

Thurrock Council
Parking strategy and policies
2016 to 2021

Document Control

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce this new parking strategy for Thurrock. It represents a significant step in delivering the council's commitment of value for money services and the creation of a safe and inclusive environment for Thurrock residents and businesses.

The refreshed strategy and policies will provide a solid foundation for council's initiatives to increase enforcement of HGV parking restrictions in the borough and manage increased demand for commuter parking, particularly around rail stations.

Cllr Brian Little
Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways



1. Introduction

The Thurrock Parking Strategy sets out the council's policies and strategies for parking within the borough over the next five years.

This **introduction** focuses on the achievements since the previous Parking Strategy was published in 2007. This document also relates to the wider corporate objectives of the council and its aims, vision and priorities.

The main section of the document is the **parking policies**, with accompanying explanatory text.

A representation of public **parking capacity** in Thurrock and the council's **Parking Service Operation** is set out.

The policies are thereafter distilled into an **action plan**, which the council and its partners will implement over the next five years, subject to regular review.

2. Aims, vision and priorities

Our vision

Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish.

Our aim

Our aim is to become a confident, well managed and influential council regarded by residents, peers and partners as ambitious for the people of Thurrock and totally focused on meeting their current and future aspirations.

Our priorities

Five strategic priorities to achieve our vision:

- **Create** a great place for learning and opportunity;
- **Encourage** and promote job creation and economic prosperity;
- **Build** pride, responsibility and respect;
- **Improve** health and well-being;
- **Promote** and protect our clean and green environment.

There is a further overriding priority of

- **Delivering** excellence and achieving value for money.

The Parking Strategy is a sub-strategy to the Thurrock Local Transport Plan, and contributes to the council objectives of delivering a safer environment for residents in the borough through its impact upon mode choice for journeys and obstruction to flow of traffic, cyclists and pedestrians.

3. Overarching policies and legislation

3.1. Thurrock Local Transport Plan 2013-2026

The Thurrock Transport Strategy describes Thurrock Council's transport strategy for the period 2013 to 2026. Based on a robust evidence base and feedback from residents and key stakeholders, it sets out the aims, objectives and a series of policies for delivering transport improvements in Thurrock. As such, this document comprises the required strategy element of the third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) for Thurrock.

In addition to a transport strategy, local highway authorities are also required to develop and submit any implementation plans alongside their strategy, and these implementation plans support the delivery of this strategy.

Thurrock Transport Strategy 2013-2026 can be found at:

thurrock.gov.uk/travel-strategies

3.2. Freight strategy and Freight Quality Partnership

3.2.1. Freight Strategy

Thurrock Council is developing a new Freight and Logistics Strategy, due for publication in 2017. The strategy will discuss in further details issues regarding all aspects of freight within Thurrock, including issues and opportunities, as well as publication of an updated freight route map.

The Freight Strategy and Transport Plan will be interlinked to improve and maintain the free-flow of traffic in the borough.

3.2.2. Freight Quality Partnership

Due to the significant importance of the logistics industry to the borough, the council has sought to actively engage with the industry. Following an award of funding from central government, Thurrock Council has established the Thurrock Freight Quality Partnership.

A Freight Quality Partnership (FQP) is a roundtable forum which enables meaningful two-way engagement between stakeholders in the freight industry, business and the local authority. Having been established in 2010, the FQP hosts at least one engagement meeting per year. Actions and issues discussed at previous FQPs include:

- impact on air quality by freight vehicles
- publicising routes suitable for freight vehicles around Thurrock
- current availability and future plans for freight vehicle parking
- informing partners of future changes/improvements to the road network
- feedback and engagement with the freight industry
- promoting driver training and best industry practice

3.3. Traffic Management Act 2004

Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act enables the consolidation, by making regulations, of civil traffic enforcement legislation covering parking, bus stands and school keep clears.

The Act extends the scope for local authorities to take over enforcement of traffic contraventions from the police, and be granted civil enforcement powers to cover a number of parking offences.

