

Report No:  
ES20355

## London Borough of Bromley

### PART ONE - PUBLIC

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**Decision Maker:** Portfolio Holder for Transport, Highways & Road Safety  
For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Public Protection and Enforcement Portfolio on

**Date:** TUESDAY 23 JANUARY 2024

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

**Title:** CASHLESS PARKING UPDATE

**Contact Officer:** Chloe Wenbourne, Head of Shared Parking Services  
E-mail: Chloe.Wenbourne@bromley.gov.uk

**Chief Officer:** Assistant Director of Traffic and Parking, Director of Environment and Public Protection

**Ward:** (All Wards);

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1. Reason for decision/report and options

- 1.1 This Report is to update Members on the performance of the cashless parking application, RingGo since the final stage of the removal of the pay and display machines in April 2023.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the PDS Committee note the content of this report, including the work undertaken by the Parking Team, RingGo and APCOA to smooth the process of machine removal across the Borough.

#### Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: Full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and published.
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#### Transformation Policy

1. Policy Status: Parking Strategy
  2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority (*delete as appropriate*):  
To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.
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#### Financial

1. Cost of proposal: N/A
  2. Ongoing costs: N/A
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Parking Services
  4. Total current budget for this head: £9m
  5. Source of funding: Revenue Budget
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#### Personnel

1. Number of staff (*current and additional*): 0
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: 0
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#### Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non Statutory
  2. Call-in: Not Applicable
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#### Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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#### Property

1. Summary of Property Implications: N/A
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#### Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: The removal of cash collections from pay and display machines has led to a reduction in the Parking Contractor's carbon footprint.
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#### Impact on the Local Economy

1. Summary of Local Economy Implications: This service provides parking facilities to help support the local residents and local businesses.
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#### Impact on Health and Wellbeing

1. Summary of Health and Wellbeing Implications: n/a
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#### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers: All motorists parking within the Borough.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? N/A
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

### 3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 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 most recent 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
- 3.2 In November 2022 a recommendation was brought to the Environment and Community Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee to remove the remaining 131 pay and display machines across the Borough and leave just the cashless system, RingGo, as the only payment facility for parking. This recommendation included the removal of all pay stations and barriers at The Hill car park, therefore the only exception was the Civic Centre multi-storey car park where no change was recommended.
- 3.3 The recommendation was accepted after officers explained that the machines were prone to theft and vandalism, leaving them out of service for a number of days/weeks at a time. The repair time was usually made worse because of the age of the machines as it was difficult to source the parts needed to fix them.
- 3.4 The age of the machines was another large factor that led to the recommendation being approved. Some of the machines were over 20 years old and quite often had problems, such as coin jams, tickets not printing or a general error that would take the machine out of service.
- 3.5 Officers were also made aware of the '3G Sunset' which was the shutdown of all 3G sim cards. All of the pay and display machines in operation across the borough had a 3G sim card within them and with the sims being switch off in February to April 2023 the machines would not be able to communicate with the back-office systems. This would have meant Parking Services and the Parking Contractor, (APCOA), would have no way of knowing if a machine was out of order, the cash box was full or needed a new ticket roll etc. Effectively there would be no way to remotely audit the performance of the machines and this would therefore increase the likelihood of service failures.
- 3.6 As per the original report, usage of the pay and display machines had gradually been declining over the years with a natural changeover of more people opting to pay for parking via the cashless system, RingGo. In 2019/20 only 38% of the car park income was being received via RingGo, whereas in 2021/22 73% of all income was being received via RingGo.
- 3.7 With the above factors being considered, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed and reviewed by an independent officer, this was completed in September 22, before the committee agreed to the removal of the machines. It was concluded that although the cash facility being removed would be an inconvenience to some motorists, it would be assumed that if someone has the physical and mental ability to drive a vehicle, then they should be able to pay for parking via one of the payment options.
- 3.8 After the approval, officers worked with both the APCOA and RingGo to prepare for the change, the following project was broken into four project streams:
1. The legal and back-office updates to the Traffic Management Orders
  2. The physical removal of the machines and the installation of additional / new signage.
  3. Communicating with the general public about the changes through various channels

