

Annual Parking Report - 1st April 2016 to 31st March

Appendix 2

Customer Service



Appendix 2: Customer Service

Here at Bromley Council, we aim to provide a comprehensive, helpful and up to date service to all our stakeholders whilst delivering the best standards of customer care possible. We strive to offer a welcoming and professional service and deal with enquiries as efficiently as we can. We endeavour to provide clear and relevant information, but if you do need it in a different format, please ask and we will do everything we can to help you.

We constantly look for ways to improve our service. We promise to keep listening so that we can continue to offer the high levels of consistent and sustainable customer service that people in the Borough expect and deserve. We will continue to involve, inform and provide you with fair and equal access to information and services.

Section 1 – Contacts for parking related matters

Enquiry reason	Contact details
Operational issues	www.bromley.gov.uk/parkingenquiries
Car park issues	
Communications	
General enquiries	
Parking permit/visitors' vouchers enquiries	
Penalty Charge Notice - enquiries (including payment enquiries and cases at Charge Certificate and Warrant stage)	
Penalty Charge Notice – appeals	www.bromley.gov.uk/parking
Penalty Charge Notice - payments	
Parking dispensation/suspension - applications	
Parking permit - applications	
Report Blue Badge misuse	www.bromley.gov.uk/report
Report an abandoned vehicle	
Freedom of Information requests	www.bromley.gov.uk/freedomofinformation
Register to pay for parking using a mobile phone	www.ringgo.co.uk

Section 2 - Who provides the services

The Parking Team provides our services; the team currently consists of dedicated permanent members of staff as listed below. (To meet the needs of the service, the number of staff may change from time to time).

- Head of Parking
- ICT and Projects Manager
- Contracts and Operations Manager
- Senior Operations Officer
- Senior Contracts Officer
- Strategy and Service Development Manager
- Customer and Communications Officer
- Information and Policy Review Officer
- Performance and Debt Recovery Manager
- ETA Officer
- Enforcement Agent and Debt Recovery Officer
- Car Park, Facilities and Assets Manager
- Appeals and Processing Manager
- Supervisors
- Parking Support Officers (dealing with appeals and administration, includes temporary contract/agency staff employed from time to time, as required).

Section 3 - Online services and information

In July 2015, Response Master Self-Serve was set up on the Parking section of the Council's website as an enhancement to the online appeals service. By entering their PCN number and contravention code, the motorist can interact through the service and view the policy and guidance that relates to their PCN type and reason for appeal. The motorist then has an idea of the likely outcome of a challenge or representation and can make an informed decision as to whether to pursue an appeal or pay the PCN.

Photographic evidence taken at the time of the alleged contravention is also available to view online. The benefits include greater transparency in our actions and a reduction in administration and the need for customers to contact the Council.

If the motorist chooses to make an online challenge or representation, they can also submit any relevant supporting documentation online and this will be received by our back office within seconds. The benefits include a fast and efficient service for our customers, a reduction in the amount of correspondence we receive by post and the associated logging and scanning, which is very time consuming. During the period of this report, 68% of all challenges and representations received were submitted online.

The table below shows the total number and percentage of users of our online services between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2017.

Year	PCNs issued	Challenges received	Challenges received (online)		Representations received	Representations received (online)	
	Total	Total	Total	%	Total	Total	%
2012-2013	91,908	14,419	6,452	45.7	7,540	2,511	33.3
2013-2014	92,919	16,219	7,743	47.7	8,516	3,454	40.6
2014-2015	89,927	16,133	10,904	67.6	7,710	3,581	46.4
2015-2016	85,543	18,075	12,913	71.4	5,163	2,635	51.0
2016-2017	89,185	18,224	13,263	72.8	4,997	2,413	48.3

In order to deal with enquiries as quickly and efficiently as possible, we believe it is necessary to have all the relevant customer details at the first point of contact. We have a number of online e-forms for specific parking related enquiries including:

- parking permits/visitors' vouchers;
- general parking enquiries;
- requests for parking enforcement;
- registering an address for parking enforcement of the dropped kerb; and
- reporting Blue Badge misuse.