The Act will enable extension to authorities outside London of the ability to issue parking penalty charge notices by post, use of cameras to detect parking contraventions, and issue penalty charges for parking within the area of a pedestrian crossing. The Act also creates specific offences to deal with double parking and parking at dropped footways within a local authority civil enforcement area.

Regulations to be made under the Act will enable authorities to challenge the validity of statutory declarations so they cannot be used as a way of avoiding payment of parking penalty charges.

Section 87 of the Act enables the Secretary of State and the National Assembly for Wales to publish statutory guidance to local authorities about any matter relating to their civil traffic enforcement functions, which may be conferred on them under Part 6 of the Act. In exercising those functions authorities must have regard to any such guidance. This is particularly important to ensure that enforcement is carried out in a fair and reasonable manner.

To reduce abuse of the Blue Badge scheme, which gives parking concessions to disabled people, Section 94 of the Act gives local authority Civil Enforcement Officers the power to inspect Blue Badges. The inspection powers were introduced in September 2006 and updated in 2014 whereby the badges can be confiscated if deemed to be used fraudulently.

Section 95 of the Act gives local authorities the additional freedom to spend surpluses from the on street parking account on local environmental improvements as well as parking facilities, road improvements and provision of public passenger transport services. This came into effect in October 2004.

4. Parking policies

4.1. Review of parking provision

The council's standards for parking provision are regularly reviewed and will be undertaken during the life of this strategy. The council will seek to ensure adequate parking provision for future developments.

4.2. Parking at railway stations

Parking at railway stations is a contentious issue. Use of rail for journeys that might otherwise be undertaken by car must be encouraged. Increasing parking capacity at stations, however, discourages use of sustainable modes to access interchanges. Consequently, decisions on station parking issues will be taken on their respective merits.

4.3. Cycle and motorcycle parking

The council will review the overall parking provision within the borough at appropriate intervals and will include the provision for cycles and motorcycles.

The council will consider parking provision at stations on a case-by-case basis, taking into account local circumstances and the promotion of travel using public transport, walking and cycling.

4.4. Restrictions

The council regularly receives requests from residents, members and local organisations for restrictions, amendments and removal of signage. These must be considered in a fair and transparent way to enable decisions to be taken.

The council is unable to fund all requests received at any one time, therefore requests that are upheld must be prioritised for implementation.

The council's Traffic section will maintain a list of parking-related requests and prioritise these in order of importance in accordance with the policy set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – parking request priorities rating

PRIORITY	In the interest of, or to address
A	Child safety or proven accident problem
B	Disabled bay requests
C	Addressing the needs of local businesses
D	Improving traffic flows and visibility
E	Changes to highway network
F	Perceived danger to road users and requests

4.4.1. Parking Restriction Provision Criteria

i) Junction Protection (A, D and F)

Double yellow lines will be provided around junctions with visibility problems as defined by Traffic Regulations.

Junction protection will be provided in situations where there is either a proven accident problem or where vehicles are parking and causing a problem at junctions joining a main route.

ii) Resident Permit Bays or Controlled Parking Zones (F)

Permit schemes or parking zones will be considered where parking from commuters and town centres cause persistent problems for resident parking. The permit schemes should cover a sufficiently large area to warrant the implementation of the scheme.

iii) School Keep Clears (A)

'Keep Clear' markings will be provided outside all school entrances and exits.

iv) Limited Waiting / Pay and Display (C)

Restrictions will be implemented where parking is taking place throughout the day that prevents a regular turnover of vehicles.

v) Disabled Bay Requests (B)

Residential areas – bays will be implemented subject to approval by the social service Occupational Therapy department, and where the applicant does not have rear vehicular access or sufficient depth to the front of the property to allow parking off the highway, subject to the necessary consents.

Town centre / car parks – appropriate provision will be made in all town centres and car parks.

vi) Double Yellow Line Requests (A, D, E and F)

Double lines will be implemented where there is a legitimate safety issue or where there is a need to improve flow of traffic and visibility.