#### 4. Post Go Live and enforcement and handling of the appeals.

##### Project stream 1 – Legal and Back Office

- 3.9 The removal of the pay and display machines meant that all Traffic Management Orders needed to be amended to reflect only one payment method. For on street locations a variation to the Traffic Order was advertised in local papers and online.
- 3.10 The off-street parking places order, was amended and advertised for 28 days, however this allowed for objections from the public. Notices were displayed within the car parks and within the local papers.
- 3.11 The notices informed motorists how they could make any comments/objections via an online link, in total, 427 objections were submitted. On receipt each objection was reviewed and categorised as detailed below.

| Category                                      | Number of Objections | Percentage of objections |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Discrimination against the elderly            | 222                  | 52%                      |
| There should be a choice of payment solutions | 55                   | 13%                      |
| Cannot use a smartphone                       | 38                   | 9%                       |
| Only carry cash                               | 26                   | 6%                       |
| Increase cost using RingGo                    | 23                   | 5%                       |
| Do not have a smart phone                     | 21                   | 5%                       |
| No Phone                                      | 16                   | 4%                       |
| Bad Phone coverage                            | 9                    | 2%                       |
| Other / do not want this / no internet        | 9                    | 2%                       |
| Ringo not reliable                            | 8                    | 2%                       |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>427</b>           |                          |

- 3.12 It was considered that although 427 objections was a sizeable number of objections, in comparison to the number of pay and display users, it was actually a low percentage of users. As an example, in 22/23 there were just over 1 million pay and display parking sessions therefore only 0.04% of objections were received.
- 3.13 As an earlier part of this process an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed and reviewed by an independent officer, this was completed in September 22, before the committee agreed to the removal of the machines. It was concluded that although the cash facility being removed would be an inconvenience to some motorists, it would be assumed that if someone has the physical and mental ability to drive a vehicle, then they should be able to pay for parking via one of the payment options.

##### Project stream 2 – Operational

- 3.14 This project allowed for the bagging, (placing a physical restriction over the machines to prevent them from being used), prior to the physical removal of the pay and display machines. A decision was taken to bag the machines as they were a physical point where the motorist could go to and see the updated information about payment via RingGo as the bags displayed this information.
- 3.15 On Street, new Department of Transport signs were installed at all locations as well as additional RingGo signs. Within the car parks, where necessary additional RingGo signs were installed.
- 3.16 The final stage of the removal of the pay and display machines was completed in May/June 2023, after the change had been adopted across the whole Borough.

### Project 3 – Communications

3.17 The team recognised from day one that this part of the project was extremely important and had many different factors to consider. Officers within Parking Services worked with the Communications team on the following:

- Creating a new web page about RingGo, why the changes were happening as well as explaining how to use the system. As part of this project, a Frequently Asked Questions page was updated as the project progressed.
- A leaflet was included in the Council Tax letter explaining the changes, this allowed for the team to send a leaflet to every property within the Borough.
- Posters and Leaflets were designed and shared at the local libraries.
- JC Decaux boards in Bromley and Orpington advertised the change.
- Various social media and press notices were released before and after the removal.
- Notices were installed on all pay and display machines explaining that the machines would be taken out of operation as of 1 April 23.
- A total of 7 drop-in sessions were advertised and attended by Council Officers, both before and post go live. These sessions allowed members of the public to meet with Officers on a one to one basis and help them with the RingGo application, answering any questions that were unique to them.

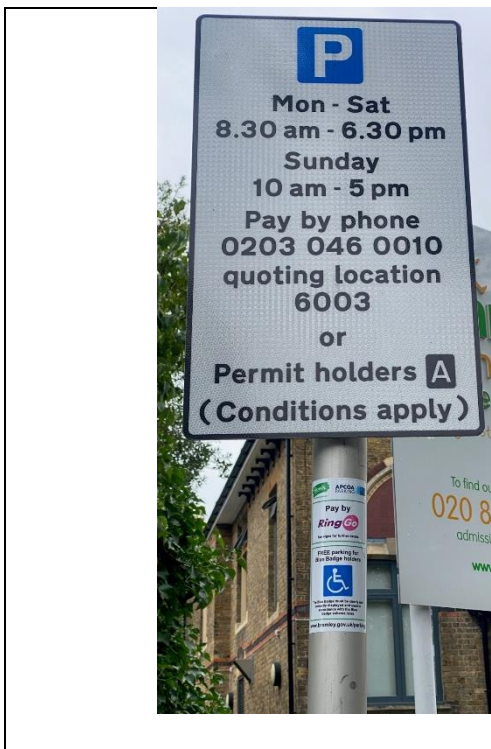
### Project 4 Enforcement and Post Go Live

3.18 It was agreed that with over 70% of parking sessions already being used to pay for parking, there was no need to change any enforcement practices post go live, however it was decided that if penalty charge notices (PCNs) were issued to those trying to use the system for the first time, this would be considered in a favourable way on receipt of an appeal.

