

# **Thurrock Council**

## **Annual parking report 2016**

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Parking objectives .....	3
Parking services .....	3
Performance .....	4
Finance .....	6
Analysis and Issues 2015/16 .....	6
School pilot project.....	7
Support for businesses .....	7
Residents' parking .....	7
Penalty charge debt recovery .....	7
Plans for year ahead.....	8
Glossary.....	9

## **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 in 2016/17 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 2015/16, 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.

The officers use hand-held computers to issue penalty charge notices (PCNs) and to make detailed notes of the circumstances. The computers were updated in 2015/2016 and now incorporate digital cameras which were separate previously.

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](http://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.

As from 1 December 2015 back office functions are procured separately through Serco although the rest of their services have been brought back in house.

## 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 2014/15 and 2015/16. 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	2014/15	2015/16
On-street penalty charge notices issued	7,559	8,983
Off-street penalty charge notices issued	1,529	1,559
Residents permits issued	2,731	3,670
Business permits issued	60	47
Visitor permits issued (valid for 20 visits up to 5 hours)	3,251	4,740
Blue badges on issue	2,939	2,861
Morrison's Car Park	894	1,374

The number of penalty charge notices issued on-street increased from 7,559 in 2014/15 to 8,983 in 2015/16, an increase of over 18%. This increase was the result of improved working practices within the team. As Morrisons pay the council to enforce their car park, the number of PCNs issued have been included in the table above.

The number of penalty charge notices issued in off-street parking places increased from 1,529 in 2014/15 to 1,995 in 2015/16, a rise of 30%..

From 2014/5 to 2015/6 the number of residents' permits increased from 2,731 to 3,670, visitors' parking permits from 3,251 to 4,740 and Business Permits reduced from 60 to 47.

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 2014/15 and 2015/16.

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.

<b>ON-STREET – most common contraventions based on PCNs</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Parked in restricted street during prescribed hours	2,016	2,668
Parked or loading/unloading in restricted street where waiting and loading/unloading restrictions are in force	397	444
Parked after expiry of paid for time in pay and display bay	494	377
Parked without clearly displaying valid pay and display ticket	128	143
Parked in residents' or shared use parking place without displaying either a permit or voucher or pay and display ticket issue for that place	426	1,026
Parked in a permit space without displaying a valid permit	1,006	1,030
Parked in residents' or shared use parking place displaying an invalid permit, an invalid voucher or an invalid pay and display ticket	167	245
Parked in a loading place during restricted hours without loading	567	693
Parked adjacent to a dropped footway	55	72
Parked for longer than permitted	144	187
Parked in a designated disabled person' parking space without clearly displaying a valid disabled person's badge	152	240
Parked on a taxi rank	0	228
Stopped where prohibited (on a clearway)	491	489
Stopped in a restricted area outside a school	22	35
A commercial vehicle parked in a restricted street in contravention of the overnight waiting ban	6	0
Parked in contravention of a commercial vehicle waiting restriction	1,062	442
A heavy commercial vehicle wholly or partly parked on a footway, verge or land between two carriageways	0	5
Other on-street contraventions	426	659
<b>TOTAL ON-STREET PCNs</b>	<b>7,559</b>	<b>8,983</b>

<b>OFF-STREET – most common contraventions based on PCNs</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Parked after the expiry of time paid for in pay and display car park	561	677
Parked in a pay and display car park without clearly displaying a valid pay and display ticket or voucher or parking clock	812	1,123
Parked with additional payment made to extend the stay beyond the first time purchased	10	33
Parked in a permit bay without clearly displaying a valid permit	0	0
Parked beyond the bay markings	128	121
Parked causing an obstruction	0	10
Other off-street contraventions	18	31
<b>TOTAL OFF-STREET PCNs</b>	<b>1,529</b>	<b>1,995</b>

## 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 2014/15 and 2015/16.

On and off-street parking income by source	2014/15 (£)	2015/16 (£)
On-street/Off-street parking charges	(356,480)	(421,326)
Permit income	(29,164)	(31,050)
Penalty charge notices	(297,439)	(361,006)
Other income	(38,876)	(200)
Total	(721,959)	(813,582)

Direct costs of Civil Parking Enforcement	2015/15 (£)	2015/16 (£)
Enforcement	348,640	406,914
Admin., appeals, debt recovery	184,037	136,022
Infrastructure maintenance	6,577	6,207
Total	539,254	549,143

Summary	2015/15 (£)	2015/16 (£)
Total parking income	(721,959)	(813,582)
Total direct costs of CPE	539,254	549,143
Outturn	(182,705)	(264,439)

Note: The bracketed figures represent income.