Careful consideration will be given to whether the location of the restriction is likely to receive an adequate level of enforcement that would ensure a reasonable level of compliance.

vii) Single Yellow Line Requests (A, C, D, E and F)

A single line will be implemented where there is a legitimate safety issue or where there is a need to improve flow of traffic and visibility, where it is required at certain times.

Careful consideration will be given to whether the location of the restriction is likely to receive an adequate level of enforcement that would ensure a reasonable level of compliance.

viii) Loading / Unloading Requests (C)

This type of restriction will be implemented where there is legitimate need to provide a loading and unloading facility and where the existing provision of yellow lines is not sufficient.

Additionally, the loading and unloading facility must not unreasonably prejudice the provision of other higher priority restrictions or compromise road safety.

ix) Loading / Unloading Bans (A, D and E)

Bans will be implemented on the main road network where no parking at any time is required and where flows of traffic must be maintained.

4.5. Funerals

There is an informal policy that the enforcement team use their discretion in enforcing vehicles belonging to mourners at funerals. With advance notice, Civil Enforcement Officers can facilitate reasonable requests for short-term parking management. No charge is made for this service.

5. Parking operations and capacity

5.1. Background to operations

From the 1 April 2005 Thurrock Council took over the responsibility for enforcing parking, loading and waiting restrictions in the Borough from Essex Police. Since this date, these parking offences are treated as 'contraventions' and are no longer classified as criminal offences. This is known as decriminalised parking enforcement (DPE) which allows the Civil Enforcement Officers employed by Thurrock Council to issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs).

The statutory process for issuing and resolution of PCNs is presented in Figure 1 below. Consequently there is no recourse to the Magistrate Court System, but to Independent Adjudicators. Any unpaid debts can be pursued through a streamlined County Court system culminating in bailiff action.

The operations under DPE powers support a shift towards sustainable transport modes especially around town centres by encouraging commuters and other drivers to use long stay car parks freeing up short stay spaces. They also allow buses and service vehicles to operate more effectively, improve the general environment and enable the Council to control and manage parking as part of its integrated transport strategy which compliments Thurrock Council's 'safety' and 'accessibility for all' outcomes.

