

# 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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## Chair's 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 growing population which is projected to reach approximately 360,000 by 2027 and the use of vehicles continues to be the key mode of people moving around the borough. It helps people to get to work, stay in touch with friends and family, contribute to society and enables access to vital services like healthcare.

The British Parking Association report<sup>1</sup> suggests that parking continues to frustrate both drivers and non-drivers alike. Crucially the industry recognises that parking remains an important factor in people's everyday life, with many holding opposing views on the subject.

This report acknowledges that parking management and delivery continues to evolve. The impact of Covid-19 could lead to reduced demand if more people continue to work from home, but equally there are significant new developments and infrastructure projects planned in the borough over the next decade which will likely significantly impact parking. Therefore, this report considers some of the challenges that the council's Parking and Mobility Service face when managing the highway and traffic and what mitigation is needed to meet future demand.

We know that attitudes towards congestion, safety and the environment will continue to influence parking policy in the borough. Therefore, this report explores the impact of specific influences such as ULEZ expansion, car free developments, Permit Transfer Scheme, hotspot areas and the switch to electric vehicles as we try to tackle the climate emergency.

This challenge session provided the Overview and Scrutiny Committee an opportunity to scrutinise the sustainability of the council's approach to parking and traffic management. It is clear from the evidence heard that parking is an integral element of not only the transport strategy but also many of the other council's priorities and aspirations. The Committee has made seven 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 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.

**Clr 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>That the Parking and Mobility Service reviews the parking and permit policies to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) It embeds a documented approach such as a Parking Enforcement Plan for policies such as pricing, control parking zones, permit schemes to manage the highway and parking demand; and</li> <li>(b) It should also detail how these relate to the other council priorities such as climate change, air quality and liveable street and school streets.</li> </ul>
<b>R2</b>	<p>That the Parking and Mobility Service consider the following options to better utilise available parking space and incorporate health impact assessments alongside equality considerations to understand the impact they will have on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Reviewing business permit spaces where feasible and how multi-use bays can be better utilised to support the post pandemic economic recovery;</li> <li>(b) Selective use of removal of individual space markings within bays (where there is a high footfall and demand for parking) 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 (where there is a high footfall and demand for parking) to support capacity within a limited footprint.</li> </ul>
<b>R3</b>	<p>That the Parking and Mobility Service considers ensuring EV charging points have a maximum stay policy in place to facilitate capacity for others to charge.</p>
<b>R4</b>	<p>That the Parking and Mobility Service reviews the current Permit Transfer Scheme and should include assessing flexibility for residents who may need a short break from vehicle ownership without it impacting their right of accessing the permit when they choose to purchase the vehicle.</p>
<b>R5</b>	<p>That the Parking and Mobility Services uses a targeted approach via CEO monitoring activities to address hotspot areas and co-ordinate with ASB and Enforcement officers to use sanctions where necessary such as ASB orders and temporary use CCTVs to act as deterrence, meet compliance and incentivise behaviour change.</p>
<b>R6</b>	<p>That the Parking and Mobility Services considers the option of setting its emission-based pricing policy over a longer period (for example three years) to help influence buyer behaviour and make the change towards lower emission vehicles.</p>
<b>R7</b>	<p>That the Parking and Mobility Service considers expanding the use of car clubs (EV's) as a single borough wide solution for the council, thus reducing further need for costly public service permits and encourage other large employer partners within the borough to sign up with the scheme such as home care providers.</p>

## 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 aimed to build on the spotlight review they undertook in 2019, focussing in more detail on the council's Parking Services.
- 1.3. In looking at the issue of parking, the Committee supports the council's long term ambitions to reduce the dependency of petrol and diesel vehicles to protect the environment and support the climate emergency agenda. The Committee also understands that there is an immediate need to manage the current demand for parking and align this with future demand.
- 1.4. 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 because of more planned car free dwellings, expansion of London's ULEZ boundaries, residents' motivation to switch to electric vehicles; and
  - any learning from neighbouring authorities and experts as part of developing 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 ensured they understand the implications for ULEZ expansion scheme, and captured any insights that help to understand residents behaviour and receptiveness to change, particularly those from lower economic background?

