

# Overview and Scrutiny Challenge Session Report

The extent to which the council's parking permit policy influences people's behaviour

13/12/2021



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## Chairs Foreword

I am pleased to present this report which focuses on understanding how the council's parking permit policy influences resident behaviour.

Tower Hamlets has a densely growing population projected to reach approximately 360,000 by 2027 and the use transport remains at the heart of how we live our lives. It helps people to get to work, stay in touch with friends and family, contribute to society and provides access to vital services like healthcare.

The British Parking Association report<sup>1</sup> suggests that parking continues to frustrate both drivers and no-drivers alike, and crucially the industry recognises that parking remains an important transport component in people's everyday life, with many holding opposing (for and against) views on the subject.

This report considers some of the challenges that council's Parking and Mobility Service face on managing the highway and traffic. It further acknowledges that how parking is delivered in the future will undoubtedly evolve. With the effects of the Covid-19 we could see less demand if more people continue to work from home, but equally there are significant new developments and infrastructure project planned in the borough over the next decade and likely to impact parking.

The report also seeks to examine the impact of the certain influences such as ULEZ expansion, car free developments, Permit Transfer Scheme, hotspot areas and the switch to electric vehicles as we try and tackle the climate emergency. We know that attitudes towards congestion, safety and the environment will also play its part as they all related to and can influence parking.

This challenge session provided the Overview and Scrutiny Committee an opportunity to scrutinise how robust and sustainable is the council's approach to parking and traffic management. It clear from the evidence heard that parking is an integral element of not only the transport strategy but many of the other council's priorities and aspirations. The Committee has made eight recommendations and hopes that the Mayor and Cabinet take these forward and work with Overview and Scrutiny to ensure that the council has a robust and sustainable parking and traffic management policy for years to come.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members, officers and external partners who attended and supported the discussion, provided valuable insights and shaped the recommendations of this report.

**Cllr Faroque Ahmed**  
**Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety**



<sup>1</sup> [BPA Public Perceptions of Parking Dec2020](#)

## Summary of Recommendations

<b>R1</b>	<p>Council's Parking and Mobility Services to review its parking and permit policies to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) It embeds a clearly documented approach for its policies such as pricing, control parking zones, permit schemes in order to manage the highway and parking demand; and</li> <li>(b) It should also detail how these are related or connected to the other council priorities such as climate change, air quality and liveable and school streets.</li> </ul>
<b>R2</b>	<p>Council's Parking and Mobility Services to incorporate health impact assessments alongside the equality considerations when reviewing following options such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Reviewing business permit spaces and how multi-use bays can be better utilised to support the local post pandemic economy;</li> <li>(b) Selective use of removal of individual space markings within bays (where there is a low footfall and high demand for parking) in order to support capacity within a limited footprint; and</li> <li>(c) Selective application for increasing the use of kerb parking where footways are unusually wide, increasing carriageway width and in some cases allowing the removal of yellow lines bays (where there is a low footfall and high demand for parking) in order to support capacity within a limited footprint.</li> </ul>
<b>R3</b>	<p>Council's Parking and Mobility Services to consider making all parking spaces next to Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points reserved for electric vehicles only.</p>
<b>R4</b>	<p>Council's Parking and Mobility Services to review the current Permit Transfer Scheme to facilitate more flexibility (including changing the 28 day rule) to residents who require a short pause/break from vehicle ownership and retain the right of accessing the permit when they choose to purchase the vehicle.</p>
<b>R5</b>	<p>Council's Parking and Mobility Services to extend the provision for permit and offer a special permit for those residents who are moving to car free developments but require daily usage of their vehicle for their employment such as taxis and mobile care workers.</p>
<b>R6</b>	<p>Council's Parking and Mobility Services to target and strengthen its civil enforcement officers (CEO) monitoring activities in hotspot areas for example vehicle repair establishments through the use of sanctions such as ASB orders and where necessary installing temporary CCTVs to incentivise behaviour change.</p>
<b>R7</b>	<p>Council's Parking and Mobility Services to enhance its emission based pricing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) setting its pricing policy over a longer term for example three years to help influence buyer behaviour make the change towards lower emission vehicles; and</li> <li>(b) over medium to longer term, set and review milestones for reducing discounts offered to lower emission vehicles as their numbers increases, and with higher emission, increase charges over a longer period to better incentivise what will be a much smaller number, to transition to low or no emission.</li> </ul>
<b>R8</b>	<p>Council's Parking and Mobility Services to consider expanding the use of car clubs (EV's) as a single borough wide solution, thus reducing further need for costly public service permits and encourage other large employers within the borough to sign up with</p>

the scheme such as home care providers.
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## Reason for Enquiry