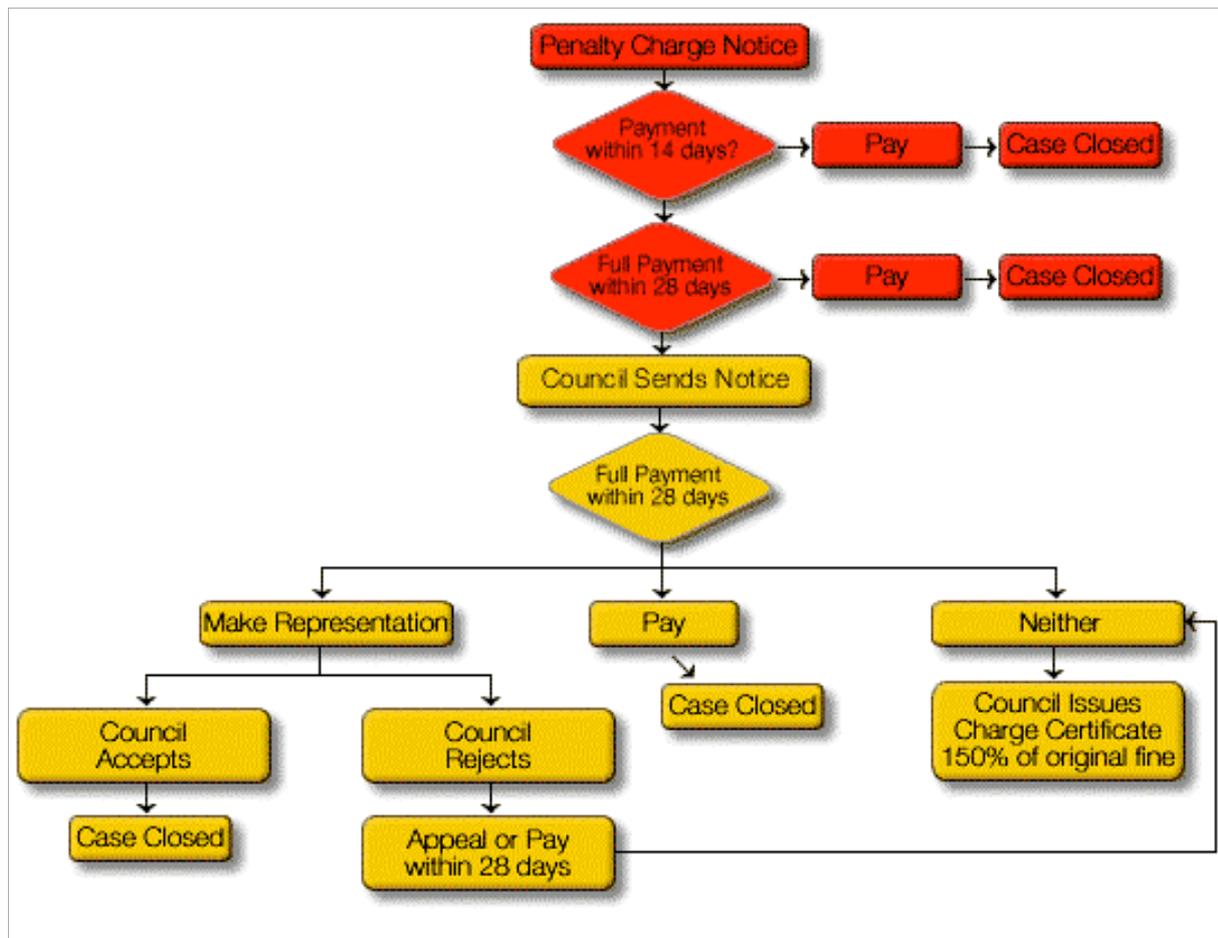


Figure1 – statutory process for issuing and resolution of PCNs

5.2. Parking service operations

There are currently ten Civil Enforcement Officers enforcing within the borough. This provision is reviewed annually.

Grays is enforced on a daily basis – excluding Sundays – with other town centres and commuter areas being enforced on a 2 to 3 times on a weekly basis. Other areas are visited on a rota basis or following feedback from the public. The council aims to enforce a different school every day in term time.

Two vehicles are used to visit areas outside of Grays and for visiting schools. This enables quick responses to feedback.

The council has no jurisdiction to enforce the following:

- roads not covered by a restriction
- private land
- obstructions – enforced by the police
- moving traffic offences – enforced by the police

5.3. Enforcement

5.3.1. Hours and days of operation

Seven of the council's Civil Enforcement Officers currently operate a two week rota system of working Monday to Thursday 8am to 4:30pm and 8am to 4pm on a Friday, and the following week Tuesday to Friday 9:30am to 6pm and 8am to 4pm on a Saturday.

Three of the council's Civil Enforcement Officers are dedicated to an evening shift, which is primarily aimed at the HGV issues work Mondays to Thursdays 1:30pm to 10pm and 1:30pm to 9:30pm on a Friday.

Out of hours enforcement is carried out to target issues in specific areas as required.

The current hours of operation in general reflect the key times that enforcement is needed within the borough. A review will be undertaken to ascertain any benefit from more regular enforcement on Sundays and or Bank Holidays.

5.3.2. Observation times

Although not required by law the Council Civil Enforcement Officers have to date been instructed to give each vehicle a five minute observation period.

The council issues instant Penalty Charge Notices if a vehicle is parked where loading/unloading is restricted, pay and display ticket (ten minute observations under guidance from government) has expired and also in some special circumstances such as areas with acknowledged safety problems.

The five-minute observation period will no longer apply to vehicles parked on double yellow lines. It is clear in the Highway Code that vehicles throughout Great Britain are not allowed to park on double yellow lines. Penalty Charge Notices are therefore issued instantly.

