

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Transport & Sustainability Committee

## Agenda Item 66

**Subject: Parking Customer Services Update**

**Date of meeting: 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**Report of: Executive Director of Economy, Environment & Culture**

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**Ward(s) affected: All**

**For general release**

### **1. Purpose of the report and policy context**

1.1 This report updates committee on changes within the Parking Customer Service (Permits) Team, particularly on the progress of the Systems Improvement Project (SIP). It outlines the work completed, some of the future challenges to overcome, and the plan to achieve the outcomes of the team's digital modernisation programme.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 That Committee notes the work done to date as outlined in see Paragraphs 3.1 to 3.9.

2.2 That Committee approves the Parking Services digital modernisation future plan (present to 2025/26) as outlined in Appendix 1 and Para 3.11.

### **3. Context and background information**

3.1 The Systems Improvement Project (SIP) was set up in December 2019 to design and implement new parking systems that would:

- Improve the customer offer and experience so that growing customer demand for online self-service could be met
- Streamline business processes
- Allow for more consistency in the way work was done
- Allow for more flexibility to meet changing objectives
- Raise staff satisfaction
- Improve data protection and data integrity
- Enable a move toward Virtual Permits
- Contribute to wider council strategies, including Digital, Data, Customer, and Sustainability strategies.

- 3.2 The project was designed to deliver flexible systems that can be quickly adapted to accommodate changes to parking permits that the Parking Customer Service Team is required to make from time to time.
- 3.3 While the system used for parking enforcement was procured from an external supplier, the system used for issuing parking permits was built internally by developers within the council's own IT & Digital Team. This approach was chosen to give the service access to the benefits of the MyAccount customer portal, and better information sharing across council departments, and aligned the service's modernisation with the corporate One Council Approach.
- 3.4 In August 2023 the migration of all parking permits to the newest version of the Mendix Parking Permits system was completed. All permits now have online routes for applications and (where applicable) renewals, and by April 2024 all other transaction types will have fully online routes available.
- 3.5 The project has also placed Parking Services at the forefront of council-wide efforts to join up council systems – for customers through MyAccount (so customers can 'Tell Us Once') and between services via the Customer Index and Corporate Person (which enables appropriate information sharing). This ensures Parking Services contributes to the Council's Customer Experience Strategy and Digital Data & Technology Strategy.

#### Parking Permits Customer Service Team

- 3.6 Officer teams have demonstrated immense flexibility and resilience during the last three years whilst new systems were implemented. This transition has been complex, and at one point staff were operating across three different systems to deliver the service, all while working partly from the office and partly from home, as a result of Covid-19 restrictions. From a difficult position in summer and autumn 2021 the service has achieved great improvements in the service, as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1 – Complaints received to the service Q3 21/22 to Q1 23/24

<b>Performance indicator</b>	<b>Quarter 3 of 2021/22</b>	<b>Quarter 1 of 2023/24</b>	<b>% improvement</b>	
Stage 1 complaints received	56	34	40 %	
Stage 1 complaints upheld or partially upheld	26	16	38 %	
<b>Performance indicator</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023 (Jan-Oct)</b>	<b>% improvement 2023 over 2021</b>
Average phone call waiting time (minutes : seconds)	33:26	08:11	02:22	94 %

- 3.8 There is a need to improve staff retention in the Customer Services Team. Historically, because the customer service role was less technical, it had a lower salary than other roles within City Transport, and therefore has functioned as a gateway to other opportunities. If retention can be improved, much needed experience can be retained in the team.
- 3.9 Transition to a new fully online service delivery model is leading the service to rethink its business processes. This is a great opportunity, in terms of customer service improvements and efficiency, but is also challenging to get right, so time and careful consideration is required.

