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| Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee | Date 10 th May 2011 | Classification Unrestricted | Report No. | Agenda Item No. 8.2 |
| Report of: Service Head, One Tower Hamlets Originating Officer(s): Robert Driver Scrutiny Policy Officer | | Title: Public Perceptions of Parking - Report of the Scrutiny Working Group Ward(s) affected: All | | |

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report submits the report and recommendations of the public perceptions of parking Working Group for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Agree the draft report and the recommendations contained in it.
- 2.2 Authorise the Service Head, One Tower Hamlets, to amend the draft report before submission to Cabinet, after consultation with the Scrutiny Lead for A Great Place to Live.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972 (AS AMENDED) SECTION 100D

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

| Background paper | Name and telephone number of and address where open to inspection |
|------------------|---|
| None | N/A |

3. Background

- 3.1 The Working Group was established in November 2010 to investigate how the Council could improve the public's perception of parking.
- 3.2 The aim of the review was to develop a more sophisticated understanding of residents concerns about parking issues. The objectives of the Review were to:
- Develop an understanding of how the Parking Service considers and deals with residents' and customers' parking concerns.
 - Support residents understanding of the Borough's Transport and Parking Policies.
 - Develop recommendations that help change the image of the Parking Service in the Borough through a better understanding of the service or by making changes to the way in which services are provided to better reflect the needs of residents.
 - Add value to the consultation process carried out as part of the preparation of the 2010/11 Local Implementation Plan (LIP).
- 3.3 The Working Group undertook various meetings with Islington Council, Westminster Council, TFL, London Councils, Friends of the Earth, the British Parking Association, Sustrans and the Department for Transport. They also undertook a site visit to the Parking Depot and went out on the 'beat' with parking Enforcement Officers,
- 3.4 The Review made a number of recommendations around the issue of communication. This communication ranges from signage on the streets, the Council's website or the interaction of our Civil Enforcement Officers with the public. It was acknowledged that changes need to be made with the way the Council communicates with residents on parking issues.
- 3.5 The report with recommendations is attached at Appendix A.
- 3.6 Once agreed, the Working Groups report will be submitted to Cabinet for a response to the recommendations.

4. Concurrent Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal)

- 4.1. The Council is required by section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to have executive arrangements that ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with this obligation, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants and may make reports and recommendations to the Full Council or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions. It is consistent with the Constitution and the statutory framework for the Executive to provide a response.

- 4.2. Pursuant to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the Council is the traffic authority for all roads in Tower Hamlets that are not the responsibility of the GLA or the Secretary of State. The Council is required to exercise its functions under that Act so far as practicable having due regard to securing the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway. Pursuant to the Traffic Management Act 2004, the Council has a network management duty to keep traffic flowing and to co-operate with other authorities working to the same end. The 2004 Act also establishes a framework for civil traffic enforcement by local authorities. Some of the recommendations invoke others of the Council's statutory functions such as those related to building and planning control.
- 4.3. The report makes a number of recommendations concerning how the Council approaches the exercise of its parking functions in the borough. These are directed to how the Council is perceived. The recommendations appear capable of being carried out within the Council's statutory functions, but much will depend on the detail of how they are implemented and care will need to be taken that statutory requirements are complied with.

5. Comments of the Chief Financial Officer

- 5.1 This report describes the work and recommendations from the Parking Working group of the public perceptions of parking in the Borough.
- 5.2 The report contains recommendations for Communities, Localities and Culture and Development and Renewal directorates to take, together with partners, and each of these may have financial implications for the Council. Consequently, a detailed financial analysis of the recommendations will need to be done and included in the later report to Cabinet.
- 5.3 Recommendation R7 is consistent with the growing trend for transparency in public finances and would help raise public awareness of the operation of the Parking Service. The proposed statement should be coupled with a statement on the benefits brought to the Council by the operation of the parking service.

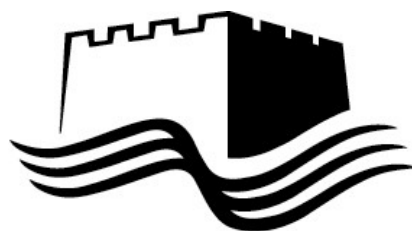
6. One Tower Hamlets consideration

- 6.1 This review makes a number of recommendations to improve communication and engagement with our diverse residents. The review has helped councillors as local community leaders to better understand the challenges facing our parking services and the public involvement session was a useful forum for councillors to discuss this issue with local residents.