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

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

- What has been the feedback from residents to date? How well is the transfer scheme working and what level of monitoring is in place to detect and manage online fraud?
- What learning can the council take to help understand how 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 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

That the Parking and Mobility Service reviews the parking and permit policies to ensure that:

- It embeds a documented approach such as a Parking Enforcement Plan for 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 relate to the other council priorities such as climate change, air quality and liveable street and school streets.

- 3.1. The Committee received a presentation from the Parking and Mobility Service on its approach to the borough's parking and permit policy. The Committee felt that some of the policy areas could convey contradictory messages to residents and other public space users and are not consistent with the council's priorities. For example, encouraging reduced vehicle usage and not addressing the number of vehicle ownership could pose challenges on the volume of vehicles using up public space for parking for longer periods of time. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Public Realm explained that the rationale for reducing vehicle usage is part of the council's active travel policy and involves promoting this through various linked schemes, including school streets and liveable streets programmes, which

will primarily support aims to reduce 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 detailed their Parking and Enforcement Plan (PEP). Their PEP is their principal policy and strategy document for parking services and includes a range of policies, plans and vision for the service across a five year period. It sets out objectives and recommendations on what and how they will deliver these and considers the impact on different stakeholder groups in Hackney.
- 3.3. Council officers acknowledged that further work needs to be undertaken to develop written policies, such as a PEP. This must set out their approach to pricing, control parking zones (CPZ) and how they intend to manage the demand of the highway and flow of traffic whilst linking it to the strategic aims set out within the council's Transport Strategy but also factoring other key priorities and strategies.

### **Recommendation 2**

That the Parking and Mobility Service consider the following options to better utilise available parking space and incorporate health impact assessments alongside equality considerations to understand the impact they will have on:

- (a) Reviewing business permit spaces where feasible and how multi-use bays can be better utilised to support the post pandemic economic recovery;
- (b) Selective use of removal of individual space markings within bays (where there is a high footfall and demand for parking) to support capacity within a limited footprint; and
- (a) 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 (where there is a high footfall and demand for parking) to support capacity within a limited footprint.

- 4.1. The Committee enquired whether the council has sufficient capacity to manage the number of vehicles in the borough and if not, how does the current policy address the issue of growing demand and capacity. The Committee felt that some of the criteria for parking in neighbouring mini zones were overly complex, unnecessary and difficult to interpret for residents. The Cabinet Member informed the Committee that managing capacity using mini zones helps to free up spaces next to a person's property, home or street and further aims to reduce shorter journeys (a key objective for the scheme). The Cabinet Member also outlined that the overall number of parking spaces generally matched the number of allocated parking permits but accepted that there is a variance on the threshold for demand and supply of parking across different parts of the borough
- 4.2. The Committee also sought clarity on the impact on parking capacity as a result of rolling out the Traffic Management Orders (TMO) for housing estates. The service confirmed that control parking on estates will be implemented to meet compliance of health and safety requirements. The service suggested that this is likely to impact on parking capacity and as due to the TMO, it may lead to some spill over on to surrounding areas, for which residents will need to either apply for a parking permit or use casual parking. The service advised that it was not able to quantify further specific levels of impact on parking capacity but informed the Committee that they will monitor the situation as its implemented.
- 4.3. The Director of Capital Traffic Management and Parking Limited outlined some possible options to address local parking pressures for the council's consideration. This detailed approaches to increase capacity and improve the use of space where there is a limited



footprint. This included a review of the use of business permit spaces and where feasible the application of multi-use bays to support post pandemic economic recovery, changing the use of 'T' marking within bays at specific locations where there is high demand for parking and high 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 address the capacity issues but equally, the Committee felt that it was important to gauge the impact that the changes above could have on other public space users possibly making streets less permeable for other public space users.

