

Committee:	Date(s):
Planning and Transportation Committee	25/02/2014
Subject: Parking Ticket Office Update and Annual Statistics	Public
Report of: The Director of the Built Environment	For Information
<p>Summary</p> <p>This report provides an update to Members on the activities and progress of the Parking Ticket Office (PTO) over the last year with further commentary on key service issues over recent years.</p> <p>The report sets out the way in which the service delivers the aims set by your Committee, our work with business and our response to the night time economy. It also sets out how the service has continued to improve by acting upon customer feedback resulting in more efficient services and improving success rates for appeals. The report also sets out how we have improved access to information and specifically comments upon the work we have done to improve our website.</p> <p>To amplify the headline data given in the Business Plan, Appendix One gives a set of statistics for the PTO over the last five years.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the report for information. 	

Main Report

Background

1. Parking and traffic enforcement in the Square Mile plays a key role in reducing congestion, improving access and road safety, as well as providing for effective and efficient business activity. The Parking Ticket Office is central to the effective delivery of parking and traffic enforcement in the City. To give some idea of the work of the PTO, it deals with a high volume of letters and emails each year (26,000 last year) in relation to the parking tickets issued (65,000 last year). The service aims to be customer focused and works with an ethos of continuous improvement. Examples of how the service has been developed are set out below:-

Examples

2. Working with Business.
We always aim to facilitate business activity in the City where practicable. One example is our work with G4S who are the main company delivering and collecting

cash for banks, businesses and other organisations in the Square Mile. Their vehicles account for 3% of all the PCNs issued in the City. This is not only costly for them but can result in congestion and/or increased road danger. We have worked with them to review where they park in relation to particular clients and thus been able to suggest alternative locations or timings. This has seen them improve their approach to parking and, as a consequence, the number of PCNs issued to G4S has reduced by 33%. Our time spent on processing challenges and payments in relation to their tickets has also reduced from circa 16 hours to a couple of hours each month. This partnership work between the company and the City was shortlisted for a Highways Institute award and has been recommended as best practice at London Councils Parking Managers' Seminars.

3. Responding to the City's night time economy.

Our Civil Enforcement Officers carry out regular on-street and CCTV enforcement which has proved particularly helping in reducing/stopping illegal parking associated with the night-time economy. In relation to Smithfield Market, we have now started using our Smart Car to carry out evening enforcement to encourage private vehicles to keep the goods vehicle bays free for the market and other businesses in the area. With the aim of being open and fair we issued warning notices for 3 weeks prior to formal enforcement using the Smart Car which started in October 2013. We intend to survey market traders to see if this provides an improved ease of parking.

4. Acting on customer feedback.

We regularly reviews areas where high levels of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) are being issued to check that signage is clear and understandable and whether we need to review our policy, procedures or operational requirements.

A prime example of this is the Crossrail closure at Old Broad Street. We considered the restriction had been clearly signed using government approved signage but motorists were receiving a high level of PCNs. As a result, officers firstly consulted drivers to establish how, if at all, the signage might be made clearer. We consulted upon a range of signs and asked what they considered to be the clearest. Once agreed we then applied to the Department for Transport (DfT) for authorisation for this 'non-regular' signage. As a consequence the level of PCNs has reduced by 66% in the first 6 months and the improved compliance has helped to reduce the risk of a serious accident or fatality in the area. We will similarly be reviewing our disabled bay and suspension signage over the coming year further to customer feedback.

5. Delivering efficient services.

We have introduced a new back office system, revised staff targets and improved processes. The current back office system costs much less than the previous system yet has improved efficiency and quality. As a consequence, we have improved our letter response times by 50% and we are now maintaining an average response time of 6 days against a target of 10 days; the previous target was 15 days. We received payment for over 80% of the PCNs we issued last year, the highest recovery rate in London. It is important that we measure our recovery rate to ensure that we are effectively recovering debts and pursuing those who avoid payment.

6. Appeals.

One of the challenges for the Parking Ticket Office has been to improve its performance in relation to appeals lodged at the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service. Relatively few PCNs (4%) go to this stage as our aim is to be able to resolve the issue earlier in the process. There is no financial merit in us pursuing appeals as we pay a fee for each one, and even if we win, we do not get costs. This was one area of service that became a lower priority whilst resources were directed to improving the office I.T. and back office systems. In 2012/13 we achieved a significant improvement in performance and, whilst there are still some cases not contested where it is right to do so, our success rate for contested appeals has improved from 20% to 64% in the current year.