We also continue to work alongside Car Parks4U and Appy Parking; these specialist companies provide user friendly web services with comprehensive and detailed parking information. There are direct links to these websites from www.bromley.gov.uk/parking

Section 4 - Total number of parking related calls received by Customer Service Centre

The table below shows the total number of parking related calls received by the Customer Service Centre, the average time taken and the average time on each call, between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2017.

Period	Number of calls	Average time on each call
01/04/12 – 31/03/13	26,718	4 minutes, 14 seconds
01/04/13 – 31/03/14	28,319	4 minutes, 25 seconds
01/04/14 – 31/03/15	26,416	3 minutes, 57 seconds
01/04/15 – 31/03/16	22,423	4 minutes, 22 seconds
01/04/16 – 31/03/17	27,259	5 minutes, 36 seconds

Call recording within the department continues to be an invaluable method of gathering information about how we communicate with our customers; motorists and the general public. We regularly listen to recorded telephone conversations to review staff training requirements and, when necessary, to resolve issues and misunderstandings, all of which helps us to improve our service.

Section 5 - The Blue Badge Scheme



This is a national arrangement of parking concessions for people with severe walking/mobility difficulties who travel as drivers or passengers. The scheme allows badge holders to park close to their destination but the national concessions apply to on-street parking only. To meet the needs of Blue Badge holders, a number of disabled bays are located on-street throughout the Borough. We also provide a number of designated disabled bays in our car parks, where parking is free for badge holders.

Staff based in our Customer Service Centre are responsible for the receipt and processing of all Blue Badge applications. A dedicated occupational health professional uses Department for Transport guidelines to make decisions about eligibility to join the scheme. Further information about applying for and using a Blue Badge is available at: www.bromley.gov.uk/parking

Section 6 - Blue Badge fraud and misuse

A national database holds records of every Blue Badge issued in England, Scotland and Wales. These records ensure more effective monitoring of cancelled, lost or stolen badges. Local authorities can access and share electronically stored information which helps in tackling misuse.

The Government's Blue Badge Scheme reforms in 2012 have impacted on Blue Badge fraud. The badge design was changed as part of these reforms from a handwritten laminated card to a badge electronically printed on PVC. The security features which include a hologram, serial number and digital photograph, make badges much harder to copy, forge, or alter.

We have widely publicised our joint campaign with the London Borough of Bexley to tackle Blue Badge misuse. Our main aims remain to protect the integrity of the Blue Badge Scheme by ensuring that only genuine badge holders benefit from the scheme's parking concessions.

We also continue to raise awareness and encourage members of the public to report known misuse. Such reports are thoroughly investigated and appropriate action is taken. Where the Council is satisfied that misuse has occurred, the case is referred for prosecution.

We also have various security measures in place to prevent Blue Badge abuse which include:

- collaboration between the council's Customer Service Centre (CSC) and the National Fraud Initiative (NFI);
- making the Blue Badge issuing process more rigorous, i.e. if a badge is lost and another required, a crime reference number is mandatory and the new badge must be collected in person.

Since the amendment to regulations effected by the Disabled Persons (Badges for Motor Vehicles) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, all Civil Enforcement Officers and named Council Officers with delegated powers are legally entitled to inspect and confiscate Blue Badges without police presence.

A badge may be confiscated if there are reasonable grounds for believing that it is fake, has previously been cancelled as lost or stolen, was being misused, or should have been returned to the issuing authority, for example because it had expired, was damaged or faded, or the badge holder has died.

Our website has more information about the [Blue Badge misuse](#). If you suspect that a Blue Badge is being used fraudulently or have cause for concern, please contact us at: www.bromley.gov.uk/reportbluebadge or by phone on: 020 8313 4800.

Section 7 – Parking dispensations and suspensions

A parking dispensation can be arranged to allow a commercial vehicle to park on a waiting restriction (yellow line) during restricted hours in circumstances where the vehicle needs to be close to a specific location. For example, for carrying out works that require the driver to park close to a building or site where continuous access is required to load or unload goods or materials.