**Recommendation 3**

That the Parking and Mobility Service considers ensuring EV charging points have a maximum stay policy in place to facilitate capacity for others to charge.

- 5.1. The Committee sought clarity on the number of dedicated electric vehicle (EV) charging bays available for charging vehicles as the evidence suggested that of the 98 parking bays, only 23 are dedicated electric vehicle charging bays. The Committee questioned whether this implied that many of the vehicle parking bays with electric charging points do not have a maximum stay policy, which would increase accessibility for more users and help with capacity as numbers of EV's grow. The Committee were concerned that having a low number of maximum stay policy for charging point bays may dissuade people from investing in electric vehicles.
- 5.2. The Cabinet Member confirmed that remaining 75 parking bays currently do not have a maximum stay policy for people to charge their vehicles and they could be used by other non-electric vehicle users. However, the council intends to explore how it can ensure bays with charging points have a maximum stay policy to help with the increased volume of EV's needing to be charged. This would be subject to the review of different types of charging points available in the market. The Cabinet Member also confirmed that there were further bids in place to strengthen the capacity of charging points and respond to increased demand, and that they expect anywhere in the region of 150-250 fast charging points to be made available for 2022/23. The Cabinet Member informed that this municipal year they will be allocating some of the 150 already approved electric vehicle charging points to help with the demand.

**Recommendation 4**

That the Parking and Mobility Service reviews the current Permit Transfer Scheme and should include assessing flexibility for residents who may need a short break from vehicle ownership without it impacting their right of accessing the permit when they choose to purchase the vehicle.

- 6.1. The Committee believes that the current PTS offer is inflexible as it does not allow permit holders who wish to take a break from vehicle ownership for a longer period without it affecting their right to a permit in the future. The Committee felt that the current 28 day period needs to be significantly extended to support the recommendation and factor in assessment of needs. The current PTS is based on the households and not individuals and therefore this will also need to be considered when undertaking the wider review on PTS including the terms and conditions.
- 6.2. The Committee considered if the PTS policy could be extended to accommodate those households where people were living in an overcrowded property but are not the primary



tenancy holders such as living with parents or co-habiting. The Cabinet Member informed that where there are overcrowding issues the PTS policy is designed to manage the capacity and availability of parking spaces and it is currently restricted to overcrowded households with permits moving to a larger property.

- 6.3. The service reiterated the view that there is a strict criteria for the PTS which had been reviewed in 2018 and considered situations where residents may have been housed outside of the borough temporarily and then returned back to Tower Hamlets at a later date, at which point the service would honour if they were previously permit holders. One of the issues for the Committee here is the applicable time frame. The 28 days criteria was originally set up to allow people change their vehicle to another. However, the service was prepared to re-visit this aspect of the PTS when they undertake the wider review and consider the feasibility of this.
- 6.4. The Committee felt that the setup of the PTS is a compromise, one which was never satisfactory or fair allowing only overcrowded families to qualify. 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.
- 6.5. The Committee also 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. 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 they will be 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.
- 6.6. 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 an earlier stage of planning in order to alleviate some of the highway parking pressures issues.
- 6.7. The Committee examined the issue of those residents who need their vehicle for work purposes but would be impacted if they are offered a car free development sited property such as mobile care workers and mini cab drivers. 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 and replaced by an increasing number of electric vehicles, situated alongside more car free developments.

#### **Recommendation 5**

That the Parking and Mobility Services uses a targeted approach via CEO monitoring activities to address hotspot areas and co-ordinate with ASB and Enforcement officers to use sanctions where necessary such as ASB orders and temporary use CCTVs to act as deterrence, meets compliance and one which incentivise behaviour change.