7. Risk Management

- 7.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from the Working Group's report or recommendations.

Report of the Scrutiny Review on the Public Perceptions of Parking



TOWER HAMLETS

**London Borough of Tower Hamlets
May 2011**

DRAFT

Acknowledgements

The Working Group would like to thank all the officers and partners that supported this Review. Most importantly we would like to thank all of the residents who offered their input to the Review. These views and perspectives have been fundamental in shaping the final recommendations of this Report.

Working Group Chair:

Councillor Zenith Rahman

Working Group Members:

Councillor Ann Jackson
Councillor Helal Uddin
Councillor Khales Uddin Ahmed
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Aminur Khan
Councillor Peter Golds

London Borough of Tower Hamlets:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| John Chilton | Head of Parking Service |
| Bryan Jones | Service Head Environmental Control |
| Richard Finch | Strategic Transport Team Leader |
| Sam Margolis | Travel Awareness Officer |
| John Stewart | Parking Development Manager |
| Mark Jenner | Parking Policy and Enhancement Officer |
| Robert Wingate | Deputy Corporate Complaints Manager |
| Ruth Dowden | Corporate Complaints Manager |
| Edmund Wildish | Service Development Officer |
| Sandra Gallagher | Parking Enforcement Manager |
| Azad Miah | Civil Enforcement Officer |
| Siddiqur Osmani | Civil Enforcement Officer |
| Mick Darby | Deputy Enforcement Manager |
| Jenny Gray | Supervisor – Representations and Appeals |

Scrutiny and Equalities:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Afazul Hoque Scrutiny | Scrutiny Policy Manager |
| Robert Driver Scrutiny | Scrutiny Policy Officer |

External:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Sean Conroy | Transport for London |
| Nick Lester | London Councils |
| Steve Shaw | Islington Council |
| John Galsworthy | Islington Council |
| Joe Turner | Islington Council |
| Councillor Wally Burgess | Islington Council |
| Councillor Jonathan Glanz | Westminster Council |
| Kate Hand | Friends of the Earth |
| Tom Sharland | Sustrans |
| Patrick Troy | British Parking Association |
| Stewart Russell | Royal London Hospital |
| Jeaur Rahman | Department for Transport |

Chair's Forward

Tower Hamlets is a borough that has a large population inhabiting a relatively small space. This poses a multitude of challenges to the Council – especially parking enforcement.

We welcomed the opportunity to review this important area which is consistently brought to our attention by our local residents. We also felt that the Review was very appropriate due to the future projections of the Borough showing that an ever increasing amount of people will be living, working and visiting the Borough and the fact that more people are likely to own a car in the future. Through improving the perceptions of parking we will continue to make Tower Hamlets a great place to live and visit in the future.

The major theme running throughout this Report has been that communication is the key factor in shaping public perceptions. This communication ranges from signage on the streets, the Council's website or the interaction of our Civil Enforcement Officers with the public. This Review acknowledges that changes need to be made to the way the Council communicates with residents.

The Working Group's evidence gathering involved many individuals and organisations to reflect the complexity of the issues we were dealing with. Our recommendations are based on the evidence given by residents, Council officers, Islington Council, Westminster Council, Transport for London (TFL), London Councils, Friends of the Earth, the British Parking Association, Sustrans and the Department for Transport.

Finally, I would like to thank all those residents, organisations and individuals that contributed their time and effort to this Review.