- 1.1. In October 2019 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) held a spotlight on the council's Transport Strategy 2019-2041, which included some discussion and actions on council's Parking Services<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.2. As part of the OSC's work programme 2021/22<sup>3</sup>, the committee looks to build on the spotlight review they undertook in 2019, focussing in more detail on the council's Parking Services.
- 1.3. The Committee wanted to better understand:
  - how the council's current parking permit scheme influences people's behaviour on parking;
  - the likely impact on the scheme and parking in general as a result of more planned car free dwellings, expansion of London's ULEZ boundaries, residents' drive and motivation to switch to electric vehicles; and
  - any learning from neighbouring authorities and experts as part of developing a longer-term sustainable parking solutions.

## Methodology

- 2.1. This challenge session was chaired by Cllr Faroque Ahmed Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety and took place on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021.
- 2.2. The Committee heard from the Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm supported by council officers holding responsibility for the Parking Service, and external witnesses including Capital Traffic Management and Parking Ltd and London Borough of Hackney.
- 2.3. The scope of the challenge session sets out the following key questions:
  - How will the council manage the demand for parking provision with the projected population growth to reach 361,400 by 2027 and also support post pandemic business growth?
  - How will the council continue to maintain its current levels of parking surplus given the extrinsic change factors such as:  
Mayor of London's ULEZ expansion scheme coming into force on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021; more planned car free dwellings; drop in footfall from passing trade for businesses and work from home culture; and inflationary costs to public transport
  - How has the council encouraged residents and businesses to switch to EV's and ensure they understand the implications for ULEZ expansion scheme and any insights that helps to understand residents behaviour and receptiveness to change, particularly those from lower economic background?
  - What has been the feedback from residents to date? How well is the transfer scheme working and level of monitoring in place to detect and manage online fraud?

<sup>2</sup> [Council's Transport Strategy](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021/22](#)

- Learning from others on how they use parking to achieve other key priorities including reduction of air pollution, encouraging health lifestyles, prioritising economic recovery, reducing the reliance on cars.

#### 2.4. Members in Attendance

Councillor Faroque Ahmed	Scrutiny Lead for Environment and Community Safety
Councillor Mohammed Pappu	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair
Councillor Bex White	OSC Member
Councillor Gabriela Salva-Macallan	OSC Member
Councillor Leema Qureshi	OSC Member
Councillor Marc Francis	OSC Member
Halima Islam	OSC Member
James Peter Wilson	OSC Member
Councillor Kahar Chowdhury	Cabinet Members for Highways and Public Realm
Councillor Kabir Ahmed	Ward Councillor

#### Evidence heard from witnesses, guests and council officers

David Pye	Director, Capital Traffic Management & Parking Ltd
Gossica Anichebe	Interim Policy and Programme Manager for Parking Service – Hackney Council
Dan Jones	Director of Public Realm
Michael Darby	Head of Service, Parking and Mobility Services

#### Challenge Session supported by

Filuck Miah	Strategy and Policy officer, Corporate
Daniel Kerr	Strategy and Policy Manager, Corporate

## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

Council's Parking and Mobility Services to review its parking and permit policies to ensure that:

- It embeds a clearly documented approach for its policies such as pricing, control parking zones, permit schemes in order to manage the highway and parking demand; and
- It should also detail how these are related or connected to the other council priorities such as climate change, air quality and liveable and school streets.

- 3.1. The Committee received a presentation from the Parking and Mobility Service's approach to the borough's parking and its permit policy and subsequently raised questions about the aims of the policy. The Committee felt that some of the policy areas may be mutually exclusive comparing the example of reduced vehicle usage versus vehicle ownership and the challenge that this brings on vehicles being parked in public space for longer period of time. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm explained that the rationale for reducing vehicle usage is part of the council's objective for more active travel and involves promoting this through various linked schemes including school and liveable streets to primarily support reducing in borough shorter vehicle journeys and tackle the climate emergency.