- 7.1. The Committee scrutinised the level of monitoring taking place by civil enforcement officers (CEO) for parking bays that are situated in hotspot areas and largely occupied by vehicle maintenance and repair establishments. The Committee raised their concerns that there is evidence that both signage and road markings have been tampered with, such as spraying over signage and road markings and that vehicle registrations plates are often concealed thus potentially avoiding fixed penalty notice (FPN). Moreover, nearby residents feel that the area was unsightly, and that it also invited other antisocial behaviours (ASB).
- 7.2. The service outlined that extensive work has been undertaken with local businesses, including creating dedicated bays for businesses to use (required to purchase permits for the use of this), so that it frees up the bays that nearby residents need to use. The service informed that one of the vehicle maintenance and repair business had consistently disregarded road traffic and parking compliance and subsequently the ASB and enforcement team issued the garage with an ASB order. The service went on to add that these hotspots are monitored by CEO and reported back to the service and if businesses continue to disregard the order then they can be taken to court. The Cabinet Member confirmed that they will take on the Committee's concerns and review the hotspot areas with targeted monitoring activities until the situation is resolved. The Committee felt that where the issue is persistent then the use of temporary CCTV's may help to draw out any irregular practice and be used as a visible deterrent for encouraging other types of ASB behaviour occurring.

#### **Recommendation 6**

That the Parking and Mobility Services considers the option of setting its emission-based pricing policy over a longer period (for example three years) to help influence buyer behaviour and make the change towards lower emission vehicles.

- 9.1. The council's Parking and Mobility Service outlined their pricing structures to support managing the highway and traffic. This includes permit pricing incentives for lower emission vehicles, surcharge for diesel vehicles on causal parking, permit surcharge for diesel vehicles ownership and permit surcharge for second and third permit per household. Additionally, to support a number of businesses in their post pandemic economic recovery efforts, the service suspended a number of the business bays to encourage outdoor dining and changed some of the parking restrictions to support the businesses. The Committee, in principle supported some of the measures that were presented but with the caveat that the more complicated a system becomes the more costs will increase for residents and that this should also be factored in when considering pricing policies.
- 9.2. The discussion highlighted the issue that deprived areas of community could be discriminated against if they are not able to afford electric vehicles. They cost more, relative to petrol vehicles, and therefore having higher charges for petrol-based 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 period so that residents can see what they are likely to pay and help to influence buyer behaviour in changing to a lower emissions vehicle. The Director of Capital Traffic Management and Parking Limited suggested using a visible sliding scale emissions-based pricing structure. 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, some of which the parking service is already applying. This option also enables the council to monitor the change in car ownership usage through the pay by phone system and facilitates the review of each year's tariff and the

discount that could be applied so that over time this brings it back into line as car ownership changes.

#### **Recommendation 7**

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

- 10.1. The Committee raised the issue that car clubs impact resident parking adversely by taking up more spaces in resident parking bays and creating additional parking pressures for some areas in the borough. The Cabinet Member advised that car clubs are arrangement schemes across many of the London boroughs, and are used to incentivise the reduction of outright vehicle ownership and often subscribed for use 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 development agenda and encourages people to use these to help 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 in the borough, vehicle types, pricing and availability and as usage increases over time transfer some of the bays to the car clubs particularly for those areas which are car free developments. Equally, the service provides a number of public service permits for front lines to carry out their duties, therefore increased car club usage by the council for front line services may offset some of the permit costs and reduce the number of vehicles required on road.

## **Conclusion**

- 11.1. This challenge session provided the Overview and Scrutiny Committee a chance to scrutinise the council's current approach to its parking permit policies and how it influences resident's behaviour. It is 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. Striking the right balance for parking to accommodate the diverse needs of the borough remains an ongoing challenge. The Committee supports the council's ambition to reduce petrol and diesel vehicles to protect the environment and has made recommendations within this report to facilitate the uptake of electric vehicles. The Committee also understands that there is an immediate need to manage the current demand for parking and align this with future demand and have proposed recommendations to help with this.
- 11.2. Overall, the Committee has made seven 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.