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| Cabinet 29 November 2023 |  TOWER HAMLETS |
| Report of: Corporate Director of Communities | Classification: Unrestricted |
| Change and amendments to the Permit Transfer Scheme (PTS) criteria | |

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| Lead Member | Councillor Kabir Hussain, Cabinet Member, Cabinet Member for Environment and the Climate Emergency |
| Originating Officer(s) | Norman Rabess – Parking Team Leader Simon Baxter – Interim Divisional Director Public Realm Michael Darby – Head of Parking, Mobility and Market Services Vicky Allen – Strategy and Policy |
| Wards affected | All |
| Key Decision? | Yes |
| Reason for Key Decision | Significant impact on wards |
| Forward Plan Notice Published | 23/12/2022 |
| Exempt information | N/A |
| Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Homes for the future. 2. Invest in public services. 3. A clean and green future. 4. A council that works for you and listens to you. |

Reasons for urgency

The Parking Service needed time to verify the data which took longer than anticipated which is why the report was delayed being shared online. The reason for the urgency is this report addresses some very urgent issues in the borough relating to housing and parking.

Executive Summary

This report addresses the mayor's strategic priorities and is related to 'Homes for the future' and his pledge to review the car parking permit transfer scheme (PTS).

The review has given us the opportunity to address the gaps identified in the scheme, and day-to-day operational issues which have led to misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and complaints.

The proposal is to reword the scheme to remove ambiguity and widen the criteria of those who can apply to the scheme. In summary, the proposed changes will allow residents who may need a short break from vehicle ownership to retain their right to a permit under the PTS indefinitely.

The proposal will allow the permit holder to apply for a new permit if their old one has expired. In addition, it will allow another family member to apply for a new permit if the previous permit holder no longer needs one.

The proposal amends the PTS to allow a family in an overcrowded property who move to a larger car free property with two or more bedrooms to retain their right to one on-street resident permit.

The proposal removes the PTS criteria 3, which states 'The applicant must have held an on-street parking permit for at least twelve months prior to moving into the new property.

The proposal to extend the PTS to allow an individual or family in an under-occupied property who downsize to a smaller car free property to retain their right to one on-street resident permit. The changes are listed in section 5 below. The changes are designed to alleviate overcrowding issues.

As well as reviewing the Permit Transfer Scheme, the mayor also made a pledge to review car-free zones to ensure those who require vehicles for work are not priced out of the local area. A separate report has been prepared, and we have proposed that a resident who is completely reliant on a vehicle for their livelihood, for example, a licenced taxi driver (including uber drivers), should be allowed to apply for an on-street resident parking permit at a car free property.

RE PUBLICATION

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Agree the proposed changes to the Permit Transfer Scheme (PTS) criteria to fulfil the manifesto pledge.
2. To note the Equalities Impact Assessment / specific equalities considerations as set out in Paragraph four.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 To deliver the mayor's manifesto pledge to review the Permit Transfer Scheme.
- 1.2 To reduce the number of families living in overcrowded properties who are reluctant to incur the loss of a vehicle if they accept an offer of more suitably sized accommodation in car-free developments, by allowing them to apply for one permit.

- 1.3 To resolve the most common day-to-day queries and complaint issues about the current PTS.
- 1.4 To ensure the scheme is clear, transparent, and fair for our residents.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 To keep the current PTS. However, this would not deliver the mayor's manifesto pledge, or resolve the most common day-to-day issues.
- 2.2 To withdraw the PTS. However, this was introduced as a mechanism to address overcrowding in the borough and removing it may lead to fewer households moving.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The PTS was introduced and adopted by Cabinet in September 2011 as a tool to help reduce the levels of overcrowding in the borough. The aim was to help overcrowded households, accepted onto the housing waiting list, move to larger accommodation in car-free developments, by allowing them to retain one on-street resident parking permit.
- 3.2 In 2011, an independent review of the proposed PTS was undertaken by a transport planning consultancy into the need for a targeted PTS. The study found that approximately one fifth of the reasons given for rejecting 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.
- 3.3 In December 2021, an Overview and Scrutiny Challenge Report looked into the extent to which the council's parking permit policy influences people's behaviour. The report recommended a number of changes to the Permit Transfer Scheme which have been addressed in this review and reflected in our proposals.

