

Thurrock Council
Annual Parking Report
2019

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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 off-street (car parks under its management).

The Traffic Management Act (TMA) 2004 requires the council to publish an annual parking report explaining how it operates and the use 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 – which are 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 the 12 October 2016.

The main objectives of the Parking Services team is to help maintain the free flow of traffic on our roads and in council-managed car parks to support the safety of all road users; assist the efficient movement of traffic; increase compliance and to maintain access to services and amenities.

Additionally, there is a special focus on tackling HGV parking in and around residential areas.

3. Parking services

During 2018/19, Thurrock Council employed ten full-time Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) to patrol across the borough to ensure parking restrictions are properly enforced to enable the above stated parking objectives to be met on a regular basis. Seven of the CEOs work a day time shift whilst three work on a twilight or night shift designed to discourage illegal parking in the borough.

CEOs are deployed on foot patrols and in a vehicle on mobile beats to cover locations that are not suitable to be carried out on foot. Their beats include morning and afternoon visits to enforce restrictions in the local surrounding areas of schools in the borough as well as commercial vehicle restriction areas.

The CEOs use hand-held devices to issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs), take time stamped photos and make notes giving reasons why the PCN was issued including stating the contravention code as required by TMA 2004. The hand held devices incorporate digital cameras which were separate previously. For safety reasons, each CEO is issued with a body worn camera and is required to wear and use it at every interaction with the public.

The notes and evidence gathered by the CEOs are used to ensure that challenges against the issued PCNs can be assessed objectively and consistently.

At the back of each issued PCN there is information on How to pay the PCN, how to challenge the PCN and what happens when a PCN is not paid or challenged.

In addition, on the council website there is detailed information on Parking enforcement, PCNs, How to pay a penalty charge notice and detailed guidance on how to Challenge a Penalty Charge Notice.

A statutory independent review process for PCNs is also available through the Traffic Penalty Tribunal after the internal processes have been exhausted. Details of the grounds for appeals can be found at www.patrol-uk.info

The Parking Services team also respond to enquiries, complaints, provide advice, guidance to the public who make contact and ensure parking information is kept up to date on the council's website.

It is also responsible for ensuring parking signs, markings and pay-and-display machines are maintained and for granting suspensions of parking bays for utility works where appropriate.

4. Performance

Within the borough, there are 2 controlled parking zones (CPZs) in Grays and in Stanford-le-Hope. There were 18 permit parking areas (PPAs), in Grays, South Ockendon, Purfleet and Tilbury. There are also 8 off-street car parks throughout the borough, for which Parking Services is responsible.

There are about 1,280 marked bays for off street parking – 647 of these are in the pay and display car parks and about 1,250 marked bays for on street parking.

The council also enforced the car park at the Morrisons supermarket in Grays by agreement up until 15th December 2018. An annual fee was paid by Morrisons for enforcement and revenue from Penalty Charge Notices was also paid directly to the council.

The following table provides the numbers of Penalty Charge Notices issued for contraventions in Thurrock, on and off street. It also provides details of the numbers of resident, business and visitor permits issued for its CPZs and PPAs.

Civil Parking Enforcement statistical information	2017/18	2018/19
On-street penalty charge notices issued	14,766	17,169
Off-street penalty charge notices issued	1,251	1,554
Residents' permits issued	2,748	2,363
Business permits issued	61	39
Visitor permits issued (valid for 20 visits up to 5 hours)	2,606	2,611
Blue Badges issued	2,936	3,035
PCNs issued in Morrison's car park	767	867

The number of Penalty Charge Notices issued on-street increased by just over 16% with the number of PCNs issued being 14,766 in 2017/18 compared to 17,169 in 2018/19.

The number of Penalty Charge Notices issued at off-street parking places increased by just over 24% from 1,251 in 2017/18 to 1,554 in 2018/19. The figures for Morrison's car park are shown separately in the table above and also show a little over 13% increase.

The number of resident and business permits issued decreased although visitors parking permits issued had a slight increase.

The tables below provide details of the most common parking contraventions for which Penalty Charge Notices were issued both on-street and off-street in 2017/18 and 2018/19.

The provision of parking enforcement has helped to support local retailers by ensuring that there is a regular turnover of parking spaces in and around town centres.