- 3.2. The Committee also heard from Hackney Council's Interim Policy and Programme Manager for Parking Services who outlined their Parking and Enforcement Plan (PEP), indicating that the PEP is their principle policy and strategy document for parking services, detailing a range of policies, plans and vision for the service for five years and sets out objectives and recommendations on what and how they will delivering these and the impact on different stakeholder groups in Hackney.
- 3.3. Council officers acknowledged that further work needs to be undertaken to develop written policies to their parking approach such as pricing, control parking zones (CPZ) in order to support how they manage the demand of the highway and managing traffic whilst linking how the parking policy approach will also address the strategic aims set out within the council's Transport Strategy but also contextually for other key priorities and strategies such as new car free developments on the Isle of Dogs.

### **Recommendation 2**

Council's Parking and Mobility Services to incorporate health impact assessments alongside the equality considerations when reviewing following options such as:

- (a) Reviewing business permit spaces and how multi-use bays can be better utilised to support the local post pandemic economy;
- (b) Selective use of removal of individual space markings within bays (where there is a low footfall and high demand for parking) in order to support capacity within a limited footprint; and
- (c) Selective application for increasing the use of kerb parking where footways are unusually wide, increasing carriageway width and in some cases allowing the removal of yellow lines bays (where there is a low footfall and high demand for parking) in order to support capacity within a limited footprint.

- 4.1. The Committee enquired if the council has sufficient capacity to manage the number of vehicles in the borough or not and further questioned how the policy expects to address the issue. The Committee felt that some of the criteria for parking in neighbouring mini zones were overly complex, unnecessary and difficult to interpret. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that managing capacity using mini zones helps to free up spaces next to the person's property, home or street and reduce shorter journeys which remains a key objective for the scheme. The Cabinet Member further outlined that the overall number of parking spaces generally equated to a similar numbers for allocated parking permits but acknowledged that there is a variance in terms of demand and supply for parking across the borough.
- 4.2. The Committee sought clarity on the impact on the overall parking capacity as a result of rolling out the Traffic Management Orders (TMO) for housing estates. The service confirmed that control parking on estates is likely to implemented in order to be compliant with health and safety requirements on access points but despite consultations some of the housing estates' residents were resistance to its implementation. The service indicated that it is likely to impact on parking capacity and may lead to some spill over to surrounding areas, for which residents will need to either apply for a parking permit or use casual parking. The service could not qualify further the specific level of impact on parking capacity but advised that they will monitor the situation as they go through process.
- 4.3. The Committee heard from the Director of Capital Traffic Management and Parking Limited who outlined on how local authorities could improve the management parking on a limited footprint and how the council could develop its parking capacity to address some of the parking pressures which included a review of the use of business permit spaces and multi-use bays to support local businesses, changing the use of 'T' marking within bays at specific

locations where there is high demand for parking and low footfall and also where kerb space for parking could be increased using unusually wide footways.

- 4.4. The Committee acknowledged that the above suggestions could help to improve managing the supply for parking demand but also felt that it was important on the impact this would have on other public space users, potentially making streets less permeable and forcing pedestrians, wheelchair users and those with push chairs being only able to cross (even on the quiet roads) at designated crossing points.

### **Recommendation 3**

Council's Parking and Mobility Services to consider making all parking spaces next to Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points reserved for electric vehicles only.

- 5.1. The Committee sought clarity on the number of electric vehicle charging bays as the service presentation suggested 98 but only 23 are dedicated electric vehicle charging bays and questioned if this implies that many of the vehicle parking bays next to electric charging points are not reserved for electric vehicles. The Committee were concerned that the low number of available dedicated bays may dissuade people from investing in electric vehicles because of access issues and not having sufficient dedicated car charging bays reserved for electric vehicles.
- 5.2. The Cabinet Member confirmed that remaining 75 bays are currently not dedicated electric vehicle bays but that the service intends to explore this in the near future as they will need to review the different types of charging points (fast and slow) and charges in the market. There are also further bids in place for charging points, and the council expects between 150-250 fast charging points for 2022/23 on more dedicated bays. The Cabinet Member further confirmed that this municipal year they will be allocating some of the 150 approved electric vehicle charges for dedicated bays.

### **Recommendation 4**

Council's Parking and Mobility Services to review the current Permit Transfer Scheme to facilitate more flexibility (including changing the 28 day rule) to residents who require a short pause/break from vehicle ownership and retain the right of accessing the permit when they choose to purchase the vehicle.