A parking suspension can be arranged to allow a motorist to park for a specific purpose in a specified bay or bays during restricted hours. For example, for carrying out major road works, utility works or larger construction projects that require the driver to park close to a building or site where continuous access is required to load or unload goods or materials. When we issue a suspension, we place signs at the location to clearly indicate to motorists that we have temporarily removed the bay/bays from service.

Similar arrangements can be made for funerals, blood transfusions, public health screening and domestic removals. In these circumstances, permission to park must be requested at least three working days in advance and will be subject to assessment to ensure that a parked vehicle will not cause an obstruction or hazard.

Our website has more information about [parking dispensations and suspensions](#) and how to apply.

We can also arrange a suspension for a skip to be placed in a bay provided that a temporary highway license has been obtained prior to the suspension request. Our website has more information about [temporary highway licences](#) and how to apply.

Section 8 - Paying to park by mobile phone

Mobile phone technology to pay for parking time using a debit/credit card is accessible in all council owned pay and display parking areas, including on-street pay and display bays and car parks (with the exception of the MSCPs in Bromley Town Centre). We currently work alongside a company by the name of RingGo to provide this service.

Paying to park using a mobile phone has many benefits, including:

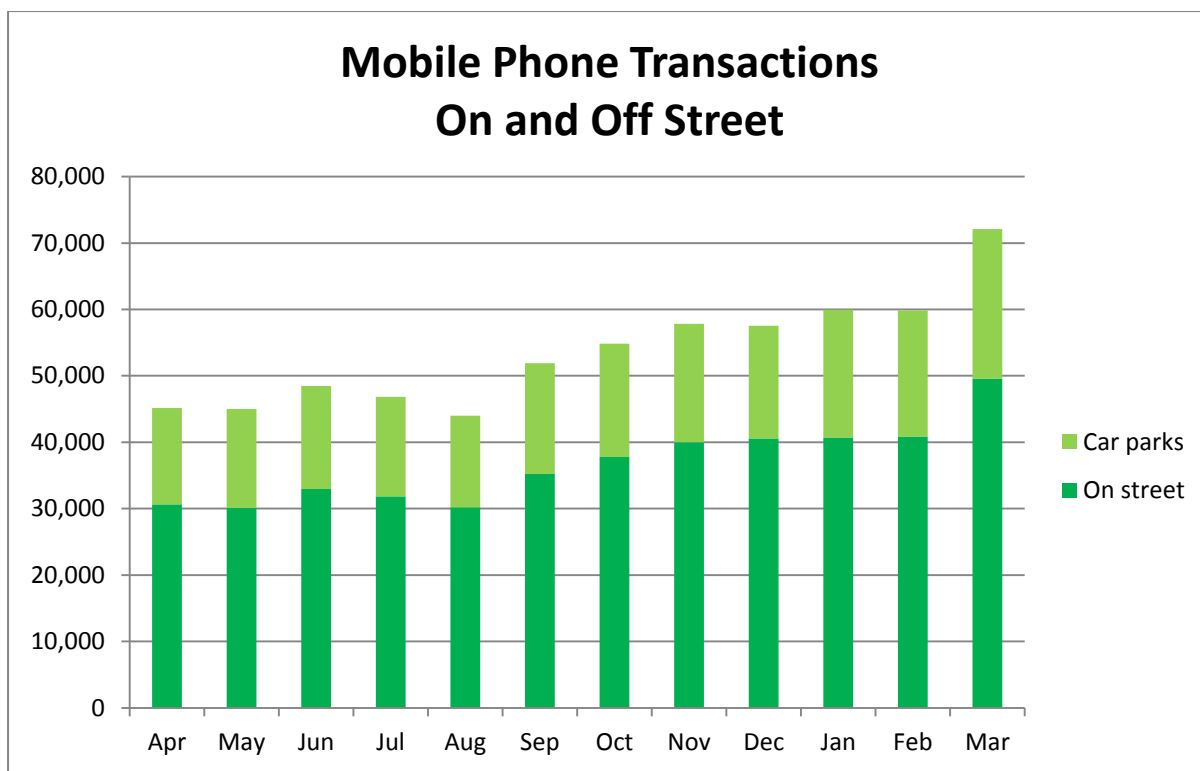
- no need to find coins;
- the ability to extend parking time, wherever the motorist is, by making a simple phone call (within stipulated maximum time limits) or using the RingGo mobile phone apps;
- helping to avoid PCNs due to lost or badly displayed tickets;
- helping to avoid PCNs, as motorists receive a text message indicating when their time is due to expire (charges apply);
- reducing the need for more pay and display machines, thereby reducing street clutter and the potential for vandalism.

