

Thurrock Council
Annual parking report 2017

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1. 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.

2. Parking objectives

The Thurrock Parking Strategy and Policies were reviewed and endorsed by Cabinet on 12 October 2016.

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. Additionally, there is a special focus on tackling HGV parking enforcement.

3. Parking services

During 2016/17, Thurrock Council employed seven full-time Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) who patrol fixed beats to ensure enforcement is undertaken on a regular basis. Additionally, three full-time CEOs were employed to run a twilight shift to increase enforcement of illegal HGV parking.

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.

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.

The back office notice processing function procured separately through Serco was brought back in-house in mid-2016/17 and a new contract with WLA which deals with the administration of all parking permits.

4. 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 three permit parking area's (PPA) in Badgers Dene, Seabrooke Rise both in Grays and Purfleet as well as 10 off-street car parks throughout the borough.

There are in the region of 1,277 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 2015/16 and 2016/17. 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	2015/16	2016/17
On-street penalty charge notices issued	8,983	15,057
Off-street penalty charge notices issued	1,559	1,686
Residents permits issued	3,670	3588
Business permits issued	47	55
Visitor permits issued (valid for 20 visits up to 5 hours)	4,740	4745
Blue badges on issue	2,861	2,861
Morrison's Car Park	1,374	1,222

The number of penalty charge notices issued on-street increased by 67.6% from 8,983 in 2015/16 to 15,057 in 2016/17. This increase was a result of improved working practices within the team. As Morrison's pay the council to enforce their car park, the numbers of PCNs issued have been included in the table above.

The number of penalty charge notices issued in off-street parking places increased by 8%, from 1,559 in 2015/16 to 1,686 in 2016/17.

The number of resident's permits decreased slightly although both visitors and business parking permits had a minimal increase.

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 2015/16 and 2016/17.

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.

On-street – most common contraventions based on PCNs	2015/16	2016/17
Parked in restricted street during prescribed hours	2,668	3,873
Parked or loading/unloading in restricted street where waiting and loading/unloading restrictions are in force	444	225
Parked after expiry of paid for time in pay and display bay	377	320
Parked without clearly displaying valid pay and display ticket	143	269
Parked in residents' or shared use parking place without displaying either a permit or voucher or pay and display ticket issue for that place	1,026	1,109
Parked in a permit space without displaying a valid permit	1,030	687
Parked in residents' or shared use parking place displaying an invalid permit, an invalid voucher or an invalid pay and display ticket	245	411
Parked in a loading place during restricted hours without loading	693	821
Parked adjacent to a dropped footway	72	92
Parked for longer than permitted	187	213
Parked in a designated disabled person's parking space without clearly displaying a valid disabled person's badge	240	281
Parked on a taxi rank	228	283
Stopped where prohibited (on a clearway)	489	859
Stopped in a restricted area outside a school	35	44
Parked in contravention of a commercial vehicle waiting restriction	442	3,461
A heavy commercial vehicle wholly or partly parked on a footway, verge or land between two carriageways	5	1,633
Parked with payment made to extend the stay beyond initial time	0	2
Parked in a suspended bay/space or part of bay/space	0	7
Using a vehicle in a parking place in connection with the sale or offering or exposing for sale of goods	0	148
Stopped on a pedestrian crossing and/or crossing area marked	0	36
A commercial vehicle parked in a restricted street in contravention of the overnight waiting ban	0	23
Non-commercial parked on footpath/verge	0	78
Re-parked in the same parking place within an hour of leaving	0	1
Parked in a parking place or area not designated for that class	0	95
Not parked correctly within the bay marking of the bay or space	0	24
Parked more than 50cm from the kerb, not in a designated parking place	0	78
Parked on a restricted bus stop/ stand	0	62
Other on-street contraventions	659	417
Total on-street PCNs	8,983	15,552

OFF-STREET – most common contraventions based on PCNs	2015/16	2016/17
Parked after the expiry of time paid for in pay and display car park	677	497
Parked in a pay and display car park without clearly displaying a valid pay and display ticket or voucher or parking clock	1,123	1,046
Parked with additional payment made to extend the stay beyond the first time purchased	33	3
Parked beyond the bay markings	121	83
Parked causing an obstruction	10	7
Parked in a permit bay without clearly displaying a valid permit	2,056*	1,796
Parked in a restricted area in a car park	0	39
Parked in a disabled persons parking space without permit	0	3
Parked in an area not designated for that class of vehicle	0	8
Other off-street contraventions	31	0
Total off-street PCNs	4,051*	3,482

* The figure published in the report for 2015/16 was nil – this was an administrative error.