Councillor Zenith Rahman
Chair, Scrutiny Lead, A Great Place to Live

Recommendations

- R 1.** That the Sustainable Transport Team liaises with the top five most visited venues in the Borough and work in partnership with them to promote alternative forms of transport to their visitors.
- R 2.** That the Parking Services work closely with the Development and Renewal Directorate to develop a strategy that minimises negative implications on residents near new Car Free Developments.
- R 3.** That Parking Services develop a communication strategy to inform residents about the Council's policy on parking surrounding places of worship. They should also continuously Review any concerns raised by local residents. This investigation should be conducted with sensitivity and transparency to ensure that any policy change is not seen as favouring any particular faith.
- R 4.** That Parking Services improve communication with customers by ensuring payments and complaints are processed within a set deadline and any reimbursements and replies are given within these deadlines.
- R 5.** That Parking Service develops a 'Citizens Parking Charter' in partnership with the Resident Parking Forum.
- R 6.** That the Corporate Director of Communities, Localities and Culture commission a comprehensive review of parking controls in the Borough.
- R7.** That the Parking Service produce a short Annual Report which details breakdown of revenue income, costs and expenditure on local projects. This report should be publicised widely.
- R 8.** The Working Group noted the importance of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) as a key agent for improving perceptions and resident involvement in parking services. It is recommended that the Parking Services place a greater focus on customer relations and resident engagement in the training of their CEOs.
- R 9.** That the Parking Service should continue with the beat average system and this should not be replaced by target driven system for parking enforcement.
- R 10.** That the Parking Service works closely with health service providers in the Borough to consider parking and accessibility implications of new and current building projects.
- R 11.** That Parking Service work in partnership with Tower Hamlets Homes, Registered Providers of Social Housing and other local landowners with the aim of harmonising parking policy in the Borough. They should

also clearly communicate the demarcation parameters and differing areas of responsibility.

- R 12.** That a Sustainable Transport page is added to the Council's website and that it is interlinked to Parking Service web pages.
- R 13.** That Parking Service produce a document called 'Ten simple rules to avoid a ticket' which is publicised through all available forms of communication by the Council.
- R 14.** That the Parking Service offers a more customer focused web content on the Council's website, and adopt more diverse and innovative forms of communication to engage with residents.
- R 15.** That Parking Services develop a Resident Parking Forum that utilises different communication tools to engage with residents.

Introduction

1. During the 2010 election campaign, residents raised parking as one of the most important issues in Tower Hamlets. Internal reporting would support this with parking consistently having the lowest satisfaction rate amongst residents in the Council's Annual Residents survey. However, the number of Stage 1 complaints involving parking has only increased very marginally during the period 2009/2010. This would suggest that the dissatisfaction with parking has more to do with the public perception of parking management in the Borough rather than the actual performance of the service itself.
2. In 2005 the London Assembly undertook an investigation into parking enforcement in the Capital, concluding that the boroughs need to do more to improve public perception of their parking services and demonstrate that the way they carry out enforcement is fair and proportionate.
3. This Scrutiny Review offered the opportunity to consider residents concerns about parking as well as utilising Members community leadership role to broker discussion on this important issue. Our aim was to change the image of parking and provide residents with an understanding of parking enforcement in the Borough.

Purpose

4. The purpose of this Review was to develop a more sophisticated understanding of residents concerns about parking issues to improve the public perception of parking services in Tower Hamlets.
5. The objectives were to:
 - Develop an understanding of how the Parking Service considers and deals with residents' and customers' parking concerns.
 - Support residents understanding of the Borough's Transport and Parking Policies.
 - Develop recommendations that help change the image of the Parking Service in the Borough through a better understanding of the service or by making changes to the way in which services are provided to better reflect the needs of residents.
 - Add value to the consultation process carried out as part of the preparation of the 2010/11 Local Implementation Plan (LIP).
6. This Review aimed to place a renewed focus on the Parking Service and service delivery by the Council. The process provided Members and stakeholder partners along with residents the opportunity to gain knowledge of parking services and the impact of parking policy on local residents, businesses and visitors. This report has been compiled from the review findings.

Methodology

7. The following methodology for the Review was agreed by the Working Group:

Introductory Review Meeting

- The Working Group heard evidence on current London wide parking issues from London Councils, Transport for London (TFL) and LBTH Parking Service.

Visit to Sutton Street depot

- The Working Group had discussions with parking managers the Parking Depot and went 'on the beat' with Civil Enforcement Officers to see how parking services are delivered on the front line.

Comparison with Islington and Westminster Council

- The Working Group visited the London Borough of Islington Council parking team to discuss common challenges in tackling negative perceptions of parking.
- Cabinet Members with a parking remit from Westminster and Islington Council gave evidence to the Working Group.

Car culture in Tower Hamlets

- Presentations were received from the Strategic Transport Team to discuss local issues surrounding parking, including 'Car aspiration' and alternative forms of transport.
- Evidence was also considered from a sustainable transport charity Sustrans and environmental group Friends of the Earth.

