

Annual Parking Report 2015

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Introduction

Thurrock Council provides parking services and has operated decriminalised parking enforcement since 1 April 2005. It enforces waiting and loading restrictions in the borough, both on-street and in the car parks under its management.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 requires the council to publish an annual parking report explaining how it operates and the uses of any surplus income on transportation-related schemes.

The provision and enforcement of parking supports the delivery of the objectives of the Thurrock Transport Strategy 2008-2021 - accessibility; tackling congestion; improving air quality; safer roads; and facilitating regeneration.

Parking Objectives

The Thurrock Parking Strategy is due to be thoroughly reviewed as the last document produced was in April 2007.

The main objectives of the parking policies are to maintain the safety of users of the public highway and council-managed car parks; provide the efficient movement of traffic; increase compliance; maintain access to services and amenities as well as for essential services; and encourage the use of non-car methods of transport.

Parking Services

During 2014/15, Thurrock Council employed seven full-time Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) who patrol fixed beats to ensure enforcement is undertaken on a regular basis.

CEOs are also deployed in a vehicle to locations that are not on existing CEO beats, or unsuitable for the foot patrols. This includes morning and afternoon visits to enforce restrictions in the local surrounding areas of primary schools in the Borough on a rota basis, and on occasions, evening visits to enforce commercial vehicle restrictions.

They use hand-held computers to issue penalty charge notices (PCNs) and to make detailed notes of the circumstances, and use digital cameras.

The notes and evidence gathered by the CEOs is also used to assess challenges against the issue of PCNs objectively and consistently.

A statutory independent review process for PCNs is available through the Traffic Penalty Tribunal. Details of the grounds for appeal can be found at www.patrol-uk.info.

The parking services team also deals with changes to parking policy, responding to enquiries and complaints, and provide parking information on the council's website.

It is also responsible for ensuring parking signs, markings and pay-and-display machines are maintained; for temporarily suspending parking places for building or road works, or for removals and public safety; and for granting dispensations to contravene restrictions as necessary.

Back office functions are procured through the council's strategic partner Serco which also deals with the administration of all parking permits.

Performance

Thurrock Council's parking service covers three controlled parking zones (CPZs), one in Grays, one in South Ockendon and one in Stanford-le-Hope and two permit parking area (PPA) in Badgers Dene and Seabrooke Rise both in Grays as well as 10 off-street car parks throughout the borough.

There are in the region of 1,161 marked bays for off street parking, and 1,255 for on street parking. There are also approximately 78 and 195 off street and on street parking spaces respectively that are not marked out as individual bays.

The Council also enforces car park at the Morrison's supermarket in Grays by agreement. An annual charge from Morrison's to enforce and revenue from all Penalty Charge Notices are paid to the Council for this responsibility.

The following table provides the numbers of penalty charge notices issued for contraventions on Thurrock Council's road network, and in the car parks under its management in 2013/14 and 2014/15. It also provides details of the numbers of residents, business and visitor permits issued for its controlled parking zones, and the numbers of blue badges on issue for these two years.

Thurrock Council's Civil Parking Enforcement Statistical Information	2013/14	2014/15
On-street penalty charge notices issued	12,721	7559
Off-street penalty charge notices issued	1,451	1529
Residents permits issued	2,424	2731
Business permits issued	60	60
Visitor permits issued (valid for 20 visits up to 5 hours)	2,992	3251
Blue badges on issue	2,491	2939

The number of penalty charge notices issued on-street decreased from 12721 in 2013/14 to 7559 in 2014/15 causing a reduction of 5162. The withdrawal of the CCTV Vehicle saw a reduction in PCN's being issued in restricted areas outside of primary schools.

Whilst the number of penalty charge notices dropped significantly, the PCN income rose, reflecting a more efficient issuing and follow up procedure. It could also be suggested that residents acknowledge the parking contraventions and have become more considerate drivers thus avoiding the need of receiving a penalty charge notice.

The number of penalty charge notices issued in off-street parking places increased slightly from 1,451 in 2013/14 to 1,529 in 2014/15.

The number of residents' and visitors' parking permits issued increased significantly from 2424 and 2992 respectively in 2013/14 to 2731 and 3251 respectively in 2014/15.

The tables on the next page provide details of the most common parking contraventions for which penalty charge notices were issued both on-street and off-street in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

This parking action has helped the council support local retailers by ensuring that there is a regular turnover of parking spaces in the town centres.