The five-minute observation time for other contraventions will continue to be observed. The observation period will be reviewed on a regular basis, as it is occasionally open to abuse.

Meter feeding, when a motorist prolongs the initial stay by inserting further monies/or makes a further payment, is an offence and can result in a PCN being issued.

5.3.3. Bus lanes and taxi ranks

Currently the borough does not have a full Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in place for enforcing restrictions in bus lanes. TROs are in place for taxi ranks.

5.3.4. School parking

Currently enforcement is instant for any vehicle parked on a keep clear crossing and has a 5 minute observation on single yellow lines.

5.3.5. Pavements

The police presently enforce footway parking as obstruction, unless there are restrictions in the road which can be dealt with by the Civil Enforcement Officers.

5.4. Parking capacity

The council enforces both on and off street parking places throughout the borough. Table 2 below details the Council's off-street car parks within the borough. Table 3 details the locations of the on-street pay and display areas within Grays town centre.

Table 2 – off-street car parks

Name and location	No. of spaces	Type	Category
Crown Road	96	Pay and Display	Long stay
Cromwell Road	60		Long stay
Argent Street	42		Long stay
Darnley Road	50		Short stay
Cornwall House	100		Long stay
Thames Road Grays Beach	183		Long stay
Canterbury Parade	111		Long stay
Lodge Lane	56	Free	-
Gordon Road (police station)	53		-
Gordon Road (petrol station)	112		-
Giffords Cross	78		-

Table 3 – on-street car Pay and Display areas

Name and Location	Category	
Brooke Road (West)	Quick Stop (Maximum stay 1 hour)	
Clarence Road (North West)		
Cromwell Road (East)		
Dell Road		
High Street		
Bedford Road	Short stay (Maximum stay 4 hours)	
Bradbourne Road		
Brooke Road		
Clarence Road		
Cromwell Road		
Derby Road		
Grange Road		
London Road		
Milton Road		
Orsett Road		
Quarry Hill		
Thames Road		Long Stay (Maximum stay 9 hrs)

The details above all include a number of disabled bays and the council also offers residential, visitor and business permits. All of these details can be found in the Annual Parking Report at: thurrock.gov.uk/parking-enforcement/parking-documents-reports-and-auditing

5.5. Parking charges

Public parking charges are at thurrock.gov.uk/council-finances-and-accounts/fees-and-charges and thurrock.gov.uk/car-parks. Charges are reviewed annually. Any changes to permit charges will be subject to consultation with residents affected.

6. Permits

6.1. Residents permits

Residents are able to apply for a permit for each vehicle they own, upon proof that their main residence is within the parking scheme boundary. The permit does not guarantee space availability at the time required, nor does it guarantee a space outside their residence.

The current cost of resident's permits are reviewed annually and published in the Councils fees and charges document as per the link mentioned previously.

Resident permits will be limited to 3 per residence.

6.2. Visitors

Visitors' permits are currently available to those living in residential permit areas. Residents are currently permitted to purchase the permits – five strips of 20 visits in any one month. The current costs are listed in the fees and charges document.

6.3. Business permits

Business users are presently allowed to purchase business permits within resident bays in CPZs at a cost which is reviewed annually. Purchase of business permits to be limited to 5 per business.

6.4. Operational

Operational permits allow council employees to carry out essential duties where it is imperative to park close to a particular site. Internal charges are reviewed annually as part of the fees and charges.

6.5. Health

Health permits enable essential health workers to park in resident bays. They have an annual expiry date. The health workers are only eligible to stay up to a maximum of 3 hours. The costs of these permits are reviewed annually and are in the fees and charges document.

6.6. Loading bays

All existing loading bays within the borough are signed and Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are in place.

Evidence suggests that disabled drivers are increasingly using loading bays. Disabled drivers are afforded alternative parking provision provided they have a blue badge. This does not include parking within loading bays at any time.

The council receives ad-hoc requests for additional loading bays to be considered. Each case is considered on its merit.

The council will use their discretion for commercial vehicles seen to be loading or unloading. If the vehicle is vacant with no activity then a penalty charge notice will be issued.