On-street – most common contraventions based on PCNs	2017/18	2018/19
Parked in restricted street during prescribed hours	4,947	6318
Parked or loading/unloading in restricted street where waiting and loading/unloading restrictions are in force	246	252
Parked after expiry of paid for time in pay and display bay	273	379
Parked without clearly displaying valid pay and display ticket	169	308
Parked in residents' or shared use parking place without displaying either a permit or voucher or pay and display ticket issue for that place	785	1208
Parked in a permit space without displaying a valid permit	689	1126
Parked in residents' or shared use parking place displaying an invalid permit, an invalid voucher or an invalid pay and display ticket	379	462
Parked in a loading place during restricted hours without loading	772	989
Parked adjacent to a dropped footway	101	193
Parked for longer than permitted	136	187
Parked in a designated disabled person' parking space without clearly displaying a valid disabled person's badge	328	330
Parked on a taxi rank	263	426
Stopped where prohibited (on a clearway)	1,240	1075
Stopped in a restricted area outside a school	59	50
Parked in contravention of a commercial vehicle waiting restriction	1,908	1747
A heavy commercial vehicle wholly or partly parked on a footway, verge or land between two carriageways	2,156	1644
Parked with payment made to extend the stay beyond initial time	0	2
Parked in a suspended bay/space or part of bay/space	1	41
Using a vehicle in a parking place in connection with the sale or offering or exposing for sale of goods	5	6
Stopped on a pedestrian crossing and/or crossing area marked	28	28
A commercial vehicle parked in a restricted street in contravention of the overnight waiting ban	14	34
Non-commercial parked on footpath/verge	15	1
Re-parked in the same parking place within an hour of leaving	6	5
Parked in a parking place or area not designated for that class	93	188

On-street – most common contraventions based on PCNs	2017/18	2018/19
Not parked correctly within the bay marking of the bay or space	35	47
Vehicle parked more than 50cm from the kerb and not within a designated parking place	73	85
Parked on a restricted bus stop / stand	45	38
Other on-street PCNs	0	0
Total on-street PCNs	14,766	17,169

Off-street – most common contraventions based on PCNs	2017/18	2018/19
Parked after the expiry of time paid for in pay and display car park	353	500
Parked in a pay and display car park without clearly displaying a valid pay and display ticket or voucher or parking clock	682	850
Parked with additional payment made to extend the stay beyond the first time purchased	6	9
Parked beyond the bay markings	162	161
Parked causing an obstruction	19	5
Parked in a restricted area in a car park	15	15
Parked in a disabled persons parking space without permit	3	5
Parked in an area not designated for that class of vehicle	10	4
Other off-street PCNs (parked longer than permitted)	1	1
Parked in a parking place for a purpose other than that designated	0	1
Re-parked within one hour of leaving a bay or space in a car park	0	2
Parked in a permit bay without clearly displaying a valid permit	0	1
Total off-street PCNs	1,251	1,554

5. Finance

The Civil parking enforcement income this year was from pay-and-display parking, permit fees, penalty charge notices, suspension of parking bays for utility works and an agreement to undertake civil enforcement in the Morrison's supermarket car park in Grays Town Centre. The main areas of expenditure were on Enforcement administration, Parking infrastructure, On and Off Street Parking 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 2017/18 and 2018/19.

On and off-street parking income by source	2017/18	2018/19
On-street/Off-street parking charges	£445,349	£524,670
Permit income	£38,940	£28,027
Penalty charge notices	£521,413	£531,164
Other income	£200	£43,510
Total	£1,005,902	£1,127,371

Direct costs of Civil Parking Enforcement	2017/18	2018/19
Enforcement	-£551,861	-£579,201
Administration, appeals, debt recovery	-£20,549	-£28,403
Infrastructure maintenance	-£7,969	-£23,316
Capital charges	-£32,492	-£79,500
Total	-£612,871	-£710,420

Summary	2017/18	2018/19
Total parking income	£1,005,902	£1,127,371
Total direct costs of CPE	-£612,871	-£710,420
Outturn – net income	£393,031	£416,951

The parking service produced a surplus this year. 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 along with the maintenance of parking restrictions. The value of a PCN payment can vary depending on which stage of the debt process payment is made.

6. Analysis and issues 2018/19

Increased focus on HGV enforcement continued throughout 2018/19 in order to minimise inconvenience to residents and road users.

The remaining aged stock of parking machines were renewed. This enabled card payments to be taken for parking charges at all pay to park parking places in the borough. On 25 February 2019 – all the pay and display machines went cashless in a move to prevent criminal activity. During the week beginning 18 February 2019 there were sustained acts of burglary and vandalism on a number of pay and display machines resulting in loss of money, damaged machines and increased repair costs.

Further analysis was carried out where appropriate to determine the need for additional Parking Permit Areas and / or Controlled Parking Zones to be introduced as a result of numerous requests from residents and new developments in the borough.