Paying to park using a mobile phone has been well received by our customers. To date, there have been very few queries or complaints about the service. Through a link to the RingGo back office, we are also able to check transactions/payments made, which assists us in dealing with appeals against PCNs.

To register with RingGo, a simple online registration process can be completed at www.ringgo.co.uk or by calling the local rate number: 020 3046 0010. Further information is available on our website: www.bromley.gov.uk/parking

Mobile phone parking was originally trialed in Orpington and by the end of April 2010, a total of 1,454 transactions were recorded. In May 2010, it was rolled out throughout the Borough and by 31st March 2011, usage had increased by 289% to 5,651 transactions with a monthly average of approximately 3,700 transactions. As at March 2017, average usage was 53,619 transactions per month for the financial year.

The graph below shows the mobile phone parking transactions for the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017.



Section 9 - Complaints

In the financial year ending 31st March 2017, we dealt with a total of 102 parking related complaints.

A complaint is defined by the Council as an expression of dissatisfaction about a service received. What we learn from the complaints we receive assists us in improving our service. Information about the Council's formal complaints procedure is available on our website: www.bromley.gov.uk

The table below show the number of complaints received for the five years from 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2017.

Period	Number of complaints
01/04/12 – 31/03/13	377
01/04/13 – 31/03/14	158
01/04/14 – 31/03/15	119
01/04/15 – 31/03/16	99
01/04/16 – 31/03/17	102

Section 10 - Freedom of information requests

Last year we received 84 requests for information under the FOI Act. We have no reason to believe this figure will not be exceeded in the coming year. We have a duty to reply within 20 working days of each request. However, a fee may be charged if a request requires work that exceeds the appropriate limit specified in regulations (set at £450 for local government). This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 2½ working days in determining whether the Council holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting it. Under section 12 of the FOI Act, the Council is not obliged to comply with any request that is equal to or above the £450 limit. However in such circumstances, through further communication to streamline the request, we are usually able to respond.

Many of the requests we received during the last financial year involved PCNs; how many were issued, where, when and how many were cancelled. Our report therefore includes this information. Section 11 gives details of typical requests which we believe will be helpful to motorists and the general public.

The table below shows the number of requests we received between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2017, the number of days taken to respond and the average response time.

Period	Number of FOI requests
01/04/12 – 31/03/13	63
01/04/13 – 31/03/14	131
01/04/14 – 31/03/15	79
01/04/15 – 31/03/16	72
01/04/16 – 31/03/17	84

Section 11 – Most common Freedom of Information requests

Outlined below are examples of common requests received under the Freedom of Information Act between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017.

Penalty Charge Notices

- **Question** - How many PCNs were issued by the London Borough of Bromley for each of the last ten years?

- **Answer** - See tables below.

Year	PCNs issued
2007/2008	82,199
2008/2009	80,456
2009/2010	76,179
2010/2011	89,256
2011/2012	90,074

Year	PCNs issued
2012/2013	91,908
2013/2014	92,919
2014/2015	89,927
2015/2016	85,543
2016/2017	89,185

Enforcement

Questions about the number of PCNS issued:

- in specific locations;
- of a specific type, e.g. bus lanes, etc.

Financial

Questions about the amount of payment received:

- in relation to PCNs issued in specific streets;
- against specific types of PCN, e.g. bus lanes, etc.;
- against PCNs issued throughout the borough.