Resident Involvement

- A Focus Group was held with local residents on how communication can be improved for local residents.
- Residents were encouraged to offer their input to the Review by post or email. This was communicated through an advertisement in East End Life.

Background

The London Context

8. It is nearly 20 years since the 1991 Road Traffic Act decriminalised parking enforcement, which passed the responsibility from the Metropolitan and City police forces to the London Boroughs on 4 July 1994. This led to a widespread change in the approach to parking enforcement as local authority parking attendants were employed and authorised to issue penalty charge notices (PCNs) and the clamping or removal of vehicles.
9. The London Local Authorities Act 1996 added bus lanes to the Council's enforcement responsibilities and the London Local Authorities and Transport for London Act 2003 added further moving traffic infringements to the enforcement already carried out by Councils. The 2003 legislation enabled London Boroughs to enforce a variety of moving traffic contraventions, such as yellow box junctions and banned turns. Local Authorities, through the Local Government Association (LGA), reasoned that Councils should (be able to take this further and) give the more minor driving offences greater priority and attention than police enforcement had been able to achieve previously. While these infringements may appear minor, they are important to Councils in terms of public transport efficiency and reliability through improved operation of the network, the legal duty to protect the free flow of traffic and access by emergency vehicles, traffic calming and road safety.
10. Local Authorities are obliged to produce their own Local Implementation Plan and adopt the eight main objectives of the London Mayor's Transport Strategy (2010) which are:
 - Improving road safety
 - Improving bus journey times and reliability
 - Relieving traffic congestion
 - Improving parking and loading arrangements
 - Improving accessibility and social inclusion
 - Encouraging walking
 - Encouraging cycling
 - Bringing transport infrastructure to a state of good repair
11. Parking enforcement can impact on all of the above objectives, which goes some way to explaining the complexity of parking management.

The Local Context

12. The need for parking controls in Tower Hamlets is self evident; it is one of the smallest boroughs in London but also one of the most densely populated. It is also a thriving residential and commercial area, and as in

other London Boroughs, traffic has increased significantly over the years which have also increased the demand on parking spaces.

13. Within the Borough, approximately 200 kilometres of public highway are subject to parking control (and enforcement) by way of designated parking bays or yellow line waiting restrictions. There are compelling road safety and traffic reasons for enforcing parking restrictions in Tower Hamlets, without regulation there is little doubt that the many parts of Tower Hamlets would grind to a halt.

14. As part of the Council's Local implementation Plan, a Parking and Enforcement Plan is in place to manage and control parking. Basic parking policy is about achieving a balance between supply and demand where that demand exceeds supply. Priority is also given to those groups that the Council wishes to recognise (disabled, residents, businesses, visitors, key public service workers etc). All of these proceedings must be done in a way that enhances road safety. However parking management can also be used to support a number of other Council objectives:

- To assist in reducing car borne journeys by rationing parking at the place of destination by time and cost.
- Reduce CO2 emissions – permit prices to be linked to vehicle emissions
- To facilitate regeneration through free short term parking or free parking around weekend markets.
- Achieve higher density residential development by supporting car free agreements.

15. The main objectives for Parking Services as outlined in the Local Implementation Plan 2005/6 - 2010/11 are:

- To balance parking priorities within local areas, by managing supply and demand.
- To effectively manage on-street parking activity and in doing so improve road safety and the general street scene
- To protect local residents parking needs from non-local parking demands, (e.g. commuters), provide parking facilities for local businesses and visitors, reduce traffic congestion and accidents.

16. The Parking Service responds positively to requests for changes to the layout of parking places and waiting and loading restrictions when problems are notified by residents and businesses. Any changes are subject to local consultation and there is a defined legal process which, as a minimum, must be followed. Consultation can often result in the identification of a compromise. This must be practical in terms of being legal, capable of being signed in a way that motorists will understand what they are expected to do, and can be enforced.

17. The Parking Service in Tower Hamlets consists of several different elements. The provision of enforcement services is carried out by Council

employed Civil Enforcement Officers, who patrol on foot or in vehicles or via Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras.