3.19 After the machines had been removed, feedback from the public was crucial. The web site continued to be updated with any new information that Officers believe to be important, as well as drop in sessions still being organised.

3.20 Some of the public feedback was that the signage within the car parks, (which had not been updated for many years), was not 100% clear in some respects. It was agreed that the signs would be completely re-designed with a bold new corporate look in all car parks.

3.21 Some Blue Badge holders were under the mistaken belief that they had to pay to park now that the pay and display machines had been removed, (it is not clear why some Blue Badge holders were under this misunderstanding as no such information was placed in the public domain). Officers listened to the feedback from Blue Badge holders and additional notices were placed on street, highlighting that the bays were still free for Blue Badge holders and that the cashless provider was RingGo (as this had also been a source of some misunderstanding).



#### 4. Number of new users to RingGo

4.1 The below table compares the number of new users per month in 22/23, to 23/24 which demonstrates this year potentially that just over 35,000 new users have started to use the RingGo system since the machines were removed, which is an increase of over 15,000 from the number of new users at this point in the previous year.

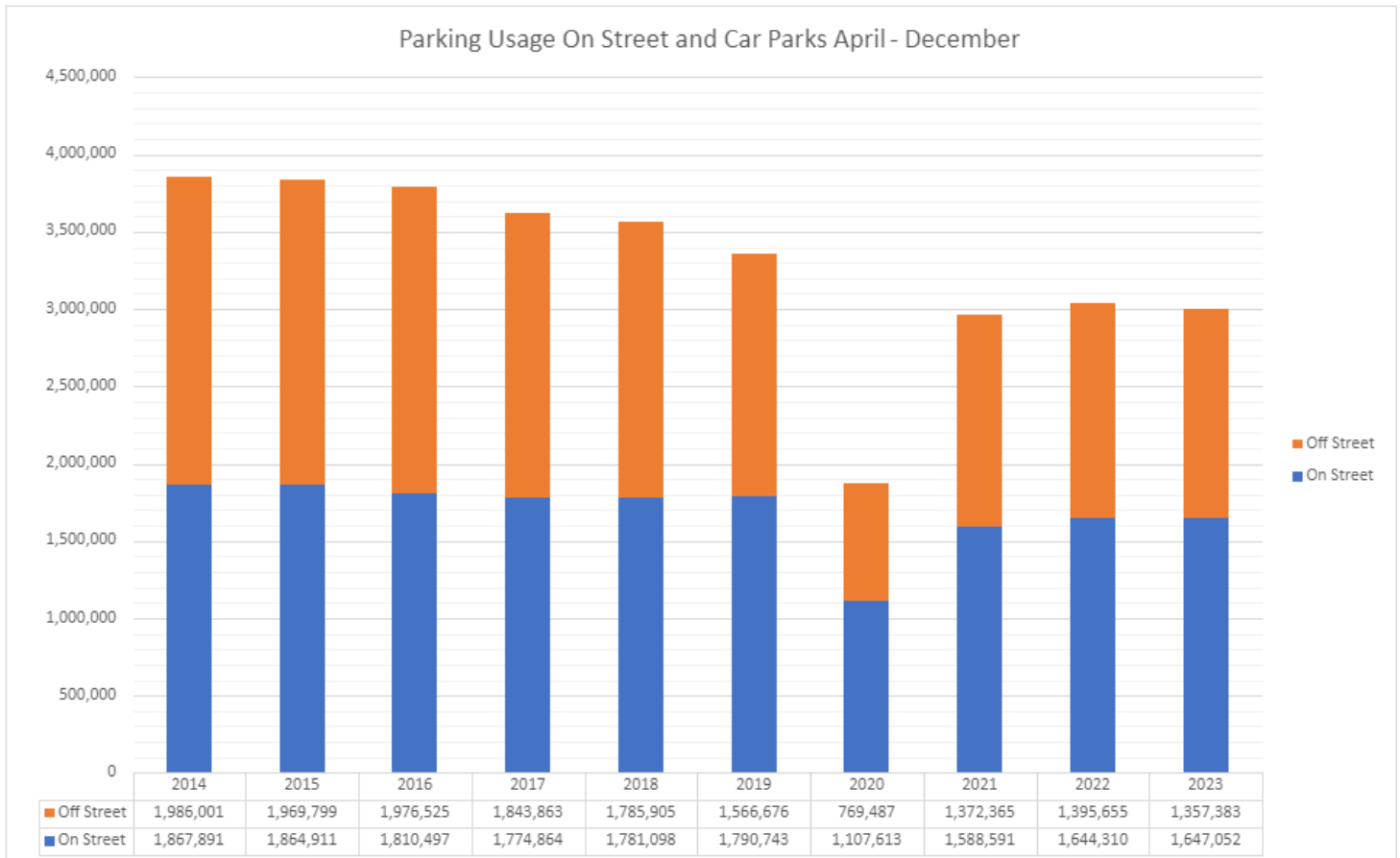
| New Users to RingGo per month |        |        |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|
|                               | 22/23  | 23/24  |
| April                         | 2,827  | 6,968  |
| May                           | 3,041  | 5,151  |
| June                          | 2,187  | 4,351  |
| July                          | 1,687  | 4,699  |
| August                        | 1,744  | 3,873  |
| September                     | 1,650  | 2,962  |
| October                       | 2,413  | 2,475  |
| November                      | 2,308  | 2,326  |
| December                      | 2,319  | 2,733  |
| Total                         | 20,176 | 35,358 |