7. Improving access to information.

We have worked hard over the last year to improve the information available and functionality of our web pages. In the last year we have reviewed over 40 pages and have introduced mapping services in areas regularly visited. Customers have access to photographs and videos relating to their case on our website so they can see the evidence of the contravention and decide whether to pay or challenge the charge. We have moved from a position where 20% of payments were made via the website to about 50%, currently thereby saving officer time and improving efficiency.

8. Improving compliance via CCTV enforcement.

PCNs issued to vehicles by on-street officers have been at a steady level for the last few years, suggesting the level of enforcement is commensurate to the level of compliance on-street. There are still a number of regular obstructive, serious or dangerous parking and traffic contraventions which take place and are difficult to address with on-street officers. These are either short intentional stops (e.g. parking on a pedestrian crossing or footway 'to go for a burger') or moving traffic contraventions (such as banned turns, no-entry signs, etc.).

Officers sought and have now received approval from the DfT to enforce contraventions either via mobile or static cameras, and this is a key tool to improving compliance. (We have responded to recent central government consultation on the use of CCTV to make this point). The City of London has moved from a position where 80% of its PCNs were issued on-street 5 years ago to circa 55% currently. We are clear in the City that we will only use CCTV to enforce serious contraventions – parking on footways, bus stops, loading bans, etc. For less serious contraventions – overstaying on pay and display bays, parking on yellow lines, etc. – we only use on-street officers, in line with Statutory and Operational Guidance and to allow officers to physically check for permits, dispensations, pay and display tickets, etc. The aim is managing kerbside space for the maximum benefit for all users.

Statistics

9. Appendix One is a table with the statistics for the service for the last five years. A number of those statistics are those which we use to measure the effectiveness of our service and to carry out trend analysis to inform and identify changes we need to make. We also report statistics which we are regularly asked for by motorists or journalists (top 5 streets, amount of income, etc.). To highlight some of the statistics, what they mean and how they are used:

10. Levels of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) by type:

2012/2013	Number
PCNs issued:	
On-street PCNs	39,575
Stationary CCTV PCNs	6,469
Moving Traffic PCNs	17,461
Vehicle drove away/prevented from serving	1,511
Total (excludes void/unissued PCNs):	65,016

11. PCN levels throughout London have decreased year on year for the last few years. The City of London issued fewer PCNs last year than the preceding year. This is positive as we need to ensure that enforcement is commensurate to the level of non-compliance and as compliance increases the level of PCNs will decrease.
12. Top five streets for PCNs (2012/2013):

Top 5 streets for PCNs (income).
Old Broad Street (£973,730)
Finsbury Circus (£159,510)
Ropemaker Street (£104,802)
Cornhill (£89,194)
West Smithfield (£65,171)

13. The figures above show that the level of PCNs in Old Broad Street was disproportionately high. This should be addressed by the change in signs we effected in March 2013 (referred to above) which have already improved compliance and reduced PCNs. We will review this year the levels of PCNs in Finsbury Circus as part of our on-going programme to see whether the high level of PCNs continue and whether a similar change to signage would be appropriate.
14. Cancellations and write offs (2012/2013):

Cancellations and Write Offs	11,017
% of PCNs resulting in cancellation/write off	17%

15. Circa 40% of the PCNs issued by the City of London result in an informal challenge (e.g. a letter or email in response to the initial PCN). This is relatively high and is partly attributable to the fact that we follow statutory guidance and advertise that we will hold the PCN at the discounted rate whilst challenges are being considered. The level of people taking this to formal appeal is around 4% as set out earlier. 17% of all PCNs are either cancelled for various reasons (proof they were delivering and not parked, disabled driver's first PCN, vehicle breakdown, signs not compliant, etc.) or written off where, for example, we are unable to trace the debtor (who may be a company that has gone into liquidation).
16. Income and expenditure (2012/2013):

Payments for PCN received	£4,216,355
Payments received for TFL enforcement	£35,77
Enforcement (PCN) expenditure	£4,109,629
Net PCN income	£142,503

17. The enforcement operation, taken on its own, has run at a loss for 3 out of the last 5 years. This demonstrates that the City of London is using enforcement powers appropriately to encourage compliance, improve safety and keep traffic moving with any revenue/loss being a by-product of that aim rather income targets being the primary objective.
18. We have recently completed the tender process for the on-street parking enforcement service. The incumbent contractors were successful and the new contract starts in March 2014..

Conclusion

19. Members are asked to note this report for information.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Parking Ticket Office Statistics for last 5 years

Contact

Stuart McGregor, Parking Ticket Office Manager

T: 020 7332 1035

E: stuart.mcgregor@cityoflondon.gov.uk