

Committee/Meeting: Cabinet	Date: 3 August 2011	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No: (CAB 019/112)
Report of: Corporate Director, Development & Renewal Originating officer(s) Owen Whalley, Service Head Planning & Building Control and Richard Finch, Strategic Transport Planning Team Leader		Title: Introduction of a Permit Transfer Scheme Wards Affected: All	
Lead Member		Cllr Rabina Khan, Leader Member for Housing	
Community Plan Theme		A Great Place to Live	
Strategic Priority		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing affordable housing and strong neighbourhoods • Strengthen and connect communities 	

1. SUMMARY

1.1 Tower Hamlets Council proposes to introduce a targeted parking Permit Transfer Scheme (PTS) that would allow some families in social rented housing to retain an on-street residents' parking permit when they move to accommodation that is designated as social rented 'car free' housing. It is considered that this PTS will help to reduce levels of overcrowding in the social rented housing stock in the borough by facilitating the move for larger families in smaller properties who are deterred from moving to larger accommodation because of its car free (permit free) status.

1.2 There is evidence that some families are currently deciding to remain in overcrowded conditions rather than accept offers of larger social rented housing due to its car free (permit free) status. This group comprises families who rely on access to their cars as an important element in the way they travel for work and for other journeys to meet the mobility requirements of their families.

1.3 The PTS will be a change in the operation of the Council's existing on-street Residents' Parking Permit Scheme.

1.4 This report outlines the criteria for the proposed PTS (refer to section 5.4 below) and related implications in the light of the evidence used to assess the impact of the scheme.

2. DECISIONS REQUIRED

Cabinet is recommended to:-

2.1 Note the forthcoming introduction of the proposed targeted Permit Transfer Scheme (PTS), by the Mayor of Tower Hamlets Council, using the scheme criteria outlined in section 5.4 below in this report to help reduce levels of overcrowding in the social rented housing stock in the borough. The PTS will be a change in the operation of the Council's existing on-street Residents' Parking Permit Scheme.

3. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

3.1 In traffic congested and polluted areas, and in areas of good access to public transport, Tower Hamlets Council has been encouraging the development of car free housing schemes since that late 1990s.

3.2 The car free housing planning policy is widely applied by councils across London and beyond. In Tower Hamlets, the LDF Core Strategy (approved by Full Council in September 2010) supports promoting the development of car free homes under policy SP09. This policy is supported by central government planning policy guidance note 13 on transport) and the Mayor of London's London Plan.

3.3 However, there continue to be a series of instances where families living in overcrowded housing conditions consider they are unable to accept offers of larger social rented accommodation where it is designated as car free. This is related to their need to retain access to their car to support the mobility requirements of their families.

3.4 The issue highlighted in paragraph 3.3 above is reflected in the Council's existing Housing Strategy Summary (2009-2012: 2010 Update) report... 'lack of access to a car can hinder households' ability to take up employment, visit family and friends, transport children to school. Protecting the environment is increasingly the high priority but consideration must be given to ensuring new residents of housing developments are not wholly excluded from accessing personal use of a car'.

3.5 This matter is also recognised in the Government's statement on the amendments to planning policy guidance note 13 on transport that... 'This Government recognises that cars are a lifeline for many people'. (DCLG Press release, 3 January 2011)

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Independent review process

An independent review of the proposed PTS was undertaken by transport planning consultants Steer Davies Gleave (SDG) into the need for a targeted PTS in 2010/11.

4.2 Impact of overcrowding on families

The SDG study found that In cases where families are unable to move from overcrowded conditions to a larger property because they are reliant on their car, this potentially has detrimental effects on the health, education and development of children within the household. London Housing described this effect as follows:

'Overcrowding impacts on health – particularly on the transmission of infectious diseases – and educational attainment.' (London Housing, 2004)

4.3 The effects of overcrowding are recognised in the Mayor of London's Housing Strategy that has set a target to reduce severe overcrowding by 50% in social housing by 2016.

4.4 Furthermore, the DCLG's 'Tackling overcrowding in England, An action plan' stated that:

'Living in overcrowded accommodation can, both directly and indirectly, have a devastating effect on families. Older children may spend more time outside the home, on the streets, simply to find privacy and space. Overcrowding may exacerbate stress, depression and in the worst cases domestic violence or breakdown of relationships.' (DCLG, December 2007)

4.5 Additionally, there can be potential knock on consequences of a lack of mobility in social housing waiting lists. If a family is unwilling to move from their current property, for example, to a three bedroom car free home, this can lead to preventing another, smaller, family, moving into their home.

4.6 Underlying this is a general shortage within the borough of affordable housing, and in particular, family properties:

"The housing challenge is immense. There is currently not enough housing supply in the borough to meet housing needs. There is also a mismatch in available affordable housing supply, with not enough homes for families." (Tower Hamlets Community Plan, 2008/09)

4.7 Tower Hamlets Council's Housing Strategy

As a consequence, reducing overcrowding is one of the four key priority areas in the Tower Hamlets Council Housing Strategy. This strategy emphasises the importance of using affordable housing as effectively as possible, which includes ensuring that there is mobility in the housing market and that the right housing options are provided at the right time.