#### 5. Usage and Income Data

5.1 The below table and bar chart demonstrates the usage in the car parks over 10 years, including the 2 multi-storey car parks and all on street parking facilities for the months of April to December, to allow for a direct comparison.

5.2 Over the last 10 years, there has been a general decrease in the demand for parking, however the below statistics confirm that the demand for parking has changed since the Covid pandemic.

5.3 Comparing the data from 2022 with 2023, the usage is on track with last year which suggests that the removal of the pay and display machines has not impacted the usage of parking across the Borough as a whole, especially as Station Road car park, West Wickham was removed from the estate in March 23. Station Road car park had over 38,000 parking sessions in 22/23. It should also be noted that The Hill Car Park was closed between 4<sup>th</sup> October and 18<sup>th</sup> December due to essential maintenance works, with a projected loss of approximately 50,000 sessions. There will have been some parking migration from these two car parks to nearby streets or to other car parks, but an increase in parking in nearby Council car parks was not noted at either location.

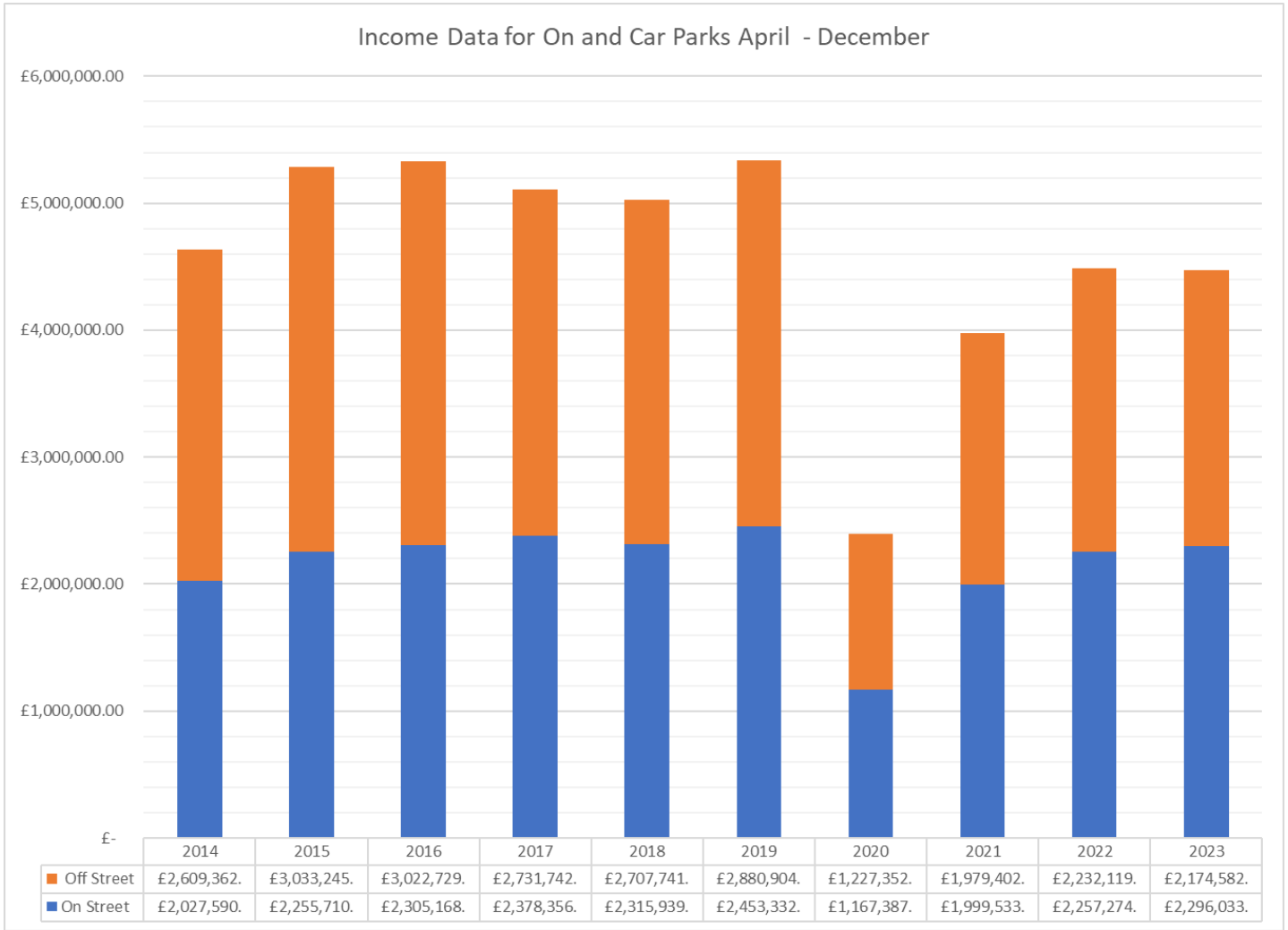


5.4 The chart and data above show the steady, long-term decline in car parking, starting well before the Covid pandemic and the introduction of cashless-only parking. Bromley is not the only borough to see a decline: a report published in January 2023 for the London Borough of Bexley projected a 30% drop off in usage of their car parks in 2022/23 since 2019/20 for the full year. In Bromley over the same time period the usage only declined by 11%.

5.5 The below table illustrates the income for all car parks (as opposed to use), including the two multistorey car parks and all on street income over the last 10 years, again the data is only compared from April to December so that a true comparison can be seen. This income data is after VAT has been removed.

5.6 Comparing income year on year is more difficult as you have to factor in the tariff increase from April 2023, as well as the estimated £40,000 income lost from the closure of the Station Road car park in West Wickham, as well as the potential loss of £120,000 from the Hill car park temporary closing.



