

Agenda Item No:

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: ALL
REPORT TITLE: Review of School Run Policy and the Issue of Dispensation Permits (CENV/2007/68)	

REPORT OF: Acting Director of Culture & Environment
FOR SUBMISSION TO Executive (Environment) Sub-Group
DATE 21 st June 2007

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report is the third and final in the process of reviewing the Council's existing school run policy that was begun in October 2006. There were reports to the Executive (Environment) Sub-Group on 21st November 2006 and 15th February 2007. There has also been discussion with Culture & Environment Scrutiny Committee and the School Travel Consultation Steering Group. Since February, consultation has been conducted with schools, children, parents and residents over a six-week period to 12th April, resulting in 3,838 responses.

The existing policy of reducing parking dispensation permits is now in the fourth year of its six-year programme, with 40% of permits remaining and the current policy will lead to 20% permits remaining in September 2007 and no permits from September 2008 (except a limited number for emergency use).

This report presents the future options for the policy based upon consultation, surveys and a review of the costs. The consultation and survey results are contained in the report and its appendices to the Culture & Environment Scrutiny Committee on 12th June, which form the annex to this report.

Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information

None were used

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RECOMMENDATION

The Executive (Environment) Sub-Group is asked to agree:

1. One of the following:
 - (a) Proceed with existing policy to reduce parking dispensation permits to 20% (i.e. 1,200) in September 2007, and withdraw all permits from September 2008 (except a limited number for emergency use) with no charge for the permit
 - (b) Reduce parking dispensation permits to 1,000 in September 2007 and hold them at that level with no charge for the permit
 - (c) Reduce parking dispensation permits to 1,000 in September 2007 and hold them at that level, and make an additional charge of £20/week, using surplus funds to facilitate the development of alternative transport, subject to a Executive approval for the

introduction of a new charge and the use of the receipts.

2. Issue of permits be prioritised for younger children
3. No new schools to be allowed to enter the Parking Dispensation Scheme

Signed by Acting Director/Assistant Director:

Date:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is the third report that completes the three-stage review of the School Run Policy that began in October 2006. It was designed to allow time to implement the agreed policy in time for the new school year. The existing policy began in 2002 following the report of the School Run Scrutiny Panel, which consisted of two strands: (a) the Parking Dispensation Scheme (PDS) for primary schools and (b) development of school travel plans. The PDS provides permits for parking on single yellow lines or residential parking bays for a maximum of 15 minutes. The current allocation of parking dispensation permits for 2006/07 is 40% of the 2004 level. Execution of the policy would lead to a further reduction to 20% in September 2007 and zero in September 2008.
- 1.2 From the outset of the review it was considered important that the School Travel Consultation Steering Group (STCSG) and the Culture & Environment Scrutiny Committee were closely involved.
- 1.3 The review has collected evidence to assess if the policy has been meeting its objective to reduce the school run and its impact, whether continuing the policy is likely to do so in future, and determine policy options for the future. The **Annex** is the recent report and its appendices to the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 12th June, which gave the results of consultation, traffic surveys and air quality monitoring.
- 1.4 Public consultation for the school run policy took place over a six-week period until April 12th 2007 where the views of schools, parents, children and residents were sought on four policy options and the future of the school run policy. Relevant Council services, external public bodies and interested parties who are affected by the school run were also invited to participate. The consultation was questionnaire based and people were encouraged to respond by completing the questionnaires on line, but offered paper copies if preferred. One-third of the returns were completed on-line.
- 1.5 The four policy options in the consultation were:

Option 1	To stop issuing any permits in July 2007 (excluding those with temporary mobility needs not covered by the Disabled Blue Badge Scheme) and so accelerate the reduction
Option 2	To continue reducing permits to zero by September 2008 (excluding those with temporary special mobility needs who are not either in receipt of a statement or in receipt of the Disabled Blue Badge) in line with current policy.
Option 3	To hold the total number of permits at the current level of 40% of the number of permits your school received in September 2004
Option 4	To reduce permits to a level of 20% of the number of permits your school received in September 2004, but not to carry out any further reductions thereafter.

