

Form B – Full Assessment

Function/Service Being Assessed:

Car parking for holders of blue badges – in the Council’s long and short term car parks

Officer completing form: Kimberley Rowley

Service: Parking – Regulatory Services

Date of completion: 9 June 2020

FULL EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM B

Is this a new function or a review of an existing function?

Review of an existing function – provision of car parking for the public (including holders of blue badges) in the Three Rivers DC owned car parks.

What are the aims/purpose of the function?

The Parking Service provides a range of benefits by offering off-street parking, with key objectives to help connect visitors with local business and other services, improve traffic flow, reduce parking congestion on local roads, and to support the success of local business.

In Council car parks in which a charge is made to park, all users are required to pay the charge. The regulations that are currently enforced do not offer exemptions for vehicles displaying a blue badge.

Parking for vehicles displaying a blue badge is available anywhere in these car parks but specific provision is made for people who are disabled through the provision of specifically marked ‘blue badge bays’, These are wider than standard parking bays and typically situated closer to payment machines and access points.

In the long term car parks this has been the situation since (at least) 1994 and this policy was unchanged by the new policy that was agreed in 2017, offering the option to park for longer at a charge, after the first free hour in the Council’s short-stay car parks. This new option became operational in April 2018.

The bays dedicated for blue badge holders have been designed and located to allow ease of access to vehicles, payment machines and access points.

Is the function designed to meet specific needs such as the needs of minority ethnic groups, older people, disabled people etc?

The Council car parks are available for use by any member of the public driving a permitted vehicle (cars, small vans and invalid carriages). The car parks are intended for use by the general public.

Specific bays are provided to assist those holding a blue badge to park in more convenient locations in the Council’s car parks.

Blue badges are issued by the County Council. Applicants have to meet specific criteria but are people with physical or hidden disabilities.

Information on the location of ‘blue badge bays’ is available on request or online at <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/car-parks>. This includes bay location maps provided by fully accessible online mapping software.

The physical fabric of every car park is regularly assessed by both dedicated surveyors and parking enforcement staff and any defects are rectified through regular programmes.

What information has been gathered on this function? (Indicate the type of information gathered e.g. statistics, consultation, other monitoring information)? Attach a summary or refer to where the evidence can be found.

Data is available to show uptake of the various parking options (long-stay, short-stay and lengths of stay), but it is not specifically relevant to this review.

The need for EqIA was investigated for the new policy. It was not subject to any EqIA following advice that there is no necessary correlation between the issue of a blue badge and the financial status of the applicant. It was therefore considered that proposing any such connection could cause conflict with the Council's commitment to promoting equality.

There are no records in the last five years of any complaint having been received from blue badge holders relating to parking in the long-stay car parks, for which charging has been standard since 1994.

Some feedback was received during the monitoring period for the new short-stay parking policy that related to the 'loss' of free parking for blue badge holders. This was considered to have been caused by a misconception arising from a decision in April 2018 to suspend all enforcement for blue badge holders temporarily. This decision was rescinded in 2019 and is considered likely to have caused confusion among blue badge holders.

Background data

Some complaints were received about the ease of use of parking payment machines by people with various disabilities. Numerous reported issues have been investigated by the machine manufacturer's engineers and some improvements have been made, particularly in the customer interaction aspects of the machines.

Use of car parks specifically by blue badge holders is not routinely monitored although feedback is received in response to consultation, as well as through unsolicited contact. This feedback is communicated via the website, by email and letter and has been used to improve the service provided in car parks (for example in the siting of payment machines, signage and surface maintenance issues that have affected the experience of disabled car park users).

There is little evidence in reports to the Council of customer dissatisfaction with the provision of the amount of blue badge bays. One specific request for the provision of more disabled parking provision in Rickmansworth town centre has been received in the last five years.

Various complaints have been received about the use of the parking payment machines by disabled users. These have been investigated but not substantiated and the machines (and installation) are compliant with the relevant standards to ensure accessibility.

Does your analysis of the information show different outcomes for different groups (higher or lower uptake/failure to access/receive a poorer or inferior service)? If yes, which aspects of the policy or function contribute to inequality?

The outcome, charging for use of the car parks, does not adversely affect different groups.

Are these differences justified (e.g. are there legislative or other constraints)? If they are, explain in what way.

What action needs to be taken as a result of this Equality Impact Assessment to address any detrimental impacts or meet previously unidentified need? (Select one option and explain

- No change required (explain why not)
- Adjust the policy (explain what needs to be changed to address which needs)
- Stop and remove the policy (explain why the policy fundamentally breaches our Public Sector Equality Duty and why options to alter the policy cannot address this)

Comment:

There is not a justifiable reasonable adjustment under the Equalities Act for offering free parking for holders of disabled blue badges. Holders of disabled blue badges are able to park for free on the highway, this is a national position which has been subject to Equality Impact Assessment.

Every disability is different and it is not possible to consider all of the variants of protected characteristics regarding parking, therefore a consistent approach to our car parks is the most straightforward approach to enforce and for different groups to understand.

When will you evaluate the impact of action taken?

When policy is due for review.

Please send your completed assessment to your service head. Completed forms should be attached as an appendix to the relevant report and a copy sent to the Community Partnerships Unit