Disabled drivers parked in loading bays will be issued with a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN). An initial PCN may be waived under the consideration guidelines as a first offence, with the offender being reminded of the rules of the Blue Badge scheme, as set out in the booklet that they receive when initially issued with the badge.

6.7. HGV parking

An overnight HGV ban has already been introduced in some areas of Thurrock. HGV parking is currently causing considerable community and traffic safety problems in the borough and this is increasing as the overall number of HGVs increases. HGVs make up a higher proportion of overall traffic in Thurrock than in many other Local Authority areas. This is due to the importance of the transport and logistics sector in the borough, and its location in relation to the strategic road network (M25 and A13).

The council will work in close partnership with the ports, freight operators and Essex Police to ensure that freight movements can be accommodated with minimum disruption to residents. Civil Enforcement Officers on evening shifts will enforce HGV 'hotspots'.

HGV and general enforcement for parking is linked to Thurrock Transport Strategy 2013-2026 – available at: thurrock.gov.uk/travel-strategies – and will also be included as part of the council's Freight Quality Partnership (FQP) and the future Freight and Logistics Strategy to be implemented in 2017.

6.8. Motorcycles

The council has received little or no representation on the number of motorcycle parking bays that are currently supplied. It is therefore considered that existing provision is adequate.

The council will review requests for additional motorcycle bays on a bespoke assessment of need.

6.9. Disabled parking provision

The council currently provides a number of on-street disabled bays within the borough. The policy for the provision of bays remains unchanged as follows:

A number of criteria have to be met before a disabled person's parking bay is implemented. These are:

- an application in writing has to be made to the social services department for their approval and support
- if the bay falls on the public highway then an application is made to the Traffic team via the Occupational Therapy team for consideration
- should funds be available, a bay will be provided only if:
 - a) the client is in possession of a valid disabled person Blue Badge
 - b) the client resides in a dwelling that cannot facilitate off-street parking
 - c) the on-street parking pressures have been observed to be severe on a regular basis

Should the above criteria be met, the request is then assessed with regards to road safety.

At present a vehicle displaying a valid European disabled person Blue Badge is allowed to park on single or double yellow lines for up to 3 hours provided no loading restrictions are in place. This is in line with the Blue Badge guidance booklet.

The council considers provision of disabled bays within car parks as well as on street.

6.10. Verges

Where there are pressures on parking, and grass verges could be strengthened to provide additional parking provision without compromising safety, visibility and/or access, consideration will be given to doing so, subject to available budgets and community support.

The views of affected residents will be obtained on any proposal to convert grassed areas to parking places. If verges are strengthened then these will be available for general parking as they cannot be reserved for a particular person.

Grass verges will not be strengthened where this will encourage people to park in contravention of a Traffic Regulation Order or where it will encourage people to park in such a manner as to obstruct either vehicles or pedestrians.

Requests will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- opinions of frontagers and ward members
- implications on highways safety, visibility and access
- environmental impact of the scheme
- cost effectiveness of the scheme – cost per parking place

This will be developed into a priority list to be agreed by the cabinet member for transport and highways each year.

6.11. Footway parking

Footway parking will only be permitted where no other means of off-street parking exists or can reasonably be provided. This is to ensure that other residents of Thurrock are not asked to pay for a provision where the householder could provide facilities for themselves.

In considering whether to allow footway parking the following factors will be taken into account:

- the need to keep junctions, bends, fire hydrants and accesses clear of parked vehicles
- the aim to keep clear pedestrian width of 1.8 metres wherever possible
- the need to keep a clear running width of at least 4 metres with passing gaps at spacing of less than 60 metres
- the need to ensure adequate access for emergency services

The provision of footway parking exemptions will have to compete against other traffic measurement measures for both staff and financial resources.

7. Future improvements

7.1. Car parking machines

A programme is underway to replace Thurrock's Pay and Display machines with solar powered machines. The first group of solar-powered machines are already in operation, with the remaining machines due to be replaced over the next two years.

