Appendix 6 – FAQ for Removal of Pay and Display Machines

Why are pay and display machines being recommended for removal?

The existing 131 pay and display machines are old and are prone to breaking down, and on some occasions will take a considerable time to be fixed as parts are not easy to purchase due to the age of the machines. Officers recognise that this is providing a poor service for the motorist as well as frustration when they pay for their parking session, but no pay and display ticket is produced.

The demand for the machines has decreased over the last few years whereas the demand for the cashless system has increased, therefore it was agreed in November 2019, report number ES19066, that delegated authority would be given to the Director of Environment & Public Protection for the removal of P&D machines across the Borough in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Since this decision, officers have been removing machines around the Borough with the a removal agreed in November 2021 by former Portfolio Holder Councillor Huntington-Thresher where a further 66 machines, 53 on street and 13 from the car parks, would be removed; this was completed in September 2022.

Officers have recently been informed of the '3g sunset' where mobile phone providers will no longer be supporting 3g sims. Within all the pay and display machines there are 3g sims in them which allows the parking contractor APCOA and officers to communicate with the machines, this allows officers to know when a machine is out of service for any reason. Vodaphone has confirmed that the removal of this support will stop between Feb to April 2023, therefore the Council would have to upgrade the sim cards at a cost of £700 per machine, a total cost of £91,700 or accelerate the removal of the machines within the Borough.

How many locations are already cashless only in Bromley?

There are approximately 30 Locations around the Borough that are already a cashless only zone. Since this being implemented in the various locations around the Borough and no formal complaints have been received.

What do I do if there is no phone signal?

The current cashless system, RingGo has been operational throughout Bromley since 2010 and there have been very few reports of a poor signal. All parking locations have regular cashless sessions purchased.

If a penalty charge is issued and a claim of poor signal is submitted Parking Services will investigate and make a decision accordingly.

I do not have a smart phone; how do I pay to park?

A cashless session can be purchased by the RingGo App via a smart phone; however, it can also be made by phoning RingGo directly with any type of phone, sending a text message or via some in-car devices. Sessions can be booked remotely as well from a pc, laptop or any other listed device, however, if booked remotely Bromley cannot guarantee availability at the location.

A basic mobile phone can be purchased for approximately £30.

Why does the Council not invest in new pay and display machines?

The current pay and display machines are extremely old, in some locations they are over 25 years old. The cost to replace these machines would be approximately £800,000.

The pay and display machine demand has been decreasing, whereas the cashless usage has been steadily increasing, especially in the last few years since the COVID pandemic.

Unfortunately, there is a significant level of theft from and vandalism of pay and display machines across the Borough and returning these to working order can cost significant amounts to the Council and is inconvenient for customers expecting to find a working machine only to find one that has been vandalised.

Newer pay and display machines would still be open to theft and vandalism and these costs would have to be met by the Council. The costs involved with the cashless parking system are far less and of course there is no risk to the Council of theft or vandalism.

Can the Council provide free parking?

Payment for parking helps to control parking in prime locations and with a projected income of just over £6.2m for 22/23for the Council revenues.

Income from parking is used towards meeting the costs of various transport initiatives including, for example, concessionary travel for older people. If parking was free the net loss of income would reduce the monies available for other travel initiatives. To illustrate the impact, council tax would need to increase by 3.5% per household to compensate for the net loss from the parking income, this averages a £60 increase on a Band D annual charge for 22/23 of £1,736.72.

How will drivers learn how to use the cashless system?

Officers will organise a campaign to help all motorist move over to the cashless system, this will include:

1. Posters at each P&D venue announcing change and including step by step how to download RingGo
2. Staff at car parks before rolling out to assist, where there is a low cashless up take.
3. Leaflets at suitable locations around the borough: such as libraries, doctors' surgeries, community resource centres etc.
4. Repeated in Spring Environment matters

Is there an alternative to pay and display machines other than the use of a system like RingGo?

Most cashless providers have an alternative system, however, reports from other London Boroughs are that whilst this system can provide a cash payment system, it can introduce further problems to the authority.

RingGo have an alternative system called RingGo retail that allows the customer to pay for a parking session using cash or card at any shop that offers a Paypoint solution.

The customer would visit the shop, provide the shop with the location number, vehicle registration and how long they would like to park and then pay the shop.

Operationally, this would involve increased costs to the Council to run the system, it would also make enforcement incredibly difficult. Civil Enforcement Officers would have to allow time for a customer to walk to the Paypoint location, pay for parking before being able to enforce any parking controls, this would be extremely difficult in the car parks.

Can the Council issue paper vouchers for those unable to use the system?

Some Boroughs have introduced paper vouchers for customers to purchase before they park their vehicle, however controlled stationary like this has considerable costs to purchase cost as well to resource the selling of the vouchers. With differential charging around the Borough for different locations, this would be extremely difficult to manage.

Does this impact the digitally disadvantaged?

It is a common misconception that a parking session can only be booked through the RingGo app using a Smart phone, however, as we have highlighted earlier there are various ways of booking a session, most of which use the simplest of technology

It should also be remembered that the people who use parking bays are motorists who have to have the skill to drive a vehicle, a skill far more demanding than using a mobile phone.

What do I do if I don't have a bank account?

Statistics show that less than 1% of the public do not have a bank account. For those people who drive, they will require a bank account to pay for the road car tax and car insurance, therefore it is expected that all drivers would have a bank account.