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 2015/16

2015/16 was a year of significant change for the Parking Services Team. Income overall increased by £91,623 compared to 2014/15 and direct costs increased by £9,889.

As stated in the previous report new management has been in place since January 2015 and has continued into 2015/16 with service efficiency including staff recruitment, retraining, new infrastructure such as parking machines, equipment and uniform.

## **School pilot project**

A pilot scheme took place during September to December 2015. The offer was for volunteers to come forward who were to be trained, fully equipped and provided with uniform to enable them to enforce outside of schools. The offer was open to school staff, teachers, learning support assistants, administration staff, governors, dinner staff, cleaners and parents.

Initially, all schools in Thurrock were invited to take part and eight showed interest, seven primary schools and one senior school. The schools were advised that the training was for five full days and had a pass or fail qualification, followed by four weeks on the job training alongside the current Civil Enforcement Officers.

This had a major effect on the project and all of the schools bar the Tilbury Pioneer School declined the scheme. They felt they could not release staff for that length of time. The training was an important part of the scheme as without it enforcement could not be carried out. The volunteer from Tilbury Pioneer was a parent therefore the time required for training had direct impact on school resources.

Throughout the project no PCNs were issued, although the volunteer offered parking advice and suggestions which were well received. The set-up cost for training and equipment of £5000 per volunteer were met from Parking Service budget. No income was generated. The lessons learnt from the pilot will feed in to the refresh of Thurrock's Parking Strategy.

## **Support for businesses**

Support was given to local businesses and shops in the pre-Christmas period through free weekend parking during December 2015 in all on and off-street pay-and-display parking places controlled by the council, to encourage people to shop locally, at an estimated cost to the council of £5,000.

## **Residents' parking**

During 2015/16 enforcement has been increased in Badgers Dene and Seabrooke Rise in Grays. This was to ensure that the revised and expanded schemes were successful and improvement has been made with enough parking available for residents.

## **Penalty charge debt recovery**

The council continues to take steps to increase its recovery rate for parking penalties in 2015/16, 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 council's fair debt policy.

The council's debt management team continues to work 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.

## **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 and permits are reviewed annually.

### **HGV enforcement**

It is clear that although we have a lorry parks in the borough it is extremely difficult to encourage drivers to use these facilities. The growing numbers of HGVs in the borough, coupled with the anticipated closure of laybys on trunk roads in the summer of 2016 has resulted in a decision being made to introduce a new shift of Civil Enforcement Officers working Monday to Friday up until 22-00pm to focus mainly on HGV enforcement.

### **Car parks**

Three changes to additional car parking are being introduced in 2016/17.

The first of these is a small car park will be constructed in Tamarisk Road South Ockendon to reduce grass verge parking and was actioned on requests by some residents.

Secondly, additional parking is being created in Thames Road, Grays down by the beach whereby the grassed area which is only open during the summer periods will be upgraded with a new surface, lighting signs and lines to make this area suitable for year-round use.

The third addition is a new car park at Cornwall House adjacent to Purfleet Railway Station to ease on-street parking pressures and accommodate growing numbers of commuters.

All have been through a full consultation process.

### **Controlled Parking Zones and Residents Parking Areas**

The council is looking at introducing a CPZ in Tilbury in 2016/17 and a full consultation will be taking place. We are also introducing a new parking permit area in Purfleet which will benefit residents and help regulate commuter parking.

### **Cashless parking**

The council are continuing to explore options for enabling cashless payments of parking fees.

### **Staff changes**

The HGV enforcement team will be employed from June 2016. They will support the current teams in the afternoons by visiting more schools, carrying out on and off street enforcement but HGVs will be the priority. Further training will also be provided to existing staff.



## **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