7.2. Cashless payments

The potential for cashless payment of parking charges will be investigated as a possibility which could assist the council by having less cash left in the machines and for users not to rely on having coinage. To assist those who wish to continue to pay by cash, the possibility of tickets being available for purchase from local shops will also be investigated.

7.3. New permits

The possibility of introducing season tickets for users, including commuters has often been requested, along with staff permits. This will be investigated for potential implementation in 2017.

7.4. Equipment

Civil Enforcement Officers currently use hand held computers (HHC) to issue Penalty Charge Notices but technology has improved and new devices such as a mobile phone app can simplify the procedure of issuing a notice and allows the officer to vacate the area more quickly thus reducing the possibility of potential confrontation.

It will also be real time as the download of the information is automatic and on the system. This will result in residents becoming less frustrated in talking to someone that can identify the reason for the PCN immediately. Currently the equipment has to be downloaded at the end of the shift in order for the information to be read.

7.5. Resurfacing of car parks

The council has an annual maintenance programme for its off street car parks, including resurfacing as necessary.

8. Action plan

The action plan below details those projects that are required to be implemented or considered as detailed within this document. It also details key activities that will be undertaken over the next 2 years. This is all subject to funding provision.

Project	How	Who	Timing
Cashless Pay	Investigation into the possibility of implementing new car parking machines which accept both cash and pay by phone/credit card payments	Highways and Transportation Services/Parking Co-ordinator	2017/2018
Review capacity of enforcement team to ensure adequacy	Investigation of operations against service aims and objectives	Highways and Transportation Services/Parking Co-ordinator	Annually in time for budgeting
Review the need for Sunday enforcement	Monitor the number of requests for out of hours enforcement. Conduct a survey of key areas to see if viable.	Highways and Transportation Services/Parking Co-ordinator	Annually subject to requests
Review provision of new Car Parking Zones, Parking Permit areas, signs and lines	Investigate each request on merit and implement subject to funding	Traffic Section/Parking Services	Subject to requests
Review the provision of on and off street disabled bays	Conduct a survey when requests are received to see if viable.	Traffic Section / Parking Services	Annually subject to requests

Project	How	Who	Timing
Review car park upgrades and replacement of equipment such as car park machines, lighting etc.	Conduct investigations on a regular basis	Traffic Section/Parking Services	Ongoing
Have an input in the new Freight and Logistics Strategy	Strategy discussions ongoing	All of Highways & Transportation Teams	Ongoing and to be finalised 2017/2018
Review parking charges annually and permits	Review charges in line with inflation and costs Investigate possibility of introducing season tickets for residents and staff	Finance / Parking Services	Annually
Training for Civil Enforcement Officers	Implementation of training subject to new legislation and guidelines in line with government regulations	Parking Services	As and when required
Review new equipment to improve service	Review current services via procurement process to see if issuing of penalty charge notices can be carried out via phone application	Highways and Transportation Services/Parking Co-ordinator	2017/2018
Implement changes to permits	Make required changes to documentation including in fees and charges	Highways and Transportation Services/Parking Co-ordinator	Reviewed Annually
Introduce charges to Health Permits	Investigate possibility of charging for health permits	Highways and Transportation Services/Parking Co-ordinator	2017/18
To improve collection rates by continuing use of Bailiff companies	Work with Debt Recovery Team and continue using foreign recovery debts	Parking Services Team/Debt Recovery Team	Annually
Review private arrangements (such as Morrison's supermarket) with a view to enforce private areas	Work with private companies to see if Service Level Agreements can be achieved	Transportation Services/Parking Co-ordinator	As and when requested

9. Glossary

CPZ	Controlled Parking Zone
DPE	Decriminalised Parking Enforcement
ECN	Excess Charge Notice
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
IT	Information Technology
LTP	Local Transport Plan
PCN	Penalty Charge Notice
SPA	Special Parking Area
TMA	Traffic Management Act (2004)
TPS	Thurrock Parking Strategy
TRO	Traffic Regulation Order