18. The processing of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) is also handled in-house and this is the industry norm, given the high degree of public interface involved. The regulations require that some elements must be handled only by Council staff and to provide an integrated service all elements of processing are handled in-house.
19. The elements that make up the parking service in Tower Hamlets include:
 - Enforcement on street and by use of CCTV
 - Installation and maintenance of pay and display machines
 - Issue and management of permits
 - Processing of PCNs
 - Handling correspondence and complaints
 - Cash collection and banking services (pay and display machines)
 - Vehicle removals and management of car pound
 - Management of an integrated parking IT system
 - Reviewing restrictions and making Orders
20. Council Civil Enforcement Officers receive comprehensive training to enable them to carry out their duties effectively. There is an enforcement protocol in place, at present its main principals are:
 - To deliver a high quality parking service to all road users in a fair and consistent manner, and
 - To ensure there is clarity of the enforcement requirements for the contraventions and policy for all Parking Service officers and Civil Enforcement Officers.

Key Findings

The Public's Perception

21. As noted in the introduction, an advert was placed in East End Life in February 2011, giving a short background to the Review and asking residents for their contributions to the process. The advert generated a lot of interest and evidence was collected through mail, email, telephone and through a resident involvement session.
22. The majority of the correspondence felt that there were inadequacies in the Council's Parking Service, and these were causing negative perceptions. Some of the predominant and reoccurring issues were:
- Lack of clarity on regulations and restrictions around parking permits
 - Concern about the effectiveness of Car Free Developments
 - That the scratch card system in some cases is too generous and is open to abuse
 - That increased enforcement is needed in problem areas
 - A perceived lack of flexibility for parking enforcement for Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs)
 - Confusion over 'Faith' parking, and the regulations and restrictions for parking surrounding places of worship
 - Fraudulent use of parking permits
23. The Working Group received correspondence from residents regarding the exercising of discretion by the Parking Service and the consequences this has on public perceptions. It was raised that when considering mitigating circumstances for penalty charges, the process should be transparent and inclusive. Members agreed that the public need to be aware that a Council can waive their penalty and this process should be more accessible.
24. The Working Group received correspondence from residents stating that they have previously written to the Council regarding a parking issue and not received a satisfactory reply from the Parking Service. Members acknowledged that a large volume of correspondence from residents is received by the Parking Service and that it is not always feasible to ensure that all correspondence is replied to promptly. However, the Working Group noted that any form of un-replied communications will be damaging to public perceptions.
25. The Working Group received correspondence from Mile End Housing Cooperative regarding the poor satisfaction of parking in the area surrounding the Troxy Centre. This was due to visitors to the venue taking parking spaces of local residents. The Working Group acknowledged that the Troxy case was typical of other popular venues in the Borough. It was discussed that popular venues across the Borough could do more to encourage visitors to use alternative forms of transport to alleviate the strain on surrounding residential areas.

R1. That the Sustainable Transport Team liaises with the top five most visited venues in the Borough and work in partnership with them to promote alternative forms of transport to their visitors.

26. The Resident Involvement Session allowed residents and officers to partake in a wide range of discussions with the main themes being:

- Car free developments
- Business parking
- Parking around places of worship
- Communication
- Sustainability

27. Many residents agreed that car free developments were not working as residents who resided in them still owned cars but removing them during the enforcement period. It was also noted that residents were not aware of the benefits and reasoning behind car free developments.

28. Many residents were angry about the apparent lack of enforcement around the car free developments, whereby occupiers still owned cars. It was suggested that the Council could do more to promote the reasoning behind, and benefits of, the developments to discourage car use. It was agreed that a consistent approach should also be applied to ensure that the car free policy is enforced.

R2. That the Parking Service work closely with the Development and Renewal Directorate to develop a strategy that minimises negative implications on residents near new Car Free Developments.

29. During the resident involvement session, it was noted that residents felt the Council had a lack of understanding towards the parking requirements of business owners. It was discussed how those who owned businesses were often penalised for loading and unloading, or did not have the space to park near their business. It was also raised to Members how businesses that rely on travelling around the Borough often could not do so due to tight enforcement. Many traders felt their customers could not park to use their shop which has a detrimental effect on their business. Residents and officers discussed the issues and it was noted that residents and businesses need to be made more aware of the reasoning behind the enforcement. This includes issues such as the necessary restrictions due to potential parking demand being much greater than the supply of safe spaces in the Borough.

30. This issue has also been highlighted by this year's Scrutiny Review on Supporting Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) which recommended a comprehensive review be undertaken on how the Council can support SMEs through our Parking Policy.