4 Analysis of the current PTS

- 4.1 Analysis found that the top three reasons why residents were unsuccessful when applying for a permit under the PTS were as follows:
- Not satisfying the twelve-month qualifying period. As an example, 21 (28%) out of 74 applicants did not hold an on-street resident permit for 12 months prior to moving.
 - Failing to renew their permits and as a consequence losing their right to a new permit which have led to complaints and Members Enquiries.
 - Not allowing another occupant to apply for a new permit if the permit holder no longer needs a permit due to a change in circumstance.
- 4.2 The proposed changes will allow a resident to apply for a new permit if their old one has expired, or they cancel it.
- 4.3 The proposed changes will allow another occupant to apply for a new permit under the PTS if the previous permit holder no longer needs a permit due to a change in circumstance.
- 4.4 The proposed changes will allow an individual or families in social housing properties (including mutual exchange) with two or more bedrooms to downsize to smaller car free properties and to retain one on-street resident parking permit.

5 The PTS proposals are as follows:

- 5.1 To amend the PTS to allow a family in an overcrowded property who move to a larger car free property with two or more bedrooms to retain their right to one on-street resident permit.
- 5.2 To remove the PTS criteria 3, which states 'The applicant must have held an on-street parking permit for at least twelve months prior to moving into the new property
- 5.3 Amend the criteria to include families living in private rented properties.'
- 5.4 Amend the criteria so that another occupant will be allowed to apply for a new permit providing that one member of the household had previously held a permit under the PTS.

- 5.5 Amend the criteria so that the permit holder is allowed to apply for a new permit if their old one expires, or they cancel it.
- 5.6 To extend the PTS to allow an individual or family in an under-occupied property who downsize to a smaller car free property to retain their right to one on-street resident permit.
- 5.7 Full details of the proposed changes to the PTS are outlined in appendix 1.

6 Impact

- 6.1 Census 2021 data shows that has been a decrease in the proportion of Tower Hamlets households that have at least one car or van, from 37% in 2011 to 33.6% in 2021. 66.4% of households in Tower Hamlets have no cars or vans in the households compared to the London average of 42.1%. Tower Hamlets has the third lowest proportion of households that own a vehicle, just above City of London and Islington.
- 6.2 It is difficult to predict the number of additional car parking permits that could be issued due to the proposed changes to the PTS.
- 6.3 The table below shows the total number of active on- street resident permits on 6 November 2023 was 24,373. Of which 809 (3.32 per cent) were issued under the PTS.

| Permit Type | Count of Permit Type | % of Permit Type |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Resident Permit | 20,637 | 84.67% |
| Resident Permit (Blue Badge Holders) | 2,802 | 11.50% |
| Resident Permit Transfer Scheme | 809 | 3.32% |
| Resident Permit for Decantees | 125 | 0.51% |
| Grand Total | 24,373 | 100.00% |

- 6.4 As of 1 November 2023, there are 24,366 household applications on the Housing Register. 10,866 are overcrowded, and of those, 8,030 require two or more bedrooms.
- 6.5 There are 1,166 under-occupying social tenants on the Housing Register. Of those 600 require two or more bedrooms.
- 6.6 There are 711 homeless households on the Housing Register who have been placed in temporary accommodation outside of the borough and require properties with two or more bedrooms.
- 6.7 Changes to the Permit Transfer Scheme could increase the number of vehicles on the roads in Tower Hamlets. Households assessed as being overcrowded and are offered homes of their choice by our Housing Options Service or partner registered providers and move into two bedroom or larger properties on car-free developments will have the right to retain one parking permit. This right

will apply to under occupying households who move into a car free development in order to free up much needed larger accommodation for overcrowded households.

- 6.8 Every household in the borough that is not in a property on a car-free development is eligible to apply for up to three permits. The proposal enables a household to retain one permit when they are offered a permanent home by Housing Options or its partner registered providers of a larger property on a car-free development. The household that moves into the vacated property then is able to apply for up to three permits.
- 6.9 The planning service are in the process of reviewing the data they hold about development schemes in the borough. This exercise will enable the council to get a better understanding of the status of the major schemes that are not being managed by our own building control surveyors. This will include a more accurate prediction about when they will complete, the number of units including number of family sized homes. Since the majority of new developments are on car-free developments, Parking should be able to use this information to better understand the potential number of residents who may be eligible to apply for on-street parking permits under the PTS.

