

Committee:	Dated:
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee	12/01/2021
Subject: Housing Estate Parking Management Review - Progress Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	4, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Y/N
Report of: Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Liam Gillespie, Head of Housing Management	

Summary

The Housing Service manages 1,060 parking facilities across its estates, including garages, parking bays and motorcycle parking. Weekly charges from these facilities are a significant source of income to the Housing Revenue Account, though void rates are high (approximately 40%) and it has been identified that our processes for managing these facilities need to be refreshed and modernised.

In mid-2020, a review of our management of these facilities was commissioned and a parking consultancy has now presented us with a report containing recommendations for the future of estate parking on City Corporation housing estates. This update report is intended to bring Members up to speed with the project and explain how officers will use the recommendations made in the review report.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report

Main Report

Background

1. The City Corporation manages 1,060 parking facilities of various types across its social housing estates. These facilities are provided to users under individual licence agreements. Each facility attracts a weekly charge which varies across different sites, and by facility type.

2. Previously, the charges regime was reviewed annually, and the fees were altered depending on demand at each site. However, this system produced several anomalies and charges tended to differ drastically between estates.
3. It was also noted that some locations have high numbers of empty facilities (around 40% across all sites). This perhaps not surprising on those estates falling within the Congestion Charge zone, though high void rates have also been noted on some estates outside that area. It is possible that this is partly due to our estate parking charges being significantly higher than local street parking tariffs for residents.
4. Our management processes have not been reviewed for many years. A system of paper permits is still used, which is administratively complex and in need of modernisation. From a resident perspective, the process of applying for parking or buying temporary permits (e.g. for visitors) is also less straightforward than it should be and involves submitting hard copies of documents or visiting an estate office. Some lapses in administrative processes have resulted in complaints from residents which have been upheld.
5. In response to these and other issues, a review of our management of estate parking facilities was commissioned and The Project Centre Ltd was appointed in May 2020 to carry out this work.
6. The review was intended, among other things, to:
 - Review current processes and documentation
 - Consider how processes could be improved from a customer service perspective
 - Recommend ways in which voids could be reduced and income maximised
 - Provide recommendations on IT systems for parking management
 - Benchmark and review our charging regime, with recommendations for different possible approaches
 - Look at alternative uses for vacant or under-used spaces
 - Advise on parking enforcement options
7. The consultants visited each site, speaking to staff about how parking is managed and any issues they encountered. They examined the parking facilities and looked at possible improvements, such as new layouts, additional spaces, or cycle storage facilities.
8. A desktop study was also completed to examine our charging regime and compare this against several other local authorities in London.
9. Finally, IT solutions for estate parking management were considered and recommendations made for possible improvements.

Findings

10. Some key findings of the review were:

Facilities

- Many sites have inadequate bay markings, and some are worn away entirely
- Several sites have insufficient visitor and contractor bays, or none at all
- There are significant opportunities to provide more contractor, visitor and resident parking by creating new bays or reconfiguring existing facilities
- Several estates have poor provision for cycle storage but there are many suitable sites for improved secure cycle storage (hangars and lockers)

Barriers and security

- While some car parks had barriers or similar, these were often unreliable or in some cases completely defective and no longer used
- Some car parks had no barriers and were subject to unauthorised parking and, in some cases, issues like fly-tipping
- Many estates had only “Sheffield” stands for bike parking, rather than more secure bike hangars or lockers
- While there were some incidents of theft or vandalism, estates were generally felt to be safe for parking and storing bikes

Charges

- The City’s estate parking charges are all higher than local authority on-street parking permits, sometimes significantly so (at one estate it was triple the cost of local on-street residents’ parking, on others it was double)
- Most local authorities apply a standard charge across all their housing estates, with only one other council in London identified as having a similar regime to the City Corporation’s (Westminster)
- Some authorities’ (including Southwark and Islington) charges vary based on vehicle emissions, in support of their aims around improving air quality

Enforcement

- The current enforcement regime is felt to be inadequate as it relies on a private enforcement officer being present to witness a contravention and issuing a penalty notice, which is not effective in preventing unauthorised parking or misuse of our land

Proposals for next steps

11. It is proposed that officers now use the review and its recommendations to design and deliver a project to implement improvements in several key areas:

- **Charging regime:** formulate detailed proposals and models for alternative charging structures, including the possibility of emissions-based charging, with a view to increasing income and reducing void losses
 - **Enhanced facilities:** draw up detailed proposals for improvements on each site, with associated costs (additional or reconfigured parking bays, improved cycle storage facilities, renewed bay markings)
 - **IT improvements:** ascertain the cost of implementing a system to enable better management of parking facilities, including electronic payments and permits for residents, visitors and contractors, doing away completely with paper applications and physical parking permits
 - **Customer service:** create a system where residents and other car park users can obtain electronic permits via an online portal or similar, without the need to submit hard copies of documents or visit an office in person
 - **Security:** formulate proposals to implement effective security infrastructure at each site to prevent or minimise unauthorised parking or misuse of our facilities, including use of automated barriers or similar
 - **Enforcement:** implement a suitable enforcement regime for each site to minimise unauthorised use, without the need for enforcement in person where feasible
12. This project is of course conditional on funding being available for the various elements, some of which would require significant investment by the HRA at an amount to be determined. The project could be designed in such a way as to be deliverable in stages, to spread costs.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

13. The improvement of our estate parking management regime supports our corporate aims of providing the facilities that our communities need and managing our land and public spaces effectively.
14. The improvements would also support the Housing Strategy outcomes around providing well-managed estates.

Conclusion

15. A review of estate parking management has identified many areas in which our current practices and procedures can be improved, to provide a better service to residents and reduce administrative tasks.
16. The review has also underlined the need to make changes and improvements to our car parks, to provide better facilities to users and potentially increase income.

17. Officers intend to use the recommendations to formulate a project to address some key priorities, with a view to creating better managed facilities, more customer-focused processes and a more sensible scheme of charges designed to maximise income to the HRA and reduce void losses.

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