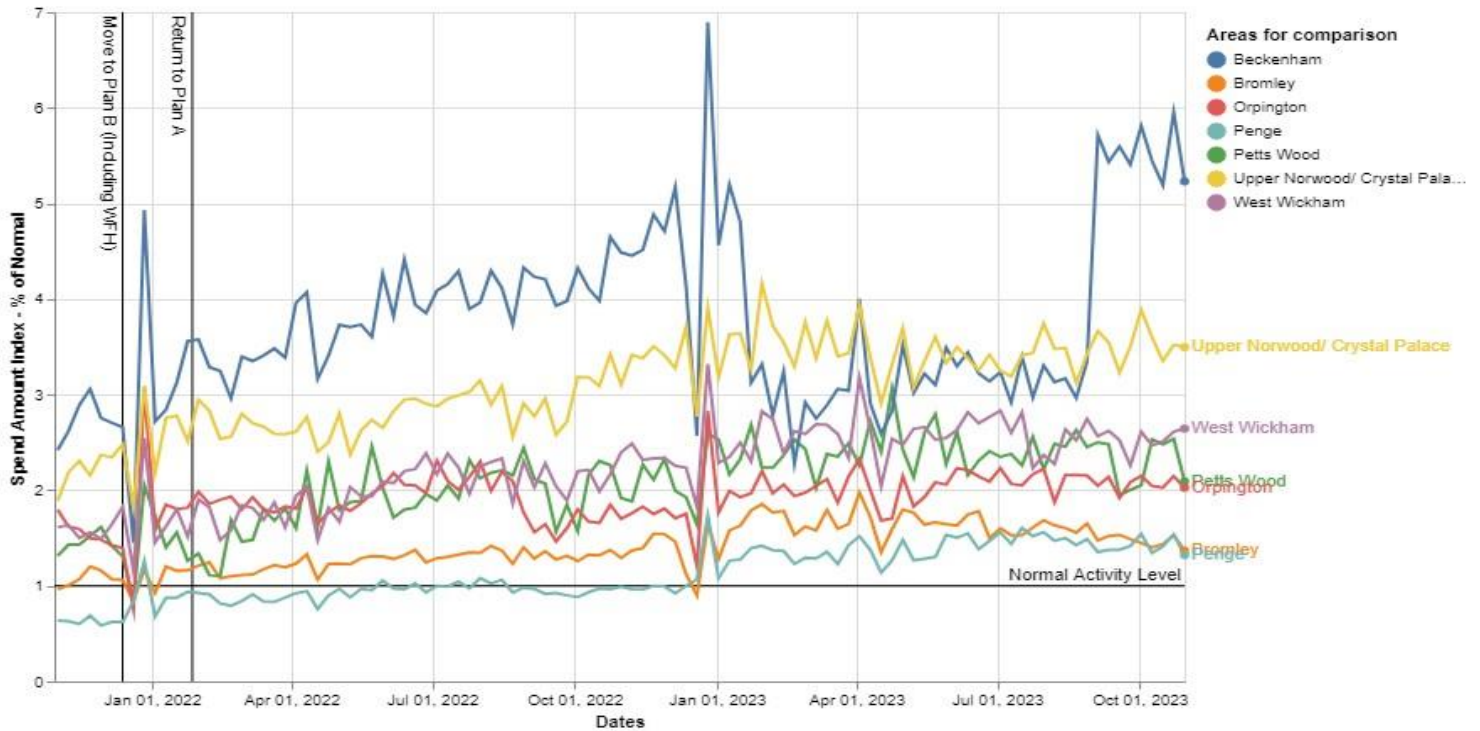


**6. Change in Customer behaviours.**

- 6.1 With the gradual decrease in usage across all parking facilities within the Boroughs, there has been a change in motorist behaviours, especially since the pandemic. With the increase of home working and internet shopping, parking usage demand has decreased. The data suggests that people are still using the high streets but the bigger area of spends are for restaurants and coffee chains, over retail.