- 1.6 3,838 responses to the consultation were received and table 1 shows how they were distributed:

	Total Responses	Possible Responses	Response Rate
Residents	1,012	25,846	3.9%
Parents	1,040	9,939	10.5%
Children	1,752	7,324	23.9%
School Management	12	73	16.4%
Resident Associations	14	92	15.2%
Interest groups	5	41	12.2%
Other groups	3	3	100%
Total responses	3,838	43,318	8.8%

2 Summary of consultation results

2.1 The Annex and Appendix 1 to the annex give more detailed results of the consultation.

2.2 *The impact of policy:* the consultation results and studies show:

- No perceived improvement in environmental conditions. This is consistent with environmental information collected and the increase in school rolls up to 10%
- The majority of parents are not aware of the school run policy to discontinue with the permits before joining their school
- In 2006 and 2007 the majority of permits being issued to new starters, contrary to policy of phasing out over five years
- Children's most preferred modes of travel are bicycle (24%) and walking (24%), followed by car

2.3 *The views:* the consultation results also show:

- A strong polarity of views on Options between residents and parents
- Polarity on more flexible permits and support for 'green' fuelled cars
- Support of parents and schools for prioritising young children, with lesser support by residents without children and no support of residents associations
- Support of parents, schools and special interest groups for scratch cards, though the support from residents without children is just under 50%, and they are unsupported by resident associations
- Polarity of views on green levy – especially not supported by majority of parents
- Support by emergency services for current scheme and removing parking obstructions impeding access to buildings

2.4 *The options:* Table 2 shows the most preferred option for each group of respondents:

	Residents without Children	Residents with Children	Parents	Schools	Resident Associations (Households)
Option 1 (zero 09/07)	48%	13%	2%	0%	0%
Option 2 (zero 09/08)	28%	8%	1%	8%	95%
Option 3 (hold at 40%)	13%	63%	53%	83%	3%
Option 4 (20% & hold)	10%	16%	4%	8%	2%
Blank	1%	0%	40%	1%	0%

3 Options for policy revisions

3.1 The school run problem distorts the provision of enforcement effort towards a particular area of the borough, but this is not as a result of the PDS. To assist with enforcement, it is proposed that parking regulations are reviewed in the area and a proposal for this will come forward separately.

Scratch Cards

3.2 Consultation results indicate support for scratch cards from parents and groups representing the parents, and from residents (just under 50% of residents), but there are concerns that:

- The School Run dispensation scheme has been a particularly difficult scheme to enforce requiring additional resources. These were set aside under current policy in view of the planned withdrawal of permits
- A long-term or permanent scheme, whether permit or scratch card, would commit the council to significant enforcement and administration resources
- The enforcement issues will become even more difficult with scratch cards requiring considerable additional resources on enforcement.

3.3 The most significant enforcement issues relating to scratch cards include:

- A scratch card based scheme could bring a much larger number of parents back into the dispensation scheme by giving a wider distribution albeit not to use everyday. However, users can be tempted not to scratch properly, which would allow use over more than one occasion. This would be especially tempting if a parking attendant is not present and would lead to a potentially much greater number of car journeys being made by a greater number of parents.
- To overcome this, extra parking attendants will be needed increasing significantly the enforcement costs to the Council. Camera technology is not yet advanced enough to ensure compliance using scratch cards. Greater enforcement may lead to greater, not less, antagonism around schools.
- There will then likely to be a high level of appeals against parking tickets for improper completion – this is strongly suggested by experience - resulting an increased costs of correspondence and appeals.

3.4 Table 3 below estimates the additional costs of introducing a scratch card scheme. These have to be added to the estimated administrative and enforcement costs of approximately £250,000.

Permit production	7,000
Permit administration	13,000
Appeals administration	26,000
Extra parking attendants (4) required	62,000
TOTAL COSTS	108,000

- 3.5 Because of these concerns, officers have decided that it is not practicable to proceed with a scratch card option as an alternative to dispensation permits and therefore have not recommended this as an option.

Clock Cards

- 3.6 The use of a clock card with parking dispensation permits, though not as flexible as scratch cards, could potentially enhance the effectiveness of enforcement as the user would have to set the time of arrival. Further investigation could be made on implementing such a scheme if it is decided to have a lower limit (options 1(b) or 1(c) of the recommendations) that would continue.

