

Cabinet 30/11/2022	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director of Place	Classification: Unrestricted
One-Hour free parking for Markets	

Lead Member	Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency
Originating Officer(s)	Michael Darby, Head of Parking, Mobility and Market Services
Wards affected	Bethnal Green East, Bethnal Green West, Bow East, Lansbury, Shadwell, Spitalfields and Banglatown, Weavers
Key Decision?	No
Reason for Key Decision	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
Forward Plan Notice Published	26 October 2010
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	Boost culture, business, jobs and leisure

Executive Summary

The Mayor's election manifesto included a commitment to provide 'one-hour free parking for customers stopping to shop at our markets' as part of a package of pledges to support our local economy.

This commitment is also reflected in the council's new Strategic Plan, which includes an action to introduce one-hour free parking at markets.

The Council has nine main markets across the borough with varying opening times ranging from just Sundays to 6 days a week. The council is looking to protect and support these markets in a difficult financial climate and introducing free parking for one hour is seen as one way to attract more customers.

A total of 248 existing parking bays, within approximately 100 metres of a market, have been identified as suitable for this purpose.

This report looks at the process and implications for providing a one-hour free parking session for visitors to all the Council's Markets.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Introduce a one-hour free parking facility close to markets on market days in the 248 parking bays identified.
2. Approve the amendments and introduction of parking bays for the Whitechapel Road Market, as detailed in Paragraph 3.3, and for the necessary Traffic Management Order making process to be carried out, if the decision is to proceed with the introduction of one-hour free parking.
3. To note the specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph 4.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 The Mayor's 2022 manifesto included a clear commitment to 'protect and support our markets across the borough' as part of pledges to support local business.
- 1.2 The Mayor's manifesto included a specific pledge to introduce '***one-hour free parking for customers stopping to shop at our markets.***'
- 1.3 These commitments to support our local economy are also set out in the council's Strategic Plan, specifically Priority 4 which seeks to 'boost culture, business, jobs and leisure'.
- 1.4 The Strategic Plan also includes the commitment to introduce one-hour free parking for customers stopping to shop at our markets.
- 1.5 These commitments follow on from the recent Covid pandemic and the current Ukrainian conflict, energy price increases and inflation rises resulting in a cost-of-living crisis, there is an argument that reduced parking charges will help to promote visitors to markets. It will also help to retain existing customers who drive and might have considered not coming because of the cost.
- 1.6 Furthermore, providing a one-hour free parking facility at markets may support residents who are facing a cost-of-living crisis and rapidly rising household bills.
- 1.7 Mary Portas, an expert on retail, argues that parking charges are taking away trade from High Streets to retail parks and thereby undermining the vitality of town centres. One of her 28 recommendations from a review of the High Streetⁱ is that local areas should implement free controlled parking schemes that work for their town centres, and we should have a new parking league table.
- 1.8 Alternatively, a 10-year-old review carried out for London Councils in 2012 on the relevance of parking in the success of urban centresⁱⁱ found that; more parking does not necessarily mean greater commercial success. There is no such thing as 'free' parking as there are costs for developing,

maintaining, and controlling parking spaces. Shopkeepers consistently overestimate the share of their customers coming by car and whilst car drivers spend more on a single trip, shoppers who walk or use public transport spend more over a week or a month. When shoppers were asked about what attracts them the answers were a good mix of shops and services and a quality environment.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Alternative options are not to provide the one-hour free parking facility OR to make it available borough wide.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Council has nine main Markets across the borough with varying opening times ranging from just Sundays to 6 days a week. The council is looking to protect and support these markets and introducing free parking for one hour is seen as one way to attract more customers.
- 3.2 One-hour free parking was set out as a clear commitment in the Mayor's manifesto, and is also set out as an action we will undertake in the council's new Strategic Plan.
- 3.3 The LBTH Markets Improvement Plan 2022-27 details the results of a public consultation on the Council's markets which was held on the Council's website in April and May 2021. Headline results of the consultation carried out with shoppers did not mention parking whereas traders consider parking to be a problem for themselves and customers. Despite this, 81% of shoppers surveyed said they walked to the market with only 19% driving.
- 3.3 All the Council's short-term parking is controlled by means of a 'pay by phone' parking system. The proposal is to re-configure the existing parking charges on market days, in the parking bays close to markets, with a one-hour free option. When drivers park, they use their phone to make a booking for their vehicle, in the same way as they do now, and can obtain a one-hour parking session for free. Drivers will only be able to book one free session per day and if they wish to stay for longer than an hour then they can choose to pay to extend their stay.
- 3.4 A total of 248 existing parking bays, within approximately 100 metres of a market, which can currently be used by visitors to Markets have been identified and the table below lists the number of spaces at each location. Currently there are no existing spaces close to the Whitechapel Road Market, however there are 8 Business Bays on Brady Street and 4 Business Bays on Vallance Road which can be changed to dual use so that visitors to the Market can also use them. Along with this a section of double yellow lining on Fulbourne Street has also been identified as being able to be removed and 4 new dual use parking bays introduced close to Whitechapel Road market.