- 6.2 The chart below demonstrate that retail spend across local town centres within the Borough has improved in the last 2 years and is actually higher than the 'Normal Activity Level' of 2019 (pre-Covid).

## Bromley vs Other Areas - Mastercard Transactions, Retail

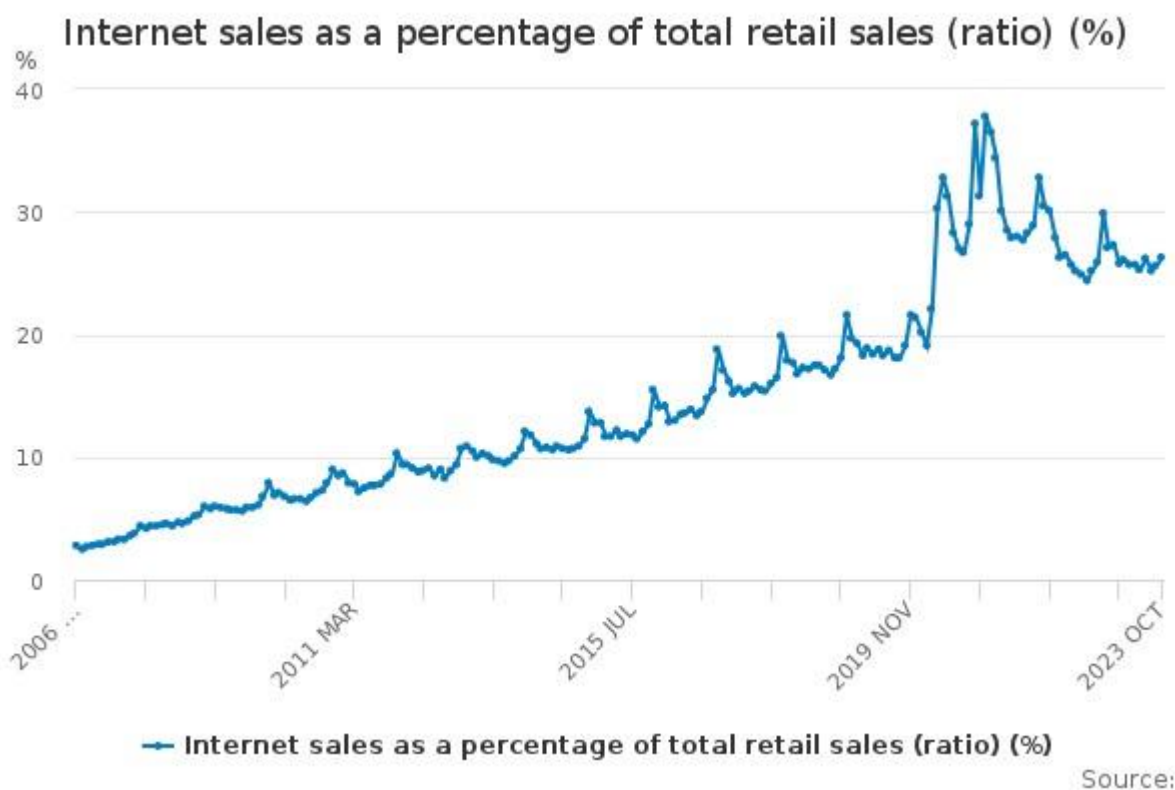
30/10/2021 to 30/10/2023, Weekdays (Mon-Fri), Spend Amount Index (% of Normal)