7 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A full equality analysis regarding the review of the PTS, which includes the proposal's likely impact on the nine protected characteristics, has been carried out and attached as Appendix 2.
- 7.2 We do not know what the impact of this proposal will have on the number of vehicles in the borough. The council is committed however to encourage residents to switch to sustainable modes of transport
- 7.3 We have planted in excess of a thousand trees to offset carbon footprint. In addition, the council announced that it expects to be net zero in 2025 and net zero borough wide by 2045.
- 7.4 The council has invested £6m into fleet vehicles. So far 350 electric vehicle charging points have been delivered, and we are preparing to install a further 2,000 slow chargers, 200 fast chargers, and 35 rapid chargers over the next three years.
- 7.5 The changes are designed to support our strategic aim of reducing overcrowding in the borough but without adversely disadvantaging households who need to use a car. The majority of overcrowded households are Asian at 73% of the total overcrowding waiting list. We expect the policy to benefit households with dependent children which are most likely to be overcrowded; and older resident households who are most likely to be under occupying. The changes are expected to free up smaller properties for residents on our housing waiting list, and likely benefit younger resident households.

- 7.6 The council has a legal duty to review the quality of air in the area. In 2000 an air quality management area was declared in Tower Hamlets due to high concentrations of NO₂ and Particulate Matter (PM₁₀). Poor air quality is associated with several adverse health impacts such as heart and lung disease.
- 7.7 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. 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.
- 7.8 The evidence pack, of the Council's Transport Strategy states:
- Traffic flows are a significant determinant of air pollution in the borough.
 - In the borough, a disproportionately higher rate of South Asian population who are over 70 years old have been diagnosed with asthma.
- 7.9 Key groups vulnerable to poor air quality include:
- Infants and young children,
 - Pregnant women,
 - 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).
- 7.10 Existing concessions to support disabled people will remain unchanged. These include free Visitor Vouchers for Carers and Resident Permits for Disabled Badge holders. Disabled Badge holders also have the right to park for three hours on a single or double yellow line and all day in a Pay by Phone bays. People who have carers are entitled to an additional free 480 visitor parking vouchers. This is an addition to 240 residents parking vouchers which are free to those over 60 years old.

8 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The contractual terms and conditions that govern resident parking permits clearly specify that the Council retains the right to amend them upon the provision of 28 days' notice. These terms and conditions are issued with each permit and published on the Council website. If the changes to the terms and conditions are approved, Officers will inform all resident permit holders of a new implementation date which gives 28 days' notice. A consultation on the changes is not a requirement.

8.2 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

9 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

9.1 The proposed amendments to the Permit Transfer Scheme would increase eligibility for on street parking permits. It is however difficult to predict the number of additional permits that might be issued as a result of these proposed changes, and the additional permit income. This will be monitored as part of usual monthly budget monitoring.

10 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

10.1 The parking permit transfer scheme is a scheme that was introduced in 2011 to help reduce levels of over-crowding in the Borough and it is right that its operation should be kept under review. Any review of the terms of the scheme are a policy decision and the rationale for the review has been clearly stated in the Executive Summary. It is proposed that existing concessions to support disabled residents remain unaffected and an equalities impact assessment has been undertaken.

10.2 The provision of resident parking permits is contractual in nature and the existing terms allow for them to be amended on the provision of 28-days' notice. We must therefore ensure that we correctly follow any steps that are required before any changes are implemented. Any changes to the scheme will be effective immediately in respect of new applications for permits.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Full details of the proposal changes to the PTS (appendix 1)
- Equalities Impact Assessment (appendix 2)

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

- Cabinet Report, 3 August 2011, Introduction of a Permit Transfer Scheme
- Overview and Scrutiny Challenge Session Report, 13 December 2021, The extent to which the council's parking permit policy influences people's behaviour

Officer contact details for documents:

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