Level of permit

- 3.7 The impact of the school run in Camden is still severe as demonstrated by consultation responses and environmental information. This points to continued need to reduce school run traffic and its impact on the local environment. Some schools are 'leading from the front' and have begun to take action to mitigate the environmental impacts of the school run in line with policy. However it is clear that most of the schools and parents are not making the necessary changes in behaviour without pressure from the Council's school run policy.
- 3.8 Even at a reduced 20% rate the dispensation scheme would allow for almost one million journeys. It is therefore considered that Option 3 in the consultation (holding the permits at their current 40% level) is not an acceptable option for the future policy and it is recommended that the Council do not proceed with this option and that a reduced level is preferred.
- 3.9 The current policy of withdrawing all permits in September 2008 has always assumed retaining a limited number of permits for temporary and emergency use. Although the actual number was not defined pending further work, it is assumed that this would be in the order of 5 to 10% (300-600 permits) of the original number of permits.
- 3.10 Consultation has shown that there is support amongst parents and schools for prioritising the pre-school age children and this group is seen to have special needs. It is recommended that the number of permits retained for temporary and emergency use is extended to allow priority for children up to Key Stage 1 (approximately 7 years old). It is estimated that 1,000 permits would facilitate about 35% of potential journeys relating to this group at schools already in the school dispensation scheme.
- 3.11 It is worth noting that consultation is currently being undertaken on controlled parking zones in the borough, which includes questions on hours of operation. Any changes would be dependent on the results of consultation, which ends on 22 June, but bringing forward the start of operation from 9 am to 8.30 or 8 am would assist enforcement of the school run.
- 3.12 The Options for the type of permit are:

3.13 **Option A**
Continue with current policy, i.e. reduce to 20% in September 2007 and to 'zero' except temporary permits for emergencies such as, e.g., a child with a sprained ankle (less than 10%) in September 2008.

3.14 **Option B**
Provide a fixed number of permits (1000) and hold them at that level, which are geared to younger children and emergency use and without a charge

3.15 **Option C**
Provide a fixed number of permits (1000) and hold them at that level, which are geared to younger children and emergency use, and charged at £20 per week to contribute to the funding of alternative transport.

Charging for permits

3.16 If permits are charged at £20 per week, subject to the Council continuing to bear the cost of the scheme, these charges will generate funds up to £760,000 (@ 38 weeks average x £20 x 1000 permits) per year, towards developing alternative transport provision.

3.17 The amount raised could be reduced if there is no charge for the proportion of permits that are retained for emergency use. Camden could act as enabler as the present policy but the provision of such transport will need to be by others including schools. It should be noted that there could be costs to the Council involved in administering the scheme, which would have to be deducted from the funds generated. It would be appropriate for options and priorities for such schemes to be discussed and recommended by STCSG.

3.18 Implementation for a charging option would involve putting in place new administrative systems, and a scheme could not be implemented before January 2008.

Prioritising Younger Children

3.19 It is proposed to limit the scheme to the schools that are currently within the dispensation scheme. It is also proposed to distribute the permits to schools on the basis of their school roll and by year prioritising the younger children. The age breakdown in schools in the current dispensation scheme is summarised in the Table 4 below

3.20 Schools will receive an allocation on the basis of this proposed distribution, but can allocate the permits on a different basis if they wished. It would be important to confirm the roll numbers and the age breakdown to be able to work out the allocation for individual schools. A meeting of the School Travel Consultative Steering Group will be arranged after the meeting of the Executive (Environment) Sub-Group to further discuss the implementation issues.

3.21 Receiving of permits could be made conditional for schools committing to and publicising Council policy and advice to parents especially prior to joining the school, and for schools producing travel plans to the DfES standard. To date 30 state school travel plans have been DfES approved compared to five independent school travel plans. These enable the Council to bid for central government and regional funding opportunities.

Table 4: Estimate of children at schools in the PDS and permits issued in 2006/07						
	Nursery		KS1 & 2		Total	
	Pupils	Permits	Pupils	Permits	Pupils	Permits
Maintained schools	689	0	2,280	433	2,969	433
Independent schools	1,985	242	3,164	1,230	5,149	1,472
Nurseries	1,751	530	0	0	1,751	530
Total	4,425	772	5,444	1,663	9,869	2,435
% of current total	45%	32%	55%	68%	100%	100%
% of current roll		18%		31%		
Example of proposed allocation of 1000 permits from September 2007						
Number of permits		500		500		
% of permits		50%		50%		
% of roll		13%*		9%		
* Maintained schools are excluded from the calculation as they do not receive any permits						

4 Comments of the Director of Finance

- 4.1 The enforcement of parking regulations in the area where the concentration of schools poses the biggest problem of the school run is estimated to cost in the region of £1¼ million per year for administration and enforcement, not taking into account the income raised from penalty charge notices. If the range of alternative transport provision is developed and car use reduces, it is expected and hoped that issues relating to enforcement around schools will reduce, easing the pressure on resources.
- 4.2 The Director of Finance has been consulted in the preparation of this report. There are no significant financial implications for options A or B.
- 4.3 If Option C, which includes a charge, is chosen there would be a need for a further report to the Executive to agree the new charge and use of the receipts. In these circumstances, further details on the costs involved would be provided.

5 Legal Comments

- 5.1 Legal Services have no comments on this report.