alternatives to the SVP system. An overview of each of the 3 alternatives is presented below together with the advantages and disadvantages.

### **Scratch cards**

6.2 Officers have looked into the use of scratch cards for residents' visitors. This option is vulnerable to fraud (especially with low cost, high-spec colour printers, hologram makers and computer programmes easily available). Scratch cards also have a high administrative cost and many authorities (e.g. Islington, Camden and Westminster) are moving away from the use of scratch cards due to residents' complaints about having to apply in person at Council offices, with proof of residence in the borough each time they want to apply for a new batch of scratch cards. Other authorities also report that many visitors often scratch off the wrong day/date/time and therefore receive a PCN, which adds to the reasons why London boroughs are moving away from scratch cards.

6.3 *Advantages:*

- Scratch cards have been used in the past and are fairly easy for users to understand
- When a residents purchases a booklet they can issue the scratch cards for multiple vehicles at the same time

6.4 *Disadvantages:*

- Scratch cards are being phased out in a number of boroughs due to the ease in which they can be copied and fake versions created, and also due to the administrative burden and delays for the issuance of the vouchers to residents.
- They allow the resident to use the scratch cards for multiple visitors cars to park at the same time. This can dramatically increase parking stress and prevent other residents from parking, therefore can negate the positive impacts of parking controls. As a result parking vouchers have generally been favoured in outer London boroughs where parking stress is generally lower than inner London
- The scratch cards do not require any form of corresponding vehicle registration. This allows the cards to be used in any vehicle and can lead to the passes being passed on.
- Enforcement of cars using scratch cards is significantly more challenging as the cards can be manipulated or forged. This may lead to considerably more challenges to issued PCNs which may increase the associated costs of enforcement.

### **Ticket Machine Cards**

6.5 This is a newer technology that has become available as the overall ticket machine technology has improved, and therefore manufacturers may be able

to develop bespoke solutions as part of any tender process. Residents would be able to apply for a discount card or, a unique code generator that they then use at the ticket machine in order to receive their visitors parking at a reduced rate. Ticket machine cards will be launched in Westminster in November 2014.

6.6 *Advantages:*

- This technology is easily accessible and does not require remembering to activate or deactivate, as it still requires a pay & display ticket, albeit one that provides an added discount
- The management system is more simple as the visitor parking is tied into the same system as the general Pay & Display parking
- With the technology the council can monitor usage and easily place restrictions on the number of vehicles that can receive the discounted rate
- Advertising the scheme should be easier and public awareness higher as visitors and residents will use the ticket machines already

6.7 *Disadvantages:*

- This option requires that the current ticket machines on-street are replaced with newer models that can incorporate this technology
- There would be additional administrative requirements associated with managing the discount cards or code generators.
- The scheme would still require the visitor to go to a physical ticket machines in order to pay for their parking.

### **Phone Payment Passes**

6.8 The exact details of this option will again depend on the provider and would require further detailed investigation, however, the option works based on the residents' user account. When residents' register for an account verification can be carried out to determine if they are also eligible for an account with a discounted rate. When visitors park the resident account holder can activate the parking session and register the visitors car's licence plate to their account.

6.9 LB of Camden operates an e-permits system which allow residents' and visitors' to use visitor parking permits without needing to display a physical permit in the vehicle. Instead, CEOs carry out checks using the vehicle registration number. This can present problems when vehicles are parked very close together, and therefore can make enforcement of CPZs less efficient because it takes longer for vehicle checks to be completed, when compared with checking vehicle windscreens. This can then lead to complaints from residents and local businesses about enforcement not being effective.

6.10 *Advantages:*

- The phone option does not require users to have any form of hardware or physical permit to be able to receive the visitor discount
- With the technology managing accounts and monitoring restrictions on the number of usages etc. will be quicker and simpler

- With the system tied into the same provider as regular phone payment Pay & Display there is one provider covering both
- Visitors would be able to top up their parking without having to return to their vehicle, via the mobile phone or internet platform

6.11 *Disadvantages:*

- This system requires users to have a mobile phone or internet readily available to manage the parking system
- Users could be required to deactivate their service at the end of their stay, this could make the system more complicated and lead to complaints
- Enforcement processes may need to be amended and may become more expensive
- CEOs may experience IT/comms 'black-spots' which may impact enforcement

**7. CONCLUSION**

7.1 The current SVP scheme is well used and modifications can be made in the short term to address most of the concerns expressed by residents. In the long term there are opportunities to introduce more flexible systems but this should be explored as part of the strategy for replacing the stock of ticket machines.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000**  
**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT**

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1.	None		