- 6.1. The Committee cited Isle of Dogs as an area of high density of car free developments, despite this, residents have raised concerns on the high number of Permit Transfer Scheme (PTS) being approved and issued adding to further local parking pressures. The Committee asked the service how they intend to address the residents' concerns and reduce parking pressures in the area.
- 6.2. The Committee's view is that there is lack of flexibility with the PTS policy as it does not allow residents to have a break from owning a vehicle (fear of losing their right to a permit). The Committee feels that the council should review this part of the PTS policy to accommodate more flexibility in supporting residents to have break from vehicle ownership for at least six months to a year and not have to worry about losing their right to a permit.
- 6.3. The Committee also examined how the PTS policy can accommodate people who were living in an overcrowded situation but were not the primary tenants such as residents in co-habiting or families living with parents. The Cabinet Member advised the Committee that where there is a permit this has already been transferred and where there are overcrowding issues the PTS policy is designed to manage the capacity and availability of parking spaces and its currently restricted to overcrowded residents moving to a larger property.

- 6.4. The service added that currently there is a strict criteria for the PTS which was reviewed in 2018 to factor situations where the residents may have been placed outside of the borough on a temporary basis and then returned later on. The 28 days criteria was set up to help people change their car for another one within a prescribed time frame, but the service indicated that they would take this aspect of the PTS under review in order to accommodate residents needs and offer a more flexibility with some of the requirements.
- 6.5. The service informed the Committee that the PTS was not designed to accommodate residents in co-habiting situation or families living with their parents occupying a single room but looking to move out to a larger dwelling of their own. However the Cabinet Member has indicated that they would take this into consideration when they look review the PTS in the near future.
- 6.6. The Committee acknowledged that the setup of the PTS was a compromise but one which was never satisfactory or fair to only allow overcrowded families to be eligible. The Committee felt that the PTS could conversely support residents who were downsizing as this would help to free up larger properties, alleviate overcrowding issues and enables other families to move into those properties.
- 6.7. The Committee scrutinised the issue of parity between social housing tenants and private owner dwellings on the same development in which developers would offer the sale of parking space at a significant premium to private owner dwellings, but this was not an option offered or available to social tenants. Therefore the Committee felt that a review of the PTS should also consider resolving any anomalies which may as a result lead to some additional people qualifying.

#### **Recommendation 5**

Council's Parking and Mobility Services to extend the provision for permit and offer a special permit for those residents who are moving to car free developments but require daily usage of their vehicle for their employment such as taxis and mobile care workers

- 7.1. The Committee enquired on the level of involvement that the service has in relation to the council's infrastructure or improvement projects such as Community Infrastructure Levy or Section 106 agreements impacting the highway, traffic and parking and if the service had any veto powers to reject planning applications based on parking requirements.
- 7.2. The service informed that all major infrastructure or improvement projects such as schools and leisure centres that is likely to impact the highway will involve highways, traffic and parking team in some capacity, where appropriate consulted upon (become part of the project team) to determine likelihood of impact on existing parking or the feasibility for incorporating new parking into development schemes. The service confirmed that they are only notified of the successful planning applications.
- 7.3. The Committee questioned the service on how it intends to address some of the challenges that car free developments add to particular groups such as minicab drivers, delivery drivers and mobile care workers who use their vehicle for work purposes. The Committee also scrutinised the council's long term thinking on demand for future parking spaces and how local parking pressure will be managed given that petrol and diesel cars will be obsolete in the next decade replaced by an increasing number of electric vehicles, situated alongside more car free developments.
- 7.4. The Committee cited Isle of Dogs and inferred that being car free is only applied to social housing tenants and not privately owned dwellings who have dedicated underground

parking spaces available to them and that many of these underground parking spaces are sitting empty thus adding to parking pressures to the surrounding highway. The Committee's view is that more discussion on parking spaces with developers needs to happen at the earlier stage of planning in order to alleviate some of the highway parking pressures issues.

- 7.5. The Committee also enquired to see if the service had considered using specific permits for people such as those who hold Public Carriage Office (PCO) licence, utilities or mobile care workers who use their vehicle for everyday work purposes. The Committee accepts that this approach would require certain restrictions to prevent PTS abuse and could include an initial period of six months allowed and thereafter, individuals would need to demonstrate a certain amount of income from that source. The Committee also suggested exploring dedicated space via TMO process for cycle delivery couriers to support the wider climate agenda.