31. The issue of 'Faith' parking was raised by a number of residents during the public consultation process, as well as being raised as an issue by external partners. During the resident involvement session it was raised that there is a confusion regarding who can park in these bays on worship days. There was a perception that you had to belong to a particular faith to park in these bays which had in some cases caused animosity. It was confirmed that this is not Council policy. It was agreed that this misconception could be damaging to community cohesion, and that the Parking Service need to communicate the regulations around faith parking better.
32. During the resident consultation process a wide range of issues surrounding communication were discussed, with the issues of unclear enforcement being most prominent. These issues ranged from unclear signage to the poor responsiveness of the Council to problems that have been raised by residents. A resident discussed a particular case where they were penalised incorrectly yet it took 40 days for their penalty to be reimbursed to them. It was acknowledged that cases like this are unacceptable and that such examples of Council conduct are extremely damaging to public perceptions.
33. A wide ranging discussion on sustainable transport was held at the resident involvement session. Members and residents discussed how one of the ways to combat negative perceptions of parking is through the tackling of car culture in the Borough. Even though the Borough is served well by public transport, and alternative forms of transport are available, it was felt that residents have not fully 'bought in' to the car alternatives. It was agreed that the Council could more effectively promote the use of sustainable forms of transport and the benefits to the environment and personal health that it brings.

R3. That Parking Services develop a communication strategy to inform residents about the Council's policy on parking surrounding places of worship. They should also continuously review any concerns raised by local residents. This investigation should be conducted with sensitivity and transparency to ensure that any policy change is not seen as favouring any particular faith.

R4. That Parking Services improve communication with customers by ensuring payments and complaints are processed within a set deadline and any reimbursements and replies are given within these deadlines.

R5. That Parking Services develop a 'Citizens Parking Charter' in partnership with the Resident Parking Forum.

R6. That the Corporate Director of Communities, Localities and Culture commission a comprehensive review of parking controls in the Borough.

R7. That the Parking Service produce a short Annual Report which details breakdown of revenue income, costs and expenditure on local projects. This report should be publicised widely.

Local Partners

34. The Review received correspondence from residents and evidence from the School Travel Service regarding parking around schools. A common theme running through the evidence was the impact of parents or carers dropping off children within Controlled Parking Zones. It was also raised the issue that enforcement varies from different areas and schools, and that problems in enforcement were creating negative perceptions of residents near schools. It was agreed that parking within these areas, and lack of enforcement of any infringements, compromised the safety of children coming to and from school.
35. During a site visit to the Parking Depot and walk about with CEOs, Councillors recognised the difficult task facing CEOs in the Borough. They saw first hand some excellent conduct and practices from the whole parking team. For example, the use of digital cameras by CEOs to ensure that conflicting accounts of issued parking tickets are avoided. The Working Group acknowledged that CEOs were the type of frontline service ambassadors that the Council would want the public to have contact with.
36. They welcomed the fact that the Parking Service had ceased clamping and acknowledged that this has led to an improvement in the public perception of parking in the Borough.
37. It was noted that the Parking Service takes pride in their service which has been 'in house' for 24 years and it has developed a strong relationship with the community it serves. The success of the service is evident through the vast difference in results between 'in house' services and private contractors. Members heard of one such example from the Enforcement Manager that there are fewer assaults on staff for 'in house' services. The Working Group acknowledges that one of the core reasons for the excellent conduct of the Parking Service is due to CEOs (Civil Enforcement Officers) being BTEC (Business and Technician Education Council) trained and being given monthly assessments (with criteria including dress, quality of ticketing).
38. The Working Group noted that PCN (Penalty Charge Notice) targets defeat the object of parking policy and would be detrimental to public perceptions of parking. The Working Group also acknowledged that recent press coverage of Tower Hamlets Parking Service had been inaccurate through claiming that the Council Parking Service is target driven. It was

acknowledged that this type of coverage plays a large part to formulating negative perceptions of parking in the Borough.