#### The Future Plan (until 2025/26)

- 3.10 The service will continue improving the system to complete the work of moving to the newly updated system. This will draw particularly on the outcome of a series of workshops which IT&D colleagues held with staff and is particularly focused on what they need to make their jobs easier.
- 3.11 Appendix 1 shows in diagrammatic form what the SIP intends to deliver over the next two years to enable the service achieve the parking modernisation programme objectives. This will become more detailed as the programme advances. The current benefits identified that the future work of the SIP will deliver include;
- A 'monthly payment' model that will allow customers to spread the cost of their permission to park over monthly payments.
  - 'Virtual' cover, so that the increasing proportion of our customers who neither need nor want a paper permit, can be covered immediately when their permit is activated.
  - Cashable savings in the processing, printing and distribution of permits that virtual cover will allow.
  - Improved options for Digitally Excluded people including keeping physical options where possible.
  - Automatic address verification via Council Tax records, making things easier for customers, more efficient for the council to deliver, and more robust against fraud. Customers will not have to provide proof of address where this is already held by the Council Tax Service – through the links between the two services built by IT&D.

#### Digitally Excluded Customers

- 3.12 The service has a clear commitment to ensure that customers who struggle with online systems receive excellent service, including additional support when needed.
- 3.13 The service have moved substantially to being online over the past three years. There is targeted support via telephone contact and, when needed, in person at the Hove Town Hall Customer Service Centre principles that underpin this are:

- Customers who genuinely can't complete applications online must be given an alternative route to obtaining the permit they need. This help is available initially over the phone. Then, if staff identify a need, an appointment for help at Hove Town Hall Customer Service Centre is offered.
- Customers who could apply online, but simply prefer not to, must not be given a way to jump the queue by coming into Hove Town Hall, because that would be unfair to the vast majority of people who use the online route.

The service encourages as many people as possible to use the online route. This is how they can best access an increasing number of council services at a time that suits them. Therefore, it is in customers' own interest to do so online, if possible, as well as being by far the most cost-effective route for the council to support.

3.14 Appendix 2 contains a flow chart showing the way customers can apply for Resident Permits, and obtain help if customers have problems with the online system.

3.15 Parking Services are examining the feasibility of selling paper 'City Visitor Parking Vouchers' aimed at giving visitors to the city a way of paying cash to park in on-street paid parking bays. This would be in addition to barrier car parks and PayPoints, where customers can already pay cash. The service has liaised with the London Borough of Westminster Council, who offer a similar product called 'Parking Cards' which they sell in very small quantities. This represents roughly 0.2% of transactions, or 1,200 – 1,500 out of two million annual on-street paid parking transactions annually.

3.16 The service is preparing to conduct a 6 month trial in a limited geographical area which will begin over Summer 2024. The aim is to start in time to offer the product during the busiest period of the year. If the trial is successful, and there is good take-up of the option by visitors to the city, then the scheme could be rolled out to more areas across the city, depending on cost. If there is limited success then other options can be explored. More details of the area, operation and costs will be presented in a report to the next available Committee meeting.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

4.1 The Systems Improvement Project is already underway. It is recommended that Committee approves the future plan outlined in 3.11 rather than alternative options.

#### **5. Community engagement and consultation**

5.1 As the programme develops feedback from customers and links to the corporate customer service steering group continue to be a crucial part of shaping the way forward.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 Agreement to the three recommendations is sought so that the service can confidently move ahead with the work to achieve the outcomes of the Systems Improvement Project over the next one to two years.

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 The costs associated with the recommendations of this report will be contained within existing Parking Services budgets and/or funded from additional parking income generated.
- 7.2 Use of surplus income from parking charges and penalty charges is governed by section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Once the direct costs of traffic management have been met, the use of surpluses is legally ringfenced to the provision of public transport services and to road, air quality and environmental improvements.
- 7.3 Parking charges are subject to the Council's Corporate Fees and Charges Policy. As a minimum, charges will be reviewed annually as part of the budget and service planning process.

Name of finance office consulted: David Wilder Date consulted: 22/01/2023

## **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1 The Council is the traffic authority for the purposes of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, and must manage the parking on the relevant roads within its administrative area. This Act also established the charging regime, for relieving and preventing the congestion of traffic. The measures proposed within this report should not, and don't, exceed the powers granted within this Act and associated legislation.

Name of lawyer consulted: Katie Kam Date consulted 23/01/24

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 The impact of the service's modernisation on different groups of people is considered at every stage of the Systems Improvement Project, underpinned by the principle that alternative paper options must be available to customers who are Digitally Excluded.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 None.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Future work of the Systems Improvement Project  
Appendix 2: Application channels for Resident Permits