4.8 The Council also recognises that some people are 'car dependent', with their livelihoods and the development of their children to an extent reliant on the car. The government also recognises the importance of the car under certain circumstances in the revised version of planning policy guidance note 13 on transport (PPG13, DCLG, 2011).

4.9 The SDG evidence base report shows that a PTS would be justifiable due to the evidence base, if limited to people moving to family (3+ bedroom) car free homes, summarised above targeted at families needing to move to larger social rented housing in the borough.

5. PERMIT TRANSFER SCHEME

5.1 The underlying issue that has led to the development of the proposed PTS is the number of refusals to move to alternative (social rented) accommodation, with one of the reasons for this being (in the case of car free developments) the lack of parking.

5.2 The PTS will be a change in the operation of the existing Council's on-street Residents' Parking Permit Scheme.

5.3 In fact, the SDG research found that approximately one-fifth of the reasons given for rejecting a social rented property in a car free development were due to its car free

(permit free) status. This refusal level was even higher amongst those households looking to move as a result of overcrowding (approximately one-quarter) due to the social rented home offer being part of a car free housing development.

5.4 PTS criteria

The criteria for the proposed PTS will be as follows:

1. targeted at social rented housing residents moving to car free homes;
2. applies to residents moving to **3+** bedroom car free homes;
3. **1** x on-street resident parking permit per household
4. parking permit must have been held for at least **1** year prior to moving home;
5. parking permit must be renewed and not lapse to remain eligible under the scheme;
6. it will be the responsibility of the social rented housing tenant to provide proof that they are eligible under the scheme; and
7. the scheme will apply from the date of introduction by Tower Hamlets Council's Parking Services and will not be retrospective.

5.5 The introduction of the proposed PTS would be managed by Parking Services and publicised using appropriate channels.

5.6 Impact of proposed Permit Transfer Scheme on on-street parking levels

An assessment of the impact on on-street car parking levels in the borough as a result of this proposed targeted scheme has been undertaken by officers.

5.7 Parking Services estimate that a targeted PTS (using the PTS criteria outlined in paragraph 6 above) will be acceptable in terms of the projected increase in on-street parking levels up to 2020.

5.8 A review of the scheme may need to be undertaken to reassess any impact of the PTS on on-street parking stress levels from time-to-time.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 This report has outlined the impact on overcrowded families who consider that they are unable to accept offers of larger social rented homes that are designated as car free.

6.2 In order to assist this part of the community move into improved, more spacious homes, this report outlines the proposed introduction of a targeted PTS to encourage families moving to larger social rented car free homes that will allow them to retain an on-street parking permit.

7. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

7.1 This report seeks approval to introduce a targeted Parking Permit Transfer Scheme that would allow some families in social rented housing to retain an on-street residents'

parking permit when they move to accommodation that is designated as social rented 'car free' housing. This will support various Council policies, primarily the Housing Strategy and its initiatives to reduce overcrowding and promote supply of social housing.

7.2 The scheme will generate various socio-economic benefits by removing a barrier that currently discourages families moving between properties. This will initially relieve overcrowding, but also generate other movements which will place families in accommodation suitable for their needs as well as potentially housing families that are currently on the Council's waiting list.

7.3 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, although officers must ensure that the appropriate parking permit charges are recovered from the car user.

8. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL SERVICES)

8.1 As noted at paragraph 5.2 of this report, the proposed PTS is an operational change to the running of the Council's existing on-street Residents' Parking Permit Scheme. As the PTS is not a comprehensive change to the Council's "car free" development planning policy, then a formal public consultation and approval process is not invoked.

8.2 The PTS addresses a special area of need in the borough as the report explains, and is supported by a sound evidence base. It is not considered the operation of the PTS is arbitrary in nature nor is its impact disproportionate.

9. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 The equalities implications of the PTS have been considered. The introduction of the PTS will help to reduce levels of overcrowding in the social rented housing stock in Tower Hamlets by encouraging larger families to move into improved, more spacious social rented homes in the borough.

9.2 In turn, this scheme should also help other people, in housing need in Tower Hamlets, move into homes vacated by overcrowded families (or by under-occupied households).

10. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

10.1 The PTS is a targeted scheme designed to help reduce overcrowding in Tower Hamlets and is a change in the operation of the Council's on-street Residents' Parking Permit Scheme.

10.2 Tower Hamlets Council supports the development of greener, healthier lifestyles through our sustainable land use and transport planning policies.

10.3 These efforts also include the promotion of walking, cycling and public transport, as well as the evolution of the TfL Cycle Hire Scheme and on-street car club network across the borough.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

11.1 It is considered that there are no significant risks associated with the introduction of the PTS. It is a targeted scheme for people moving to 3+ bedroom social rented car free homes to help reduce the number of overcrowded households in the borough.

12. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 It is considered that there are no crime and disorder reduction implications.

13. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

13.1 The introduction of the PTS will support the more efficient use of the social rented housing stock in the borough by helping to reduce levels of overcrowding in the social rented housing stock in Tower Hamlets by encouraging larger families to move into improved, more spacious social rented homes in the borough.

14. APPENDICES

14.1 None

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended) List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report

Brief description of "background papers"
N/A

Name and telephone number of holder
and address where open to inspection.

To be completed by author

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