39. During the visit to the Parking Depot it was drawn to the attention of the Working Group that the Parking Service team can survey a particular area at request of residents to identify whether an area can be used for parking. It was noted that provisions for residents to undertake this were not well publicised.
40. The Working Group had a detailed discussion with the Head of the Parking Service about the contradictions that the Council faces when enforcing parking policies, and the effect this has on public perceptions. It was agreed that the Council must acknowledge the dilemma posed to the Parking Service through having conflicting objectives. It can facilitate car borne journeys which promote the perception of convenience through recognising what residents and businesses want. Conversely, the Council can discourage use of the car through highlighting consequential effects such as traffic congestion, poor air quality, noise, CO2 emissions, reduction in air quality and decrease in road safety. It was agreed that there needs to be a balance between these conflicting objectives and this conflict needs to be better communicated to residents.

R8. The Working Group noted the importance of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) as a key agent for improving perceptions and resident involvement in parking services. It is recommended that the Parking Service place a greater focus on customer relations and resident engagement in the training of their CEOs.

R9. That the Parking Service should continue with the beat average system and this should not be replaced by target driven system for parking enforcement.

41. The Parking and Facilities Team at the Royal London Hospital (Bart's and the Royal London NHS Trust) gave evidence to the Working Group on the issue of growing parking pressure surrounding the hospital. These pressures will only be exacerbated by the new hospital that is due to open later in 2011 that will add additional 1000 beds. One key issue raised by the team was that vulnerable people visiting the hospital were unable to easily be driven to or from the hospital as there is no public parking at the hospital itself. It was noted that there is no disabled parking at the hospital, and that drivers who are registered disabled and have a blue badge have found the parking around the hospital inadequate. The Working Group were concerned about the perception effects of pregnant, injured, elderly or disabled patients being unable to travel in dignity or comfort to and from the hospital.

42. With the concerns surrounding the expansion of the hospital, it was also acknowledged that these negative perceptions could have less obvious knock on effects. The NHS policy on Hospital Choice states that:

“You can choose a hospital according to what matters most to you, whether it's location, waiting times, reputation, clinical performance, visiting policies, parking facilities or patients' comments”.

43. Members acknowledged that parking plays an important role in the choice process, and it is vital that the current and future parking issues are addressed. It was noted that negative perceptions could overshadow the clinical excellence that the new hospital facilities will bring. There is a danger that the public will dismiss The Royal London Hospital in their choices due to poor perceptions of parking.

44. The issue of demarcation around the hospital was identified, with confusion arising over responsibility for specific streets. According to the Hospital's Parking Service, it is commonly perceived that the streets which run through the hospital (Stepney Way, Ravens Row, Turner Street, Varden Street, Ashfield Street, Walden Street) belong to the hospital and therefore patients and visitors park with the perception of immunity. However, these streets are actually controlled via either TfL or Tower Hamlets Council. Therefore, individuals often raise complaints and concerns to the trust around penalty charge notices. It was suggested that there should be a single point of contact with clear signage demonstrating who owns and manages specific areas. The Working Group acknowledged that demarcation was an issue in a number of locations across the borough.

R10. That the Parking Service works closely with health service providers in the Borough to consider parking and accessibility implications of new and current building projects.

R11. That Parking Service work in partnership with Tower Hamlets Homes, Registered Social Landlords and other local landowners with the aim of harmonising parking policy in the Borough. They should also clearly communicate the demarcation parameters and differing areas of responsibility.

45. The Working Group received a presentation from the Council's Strategic Transport Planning Manager on car culture. The presentation gave the issue of car culture a policy framework and elucidated the key challenges that the borough faced to tackle it. There was a discussion on past and current key interventions and achievements such as the congestion charging zone and promotion of public transport. It was agreed that the Council was actually taking a very sensible and proactive approach to tackling car culture. However, it was agreed that there could be further developments on current or past borough wide schemes such as 'walking buses' and cheaper parking permits for environmentally conscious businesses. The key flaw in the delivery was through the communication of policies and schemes and not tackling the perception that universal car use in the borough as a possibility.

R12. That a Sustainable Transport page is added to the Council's website and that it is interlinked to Parking Service web pages.