Source: Anonymised and aggregated data by Mastercard  
Chart: High Streets Data Partnership

## 7. Online Shopping national data

- 7.1 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) provides data on online/internet sales as a percentage of total Retail sales.
- 7.2 The below graph shows that the percentage of online/internet sales grew from around 3% in 2006 and reached over 20% prior to the pandemic in 2019. Following the Pandemic, it showed a dramatic increase which peaked at 38% in January 2021. Since then online/internet sales have settled at around 25%.



## 8. Machine Removal

- 8.1 With the removal of the machines, there were significant ongoing savings across the remainder of the contract with APCOA of over £150,000.
- 8.2 The savings were linked with no longer paying the annual maintenance fee per pay and display machine, cash collection costs and a resource of an APCOA officer to service the machines.
- 8.3 It is noted that some residents are still adapting to the change of being a cashless only Borough. Leaflets are still being shared in the local libraries and Civic Centre reception, as well as the Council website having extra information on how to use the RingGo service.
- 8.4 There has been a small number of requests for machines to be reinstated in some car parks, however this is not something that is feasible under the current financial climate. To purchase and install a pay and display machine will cost approximately £7k per machine, plus cash collection costs, however the large resource would be employing a member of staff with the skill set to attend machines when they had problems, even with brand new machines, this role would be required.
- 8.5 The pay and display machines provided a poor service to the customer, were expensive to maintain and were resource heavy in servicing them. The RingGo cashless system is a reliable system that has been used in Bromley since 2010. Any resident who requires additional help in using the service can contact Parking Services directly who will be happy to assist them.
- 8.6 From comparing the usage and income data as above, officers are satisfied that removal of the machines has not impacted the majority of the customers using the facilities. It is accepted that some customers prefer paying cash and as per above, officers within Parking Services are happy to assist anyone with their enquires.

## 9. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

9.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and published concerning the removal of the machines.

## 10. TRANSFORMATION/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 These changes have helped take forward the Council's policy of reducing the number of pay and display machines around the Borough and reducing the ongoing maintenance costs on the Parking Enforcement Contract.

## 11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

11.1 Please refer to report ES20177, section 11.3 and 11.7 for the savings linked with this initiative.

## 12 CARBON REDUCTION/SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The removal of cash collections from the pay and display machines and the need for the patrols to visit the machines will have reduced the Parking Contractors carbon footprint.

## 13. IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY

13.1 Card payments and online shopping data suggest the removal of the machines has not impacted the local businesses.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Non-Applicable Headings:</b>                       | <b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b><br><br><b>PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS</b>  |
| Background Documents:<br>(Access via Contact Officer) | <a href="#">Agenda item - PARKING SERVICES - REVIEW OF PARKING FEES AND CHARGING PROCESSES (bromley.gov.uk)</a><br><br><a href="#">Bexley Car Park usage report 12 Jan 23 v3.pdf</a><br><br><a href="#">Equality Impact Assessment Pro-forma Template - updated 2012 (bromley.gov.uk)</a> |