Market	Market operating days/hours	Spaces
Watney Street	Monday to Saturday 8.30am to 6pm	19
Petticoat Lane	Sunday 9am to 3pm	32
Brick Lane	Sunday 10am to 3pm	56
Columbia Road	Sunday 8am to 2pm	33
Bethnal Green Road	Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm	43
Roman Road Square	Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm	16
Roman Road	Tues, Thursday & Saturday 8am to 6pm	22
Chrip Street	Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm	11
Whitechapel Road	Monday to Saturday 8am to 6pm	16
TOTAL		248

Procedure

- 3.5 To change the parking charges to allow for a one-hour free option for the markets, when they operate, will require a Variation Notice to be published in the local press. The new charges can then become operational a minimum of 21 days after the publication date of the Variation Notice. Information on the new free parking session will be communicated on the council website and other communication channels, including the pay by phone contractor. Permanent information signage will also be put up in those parking bays around the markets where drivers will be able to obtain the one-hour free parking facility.
- 3.6 Alteration of existing parking bays and introduction of new parking bays will require a Traffic Management Order to be made. The making of a Traffic Order necessitates a legal procedure which takes approximately 12 to 16 weeks to complete, subject to any objections or representations which may be received. Once the Traffic Order is made it can become operational within one week.

Costs

- 3.7 The total costs of advertising Public Notices for Traffic Orders and the Variation Notice, along with signs and road markings, for the introduction of a one-hour free parking facility and the provision of spaces for the Whitechapel Road Market is estimated at £10,000 and this will be funded from the Parking account. The provision of a one-hour free parking facility for Markets will have an impact on the Council's Cashless Parking income and it is estimated that in total there will be a reduction of approximately £150,000 per annum. This has been derived from the current level of income generated by the identified parking bays on market days. It considers all parking sessions that were booked and allows for the first hour to be free, as users will be able to get one-hour free parking and then pay for any extra time they need.

Please see example below, typical month at one location.

Roman Road Car Park

INCOME WITHOUT CONCESSION					
Hours	0.50	1.00	1.50	2.00	TOTAL INCOME
Income by session	49.50	1,577.20	72.85	1,563.65	3,263.20
INCOME LOSS WITH CONCESSION					
Hours	0.50	1.00	1.50	2.00	INCOME LOSS
Income loss by session	-49.50	-1577.20	-48.57	-781.83	-2457.09

Below is a table of proposed spaces by location

Market	Spaces	£/hour
Watney Street	19	4.70
Petticoat Lane	32	5.30
Brick Lane	56	5.30
Columbia Road	33	5.30
Bethnal Green Road	43	4.70
Roman Road Square	16	4.70
Roman Road (car park)	22	4.30
Chrip Street	11	4.30
Whitechapel Road	16	N/A
TOTAL	248	

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 An equalities assessment has been carried out and it has identified that the one-hour free parking facility could encourage more car drivers to use their cars to visit the markets. This would then have a negative impact on air quality.
- 4.2 Key groups vulnerable to poor air quality include:
- Infants and young children
 - Pregnant women
 - Older people (people over 65)
 - People with existing cardiovascular disease or respiratory disease
 - Low-income communities (research has found that communities in London that have higher levels of deprivation, or a higher proportion of people from a non-white ethnic background are more likely to be exposed to higher levels of air pollution than communities in areas of lower deprivation)

- In the borough, a disproportionately higher rate of South Asian population who are over 70 years old have been diagnosed with asthma

4.3 Modelling data from the London Atmospheric emissions inventory (LAEI), produced by the GLA (Greater London Authority), shows that in Tower Hamlets 37% of Nitrogen dioxide NO₂ emissions (a major air pollutant of serious concern) come from road transport. The Council has data from air quality monitoring sites in or near to seven of the markets. Over the last seven years the data shows there has been a progressive downward trend in air pollution in these areas, an improving picture due in part to improvements in vehicle technology and Euro emissions and most recently the introduction of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). Except for Whitechapel market, the other markets comply with the UK legal limit for Nitrogen dioxide. The current levels are typical for these type of sites in Tower Hamlets and if more vehicles are introduced locally, it is likely to result in higher local pollution. It should also be noted that whilst air quality levels in the markets comply with the UK legal limit for nitrogen dioxide, this level is well above the World Health Organisation level and none of the markets meet their guidance on safe air.