The External View

46. The Working Group heard from Islington and Westminster City Council Councils regarding their communication strategy to improve public perceptions of parking services. One such scheme is the parking enforcement protocol being published, which detailed every parking contravention enforced and a parking policy statement which was available to all residents through leaflets and the website.
47. The Working Group considered evidence from the British Parking Association (BPA). The organisation suggested to the Working Group that Local Authorities should adopt BPA practices through taking a more proactive approach to developing communications and relationships with media on parking matters. The BPA confirmed that in the past Local Authorities have had very successful responses to forging these relationships. The Working Group discussed this view and it was noted that parking services have a strong relationship with the Council's Communications Team, and that all enquiries are dealt with comprehensively and swiftly. It was raised by Members that as the recommendations of the Review are enforced; there should be an increase in positive media coverage on parking services. It was suggested that the communication team could lead on promoting the Review's work to local and national media.
48. Officers and Councillors from Islington and Westminster City Council informed the Working Group that faith based parking is a big issue in their respective Boroughs. It was acknowledged that in Tower Hamlets there is a multitude of different faiths that collectively pose a sporadic stress on parking in certain areas.
49. The Working Group noted the findings of the research published by The Commission for Local Administration in England on Parking Enforcement by Local Authorities. The most relevant findings of the Report for this Review being that Local Authorities face a difficult task in enforcing parking controls effectively in an environment of ever increasing traffic. The Working Group also acknowledged that the above task is being made more difficult by the perception of some motorists that the imposition and pursuit of penalty charges is inherently unfair.
50. Public perceptions of TfL and traffic enforcement were presented by a TfL representative to the Working Group. The below results from a recent survey were discussed:
- Think TfL is good at explaining why road rules are important 21%
 - Feel TfL is supportive of Drivers: 14%
- (1,258 adults aged 17 and over with a full drivers licence)

51. Members discussed how the above results correlated to local poor perceptions of parking, with the concepts of drivers being victimised and poor communication for car users being particularly prominent. Members agreed that the most relevant issue raised in the presentation was the confusion over TfL and Borough responsibility of certain roads which can lead to blame being directed at the wrong party.
52. The Working Group considered the common sense approach as elucidated in the Driver's Charter which formed part of a wider research project that helped TfL understand drivers' attitudes and motivations. These included:
- The issuing of a Plain English leaflet with each penalty explaining what steps you need to take to pay or challenge the penalty.
 - Making it as easy as possible to pay or challenge your penalty
 - Reviewing enforcement at locations where a high level of penalties were issued and where drivers can claim that the signs are confusing.
53. London Councils presented to the Working Group how uncertainty and double standards leads to complaints. Members agreed that there must be greater clarity for residents in dispute scenarios. They also discussed how a limited amount of discretion on street leads to an inflexible and unworkable service. However, higher levels of discretion lead to a less transparent service. The Working Group acknowledged the inherent complexity associated with applying discretion to parking enforcement.
54. The Working Group heard evidence from a local representative from Friends of the Earth about car culture in the Borough. Members were alarmed to hear that parts of the Borough have some of the worst air quality in the country. Friends of the Earth suggested to the Working Group that the solutions to the current car related problems in the Borough lay in the promotion of alternative forms of transport. Members acknowledged that better promotion is needed for alternatives to car use, such as promoting home working and making shops and amenities more accessible.
55. The British Parking Association, Islington Council and Westminster City Council recommended the formation and use of a Resident Parking Forum. Members suggested that this could be incorporated, or developed from, the previous resident committees on transport. It was suggested from Members that the strong interest from residents in the Review should be utilised to help form such a Forum. It was agreed that CEOs should play a central role in these Forums.

R13. That Parking Service produce a document called 'Ten simple rules to avoid a ticket' which is publicised through all available forms of communication by the Council.

R14. That the Parking Service offers a more customer focused web content on the Council's website, and adopt more diverse and innovative forms of communication to engage with residents.

R15. That Parking Service develops a Resident Parking Forum that utilises different communication tools to engage with residents.

Conclusions

56. The Working Group welcomed the opportunity to investigate the public perceptions of parking, with a view to improving resident satisfaction for the Council's parking services.
57. This Review has focused on issues of communication, and it is hoped that the adoption of the proposed recommendations will improve how residents perceive the parking in the borough.
58. Members wanted to have a broad evidence base to formulate recommendations to reflect the complexity of parking policy. The Working Group feels that through incorporating a diverse range of partners in the Review process relevant solutions have been offered to the challenging issue of the public perceptions of parking.
59. The Working Group hopes that the recommendations will be considered and adopted by the Mayor and his Cabinet, and that the actions will lead to further improvements in parking services and the overall wellbeing of residents.

Scrutiny and Equalities in Tower Hamlets

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