#### **Recommendation 6**

Council's Parking and Mobility Services to target and strengthen its civil enforcement officers (CEO) monitoring activities in hotspot areas for example vehicle repair establishments through the use of sanctions such as ASB orders and where necessary installing temporary CCTVs to incentivise behaviour change.

- 8.1. The Committee scrutinised the level of monitoring taking place by civil enforcement officers (CEO) on parking bays which are situated in hotspot areas and largely occupied by vehicle repair businesses where there has been visible evidence that both signage and road markings have been tampered with and that vehicle registrations plates are often concealed thus potentially avoiding fixed penalty notice (FPN). Furthermore local residents also felt that the hotspot areas were unsightly, and that it also invited other antisocial behaviours (ASB).
- 8.2. The service outlined that extensive work had been undertaken with local vehicle repair establishments including creating space for more dedicated bays to support the business, but they would still require a permit. Equally the service responded to using ASB orders on a local garage who consistently disregarding the warnings. The services indicated that these are monitored by CEO and reported back to the service. The Cabinet Member added that they will review the hotspot areas and continue with target monitoring until the situation is resolved.

#### **Recommendation 7**

Council's Parking and Mobility Services to enhance its emission based pricing:

- (a) setting its pricing policy over a longer term for example three years to help influence buyer behaviour make the change towards lower emission vehicles; and
- (b) over medium to longer term, set and review milestones for reducing discounts offered to lower emission vehicles as their numbers increases, and with higher emission, increase charges over a longer period to better incentivise what will be a much smaller number, to transition to low or no emission.

- 9.1. The Council's Parking and Mobility Service outlined its pricing structure including permit pricing incentives for lower emission vehicle, introduction of surcharge for diesel vehicles for causal parking, permit surcharge for diesel vehicles, introduction of permit surcharge for second and third permit per household. Additionally, the service suspended a number of the bays for businesses to support (post pandemic) outdoor dining and changed some of the restrictions to support local businesses. The Committee acknowledged in principle that it

supports the some of the measures but with the caveat that the more complicated a system becomes the more this will lead to increased costs on the residents and that this should be taken into consideration.

- 9.2. A ward Councillor debated the point that poorer sections of community could be discriminated in not being able to afford the electric vehicles given that they are currently priced higher than the petrol vehicles and having charges that are higher for petrol vehicles will disproportionately impact poor sections of the community.
- 9.3. Hackney Council's Interim Policy and Programme Manager for Parking Services informed that their pricing approach is based over a longer term so that residents can see what they are likely to pay three and help to influence buyer behaviour in changing to a lower emissions vehicle. The Director of Capital Traffic Management and Parking Limited suggests using a sliding scale emissions based pricing structure as this helps to reduce discounts offered to lower emission vehicles as their numbers increase, and conversely higher emission vehicles have increased charges over a longer period to better incentivise to transition to low or no emissions vehicle. This option also enables the council to monitor the change in car ownership, usage through the pay by phone system and facilitates each year's tariff review and the discount that could be applied so that over time this brings it back into line as car ownership changes.

#### **Recommendation 8**

Council's Parking and Mobility Services to consider expanding the use of car clubs (EV's) as a single borough wide solution, thus reducing further need for costly public service permits and encourage other large employers within the borough to sign up with the scheme such as home care providers.

- 10.1. The Committee raised the issue of sometimes the car clubs impact resident parking adversely by taking up more spaces in resident parking bays and creating additional parking pressures for some areas. The Cabinet Member confirmed that car clubs are arrangements schemes across many of the London boroughs and are used to incentivise the reduction of outright car ownership and used on a needs basis.
- 10.2. Hackney Council's Interim Policy and Programme Manager for Parking Services informed the Committee that their approach on the use car clubs supports some of their car free developments agenda and encourages people to use these to use thee to helps reduce parking pressures. Whilst the Director of Capital Traffic Management and Parking Limited outlined the benefits of using a single source car club provider allowing the council to hold a strong position to set the standards, vehicle types, pricing and availability and as use increases over time transfer some of the bays to the car clubs.

## **Conclusion**

- 11.1. This challenge session provided the Overview and Scrutiny Committee a chance to scrutinise the council current approach to its parking permit policies and how this influences resident's behaviour. It clear from the evidence heard that parking is an integral element of not only the transport strategy but many of the other council's priorities and aspirations. The Committee has made eight recommendations and hopes that the Mayor and Cabinet take forward these recommendations and work with Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that the council has a sustainable and robust policy approach parking and traffic management to accommodate a growing population.