5. 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 2015/16 and 2016/17.

On and off-street parking income by source	2015/16	2016/17
On-street/Off-street parking charges	£421,326	£446,812
Permit income	£31,050	£34,021
Penalty charge notices	£361,006	£336,515
Other income	£200	£824
Total	£813,582	£818,172

Direct costs of Civil Parking Enforcement	2015/16	2016/17
Enforcement	£406,914	£579,169
Admin., appeals, debt recovery	£136,022	£12,313
Infrastructure maintenance	£6,207	£8,705
Capital charges	0	0
Total	£549,143	£597,187

Summary	2015/16	2016/17
Total parking income	£813,582	£818,172
Total direct costs of CPE	-£549,143	-£597,187
Outturn – net income	£264,438	£220,985

The parking budget aims to at least break even each year, and in a year of standard expenditure, an income of over £600,000 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.

6. Analysis and issues 2016/17

2016/17 was a year of significant change for the Parking Services Team. The back office system and staff were brought back in house and a new twilight shift of three additional Civil Enforcement Officers was new to tackle the increase on HGV illegal parking in the borough.

As stated in the previous report new management has been in place since January 2015 and has continued into 2016/17 with service improvements with a need to replace new infrastructure such as parking machines which became unrepairable, as well as new hand held's and additional uniform for the new shift.

7. 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 2016 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 and is now decided on an annual basis after discussions with the Portfolio Holder.

8. Residents' parking

During 2016/17 enforcement has been increased in Badgers Dene, Seabrooke Rise in Grays and Purfleet. This was to ensure that the virtually new schemes were successful and improvement has been made with enough parking available for residents.

9. Penalty charge debt recovery

The council continue to take steps to increase its recovery rate for parking penalties in 2016/17, 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 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. In 2016/17 the Council received a

payment of £3k. It is clear that fines can now start to be recovered by our partners on an annual basis. The two teams have collectively agreed that moving forward An emphasise is to be pursued in increasing the recovery of foreign debt as collectively agreed between the Parking Services Team and the Debt Recovery Team.

10. Plans for year ahead

10.1. 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 annually reviewed.

10.2. Lorry parks

It is clear that although we have a small number of lorry parks in the borough it is extremely difficult to encourage drivers to use these facilities. The new twilight shift will continue not only to enforce illegal parking but, by the offering out of leaflets to drivers, will try and continue to educate those to park in the designated areas.

The Council is in continued dialogue with Essex Police, the Port of Tilbury Police and DP World 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 lorry parks. A new scheme will be piloted with an external provider to carry out sporadic night enforcements with a more robust action of clamping those illegally parked with a view to recover all costs owed to the Council by the Company or individual.

10.3. Car parks

An additional car park was to be introduced in 2016/17 but unfortunately this was delayed. In 2017/18 small car park will be constructed in Tamarisk Road South Ockendon to reduce grass verge parking and was actioned on requests from some residents. This will now be implemented in 2017/18.

10.4. 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.

10.5. Controlled parking zones and residents parking areas

The Council is looking at introducing a CPZ in Tilbury in 2017/18 (the assessment and consultation was carried out in 2016/17) and it is envisaged that the implementation will be in 2017/18.

10.6. Cashless parking

The Council are continuing to explore options for enabling users of one of its parking areas to enable commuters to make cashless payments for their parking fees. It is hoped to pilot this scheme in one car park in Grays with a view to roll it out in 2018/19.

10.7. Staff changes

As stated above the team have two new back office staff and three twilight CEO's to ensure that the system in house is working more efficiently and that we also focus on HGV illegal parking. In addition to this we are also going to be assisting the back office staff with a new upgrade to the system which will support and contribute to enable the statutory process to become more economical and to provide the CEO's process of issuing PCN's more robust.

10.8. Permits

It is envisaged that the Council will look at the possibility of offering season tickets out to residents who might prefer to pay for their parking permit on an annual basis and to consider the option of implementing chargeable contract parking for those private companies who are in contract with the Council and wish to purchase a contract permit.

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