In addition, in response to the requests from residents we have commenced enforcing on a Sunday across the borough.

We continue to use a well-placed company to trace and pursue the keepers of foreign-registered vehicles with the view to collecting outstanding payments.

We successfully upgraded our back office Parking Operating System – enabling and empowering our officers to carry out their duties efficiently.

There were successful prosecutions for physical and verbal abuse against Civil Enforcement Officers and Blue Badge fraud.

Our contract with Morrison PLC to enforce in their Grays Store Car Park came to an end on 15 December 2018.

7. Support for businesses

To help encourage people to shop locally, support was given to local businesses by providing free Saturday parking throughout December 2018 in all on and off-street pay and display parking places controlled by the council.

8. Residents' parking

As a result of requests from residents, surveys and investigations have been carried out in order to determine the need to extend existing or introduce new resident parking schemes within the borough. The result is, subject to consultation, additional schemes are likely to be introduced during 2019/20.

9. Penalty Charge debt recovery

The council continued to take steps to increase its debt recovery for parking penalties in 2018/19 by registering more outstanding charges with the courts as debts and by appointing bailiffs to recover these debts. 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.

In 2018/19 the council received a payment of almost £12k for debt owed to the council in relation to foreign vehicles. This was as a result of the increased focus on HGV parking enforcement.

10. Plans for the year ahead

Increased focus on HGV enforcement will continue throughout 2019/20 in order to minimise inconvenience to residents and road users.

There will be an introduction of additional Parking Permit Areas based on consultations that have already taken place in 18/19.

There will be ongoing maintenance of road signs, markings, lines and hard standing grass verges.

Continual monitoring of improper use of blue badges and permits.

Maintain zero tolerance of abuse against staff.

The pay and display machines maintained by the council are likely to remain cashless.

We will be investigating the possibility and feasibility of using Traffic Watch Cameras around schools to improve the safety of school children and their families.

There will be continuous engagement with technology to enable a faster and more efficient Traffic Enforcement Service which should translate to a better travelling experience in the borough.

10.1. Parking tariff review

Parking charges in Thurrock are relatively low. Tariffs for on and off street car parking areas and permits are reviewed annually. There will be no increase to charges in 2019/20 financial year.

10.2. Lorry parks

There are a small number of lorry parks in the borough that drivers can use. The twilight/ night shift will continue to enforce illegal parking and where possible will try to educate drivers on the benefits of parking 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. With the help of an external provider we will carry out sporadic night enforcements with a more robust action of clamping those illegally parked with a view to recovering all costs owed to the council by the company or individual.

10.3. Car parks

The number of off street car parks within Thurrock has remained the same as the previous year.

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 investigated the feasibility of introducing a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) in Tilbury in 2017/18 and in 2018/19 decided to implement a Permit Parking Area instead.

There were two controlled parking zones in Grays and Stanford Le Hope and 18 Parking Permit Areas in Grays, South Ockendon, Stanford Le Hope, Purfleet and Tilbury.

10.6. Cashless Parking

The council purchased an additional 18 new pay and display machines which incorporated a cash and card payment facility. In total there are now 32 pay and display machines in the borough. This enables commuters to make cashless payments for their parking fees. The council went totally cashless on 25th February 2019.

10.7. Staff Changes

The Parking Services Team has settled in well in the Environment and Highways Directorate. By working under one Enforcement umbrella, both teams – Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) and Environmental Enforcement Officers (EEO) share intelligence and communication channels – via radio.

This has enabled them to communicate swiftly when CEOs witness enviro-crime offences being committed. This provides a fast reactive response by the EEOs attending the scene to enforce by the use of Community Protection Warnings/Notices (CPW/CPN).

CPW/CPNs have been issued in areas where HGVs were parked on grass verges and footpaths and caused criminal damage at locations which were not decriminalised and therefore could not be enforced by CEOs.

10.8. Permits

It is envisaged that the council will investigate the possibility of introducing season tickets to commuters who might prefer to pay for their parking permit on an annual basis. In addition to resident and visitors permits, we have a range of parking permits which cater for business, charities, details of which can be found on our website.

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

Community Protection Notice/Warning (CPN/CPW)

Is issued in accordance with the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 where there are reasonable grounds to ascertain there exists conduct which is having a detrimental effect of a persistent or continuing nature on the quality of life of those in the locality and that the conduct is unreasonable.

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 poor parking behaviour.

Environmental Enforcement Officers (EEOs)

Enforcing enviro-crime and some aspects of anti-social behaviour in line with the Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and Criminal Prosecutions & Investigations Act 1996 (As amended).

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.