4.4 Research from 2019 estimates the mean fraction of mortality attributable to air pollution was higher in Tower Hamlets than the London average and was the 6th highest in London. As well as heart disease and cancer poor air quality is also linked to: Asthma, Dementia, Allergies and reduced life expectancy.

4.5 There will be a benefit to drivers who want to visit the markets, particularly if they are purchasing heavy or bulky items.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Air quality is likely to also be negatively impacted by attracting drivers to use the one-hour free facility to do other things than visit the market, visiting friends and family for instance or going to other nearby venues. The one-hour free parking facility could also attract existing customers who walk, cycle or use public transport to drive to the market instead.

5.2 The Council's Transport Strategy outlines that physical activity decreases risks of disease and ill health, including high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, anxiety and depression. Promoting car driving may contribute to drivers' and passengers physical inactivity including children's obesity too.

5.3 The evidence pack of the Council's Transport Strategy states:

- Traffic flows are a significant determinant of air pollution in the borough
- It is known that air pollution causes a range of health conditions and diseases, including asthma.
- People who walk to the high street visit more regularly and spend up to 40% more than people who drive to the high street.
- Cycle parking delivers 5x the retail spend per square metre than the same area if car parking.

- Overall in London 58% of households own at least one vehicle, in Tower Hamlets it is only 37%.
- 5.4 The provision of a one-hour free parking facility for all the Markets across the borough may generate requests from other business areas who would feel that they too would benefit from this facility.
 - 5.5 The council's parking charges are reviewed and set each year as part of the annual budget process. Any new agreed charges are then introduced by advertising a Variation Order which gives 21 days' notice of the new charges, and this does not require any consultation to be carried out.
 - 5.6 The introduction of new parking bays for Whitechapel market requires an amendment Traffic Order to be made and this includes a statutory consultation which must be carried out.
 - 5.7 The Council's Transport Strategy (Tower Hamlets Transport Strategy 2019-2041) identifies 6 key outcomes to transform the way people travel in the borough. Whilst 80% of residents currently use sustainable travel modes the London Mayor has set the borough an ambitious target of 90%, at the same time as the number of cars owned by residents is rising sharply. Tower Hamlets also has the highest daily traffic flows in the UK due to the number of strategic routes which pass through the borough.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 This report is seeking approval to introduce a one-hour free parking facility close to markets on market days and complete the necessary Traffic Management Orders required. This represents a Mayoral pledge to boost culture, business, jobs and leisure within the Borough
- 6.2 The Parking Account is a ringfenced account and any surpluses made by the service must be re-invested in highways and transport related activity or held in a reserve for future use in such activity. Any losses must be managed within the account and reserve, rather than utilising other general fund resources.
- 6.3 The cost of issuing the Traffic Management Orders is estimated at £10,000. Loss of income from introducing the one-hour free parking in 248 bays on market days is estimated at £150,000. The financial impact of introducing the scheme will need to be met from within the Parking account. Any financial benefit from the scheme will lie with the market trader and will be difficult to measure. However, the benefit is deemed to be small as most visitors to the markets do arrive by car.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The statutory process to be followed when seeking to vary parking charges is set out in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the 1996 Local and allows us to vary by notice and regulations set out how we give notice and make our

intentions public. One of the reasons behind the introduction of s35C was to take away the need for any variation to be by order and the lengthy processes that involves.

- 7.2 The Regulations are the 1996 Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations –
- At least 21 days' notice in the local press
 - Site notices
- 7.3 The Network Management Duty does not apply to variations of parking charges.
- 7.4 Any new parking places to be created will be done in line with existing statutory requirements.
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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A

ⁱ The Portas Review - An independent review into the future of our high streets - 2021

ⁱⁱ Review of the relevance of parking to the success of urban centres – London Councils 2012