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ON-STREET Most Common Contraventions Based on PCNs	2013/14	2014/15
Parked in restricted street during prescribed hours	1,305	2016
Parked or loading/unloading in restricted street where waiting and loading/unloading restrictions are in force	1,067	397
Parked after expiry of paid for time in pay and display bay	441	494
Parked without clearly displaying valid pay and display ticket	117	128
Parked in residents' or shared use parking place without displaying either a permit or voucher or pay and display ticket issue for that place	280	426
Parked in a permit space without displaying a valid permit	806	1006
Parked in residents' or shared use parking place displaying an invalid permit, an invalid voucher or an invalid pay and display ticket	117	167
Parked in a loading place during restricted hours without loading	595	567
Parked adjacent to a dropped footway	178	55
Parked for longer than permitted	132	144
Parked in a designated disabled person' parking space without clearly displaying a valid disabled person's badge	106	152
Parked on a taxi rank	202	0
Stopped where prohibited (on a clearway)	1,183	491
Stopped in a restricted area outside a school	341	22
A commercial vehicle parked in a restricted street in contravention of the overnight waiting ban	39	6
Parked in contravention of a commercial vehicle waiting restriction	3,319	1062
A heavy commercial vehicle wholly or partly parked on a footway, verge or land between two carriageways	2,024	0
Other on-street contraventions	469	426
TOTAL ON-STREET PCNs	12,721	7559

OFF-STREET Most Common Contraventions Based on PCNs	2013/14	2014/15
Parked after the expiry of time paid for in pay and display car park	393	561
Parked in a pay and display car park without clearly displaying a valid pay and display ticket or voucher or parking clock	912	812
Parked with additional payment made to extend the stay beyond the first time purchased	7	10
Parked in a permit bay without clearly displaying a valid permit	15	0
Parked beyond the bay markings	110	128
Other off-street contraventions	14	18
TOTAL OFF-STREET PCNs	1,451	1529

Finance

Civil parking enforcement income is from pay-and-display parking, permit fees and penalty charge notices, and an agreement to undertake civil enforcement in the Morrison's supermarket car park in Grays Town Centre. The main areas of expenditure are on enforcement administration, parking infrastructure maintenance and debt recovery.

The following tables provide comparative figures for the parking income by source and the direct costs of civil parking enforcement in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

On and off-street parking income by source	2013/14 £	2014/15 £
On-street/Off-street parking charges	(295,957)	(356,480)
Permit income	(24,164)	(29,164)
Penalty charge notices	(259,572)	(297,439)
Other income	(21,514)	(38,876)
Total	(601,207)	(721,958)

Direct costs of Civil Parking Enforcement	2013/14 £	2014/15 £
Enforcement	407,987	348,640
Admin., appeals, debt recovery	203,197	184,037
Infrastructure maintenance	24,803	6,577
Capital charges	0	0
Total	635,987	539,253

CCTV enforcement vehicle trial	2013/14 £	2014/15 £
SSP set up and operational costs	106,683	NA
Fuel	1,865	NA
Highway infrastructure	9,000	NA
Other expenditure	318	NA
Total	117,866	NA

Summary	2013/14 £	2014/15 £
Total parking income	(601,207)	(721,958)
Total direct costs of CPE	635,987	539,253
CCTV enforcement vehicle trial	117,866	N/A
Outturn	152,646	(182,705)

Note: The bracketed figures represent income. The final figure for 2013/14 is 152,646 as opposed to the printed version in the Annual Parking report 2013/14 which was 152,545.

The parking budget aims to at least break even each year, and in a year of standard expenditure, an income of over £550,000 should produce a surplus.

The use of any surplus income from Civil Parking Enforcement is restricted to transport-related issues like the operation of public passenger transport services, highway or traffic improvement projects, and certain types of environmental improvement.

Analysis and Issues 2014/15

2014/15 was a year of significant change for the Parking Services Team. Income overall increased by £120,751 compared to 2013/14 and direct costs reduced by £96,734. This on top of the saving from the use of the CCTV vehicle of £117,866 indicates massive improvements to the overall out-turn.

Temporary (agency) staff were employed to cover unforeseen staff absences in parking services in 2014/15, the same as 2013/14 including for long term sickness and maternity leave. New management has been in place since January 2015 and service efficiency has improved. .

CCTV Enforcement Vehicle Trial

A 12-month CCTV enforcement vehicle trial was undertaken from June 2013 for one year, to gauge its effectiveness.

Thurrock does not have many of the necessary parking restrictions compared to some other authorities operating mobile CCTV enforcement. This limited its usage outside of school times, and limited its use at schools for only 39 weeks of the year.

The number of PCNs issued by the vehicle did not cover the operational costs and put pressure on the budget. This led to the parking account being in deficit in 2013/14.

The decision was therefore taken to discontinue mobile enforcement. Since the discontinuation of the trial the team has been restructured, PCN's have increased and the Debt Recovery Team has had a higher success rate in collecting money owed to the Council.

Support for Businesses

Support was given to local businesses and shops experiencing difficult times in the current financial downturn through free weekend parking during December 2014 in all on and off-street pay-and-display parking places controlled by the Council, to encourage people to shop locally.

The lost revenue from this initiative was estimated to be in the region of £5,000 the same as the previous year.

Controlled Parking Zone & Residents' Parking

In 2013/14 a new permit parking area was introduced in part of the Flowers Estate in South Ockendon to reduce the impact of commuter parking in the locality of the station. There has been an improvement in parking in this area as well as revenue from PCNs produced.

Two new Residents Parking Areas have been introduced in Badgers Dene and Seabrooke Rise in Grays. This was to ensure that commuter parking was reduced

after various complaints from residents. An improvement is expected and initial feedback has been positive.

Penalty Charge Debt Recovery

The council took steps to increase its recovery rate for parking penalties in 2014/15, by registering more outstanding charges with the courts as debts and by appointing bailiffs to recover these debts, particularly in the cases of unpaid parking penalties issued to repeat offenders. The debt recovery process is being managed by the Council's debt management team and is being conducted in accordance with the fair debt policy.

The council's debt management team has also started working with partners throughout Europe to trace the keepers of foreign-registered vehicles. This enables those individuals who have received a PCN to be pursued for their outstanding parking penalties. Feedback from the Debt Recovery Team is positive, with some fines being recovered from foreign drivers and companies. However this process is still at an early stage.

Plans for Year Ahead

Parking Tariff Review

Parking charges in Thurrock are relatively low. Limited increases to tariffs for on and off street car parking areas were introduced in January 2015.

Lorry Parks

There will be the introduction of a new lorry park opening in Tilbury in November 2015. There is already a temporary park in West Thurrock until August 2015 and there is a resolution to expand and approve this as a permanent park in the near future. In addition to this, DP World are in early discussions with the Development Management Team at the Council to provide this type of facility in the vicinity of the port. This will see the need to increase the enforcement in Thurrock especially if as expected Highway England, (formerly Highways Agency) choose to close their laybys once the lorry park is established. The Council is in dialogue with Essex Police and the Port of Tilbury Police to monitor the situation and plan possible interventions. Reducing the impact of vehicle emissions in Thurrock is a high priority and therefore we are working to reduce on street lorry parking across the borough and encourage the use of these new lorry parks.

Freight Action Plan

The Thurrock Freight Quality Partnership (FQP) has ongoing work to develop an action plan in relation to HGV movements within the borough. The Group will link in with the Parking Team to look at ways to minimise the negative impact that freight movements have in the borough recognising that they are essential for local businesses.

Residents Parking Area

The Council may look at introducing a new parking permit area in Purfleet which will benefit residents and reduce commuter traffic. A full consultation is taking place in July 2015.

Cashless Parking

The Council will explore options for enabling users of some of its paid for parking areas to make cashless payments for their parking fees.

Staff Changes

The Parking team came under new management in January 2015. Management is working with the staff to introduce refresher training, new uniforms and updated equipment technology which will ease pressure on the Civil Enforcement Officers day to day duties. The team's efforts have been enhanced with support and encouragement and this has led to them generating new ideas and thoughts to improve the service.

School Pilot Scheme

A trial has begun whereby schools were offered the opportunity to be trained to enforce outside of their own establishments in order to not only assist the small number of Civil Enforcement Officers but also to educate the parents of the legality of where they can park. To date there has been limited take up. However, Pioneer School in Tilbury is expected to commence operation in September 2015. The trial will last for the Autumn Term until December 2015 when it will be reviewed.

Glossary

Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs)

Formerly known under the Road Traffic Act 1991 as Parking Attendants, the Traffic Management Act 2004 re-classified those responsible for taking civil enforcement action in relation to civil parking and traffic control contraventions as Civil Enforcement Officers

Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE)

Refers to the enforcement of parking controls under regulations set down in the Traffic Management Act 2004

Penalty Charge Notice (PCN)

The Notice served directly (as set down in the Traffic Management Act 2004) by Civil Enforcement Officers to motorists for allegedly contravening civil parking controls within a Civil Enforcement Area.

Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ)/Permit Parking Area (PPA)

A zone or area where parking is controlled through the provision of permits and other on street controls in order to manage kerb space and ensure that residents are not unduly inconvenienced by parking behaviour