

**WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL
PARKING SERVICE
ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**



www.watford.gov.uk/parking



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

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FOREWORD FROM OUR PORTFOLIO HOLDER



Ian Stotesbury
*Portfolio holder for
the Parking Service*

Welcome to Watford Borough Council's annual parking enforcement report, covering the financial year of 2021/22. Through this report Watford Council shares information about how Civil Parking Enforcement is delivered across the Borough, including data on the quantity of Penalty Charge Notices & permits issued and our plans for the future.

The Parking Service delivers an important public responsibility, striving to maintain road safety and reduce congestion, alongside protecting designated resident parking areas and public parking spaces for residents and businesses.

This year has been a challenging year, because although national lockdown measures were removed at the start of this year, the pandemic still continued to impact the service, with motorists' behaviour not returning to pre-pandemic habits and with home working continuing we have seen challenges for local businesses. This has also had an inevitable financial impact as the use of public parking reduced.

That said, it has been a busy year not only with the management of the borough's parking restrictions, but also with the delivery of parking related schemes. The start of the year began with parking management being introduced to Oxhey Activity Car Park and further pay and display facilities introduced in Eastbury Road to support local residents enjoying this new popular recreational area.

In the summer the RingGo Cashless service was expanded to all our Council car parks and a number of on street locations around the town centre providing motorists an alternative to cash payment when using pay and display bays. In the Autumn, the controlled hours of Zone W were extended to help resolve parking difficulties residents were experiencing following consultation with residents.

I hope you find this Annual Report 2021 -22 informative and interesting and I thank you for taking the time to read it.

INTRODUCTION TO WATFORD'S PARKING CHALLENGES

There are huge and ever increasing demands on the limited road space within Watford, which are more comparable with London Local Authorities, as opposed to a town compacted into an area of just 21-square kilometres.

Watford is home to more than 40,000 households and 102,300 inhabitants, an expanding regional shopping centre attracting in excess of 400,000 visitors each week, a Championship football club with a home capacity of 22,000 seats and the award winning Cassiobury Park, which receives over 1.2m visits a year.

Additionally, the town centre has a vibrant night time economy including a restaurant met quarter, Palace Theatre and Colosseum entertainment venue all bringing in a regular influx of visitors.

Businesses are equally important to the sustainability, economy and appeal of Watford and their ability to receive goods and deliveries is often essential to their operations. Similarly, residents expect to be able to park within a reasonable distance to their homes, particularly with off-street parking being at a premium in many areas throughout the town.

Inevitably, competition amongst the various groups of road users is high and their reasons for parking will often be conflicting. The council Parking Service bears responsibility for balancing the demands and desires of the various groups against the management of the limited degree of road space available as best as possible, in order to maximise parking opportunities and improve compliance to existing parking regulations.

In accordance with the Traffic Management Act 2004, local authorities that carry out Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) are expected to be accountable and transparent and as such are required to publish an annual report every financial year.

Further information regarding the Traffic Management Act 2004 and the Department for Transport Operational Guidance to local authorities can be viewed on the website **www.gov.uk/government** or via the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-enforcement-of-parkingcontraventions

BACKGROUND

Watford Borough Council adopted Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) powers in October 1997. In respect of on-street parking enforcement, Watford Borough Council acts on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council (the highway authority) under the terms of a parking agency agreement between the two authorities. As the parking authority Watford Borough Council is responsible for the enforcement of its own off-street car parks.

Following the introduction of the Traffic Management Act 2004, DPE was amended to Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) and has been operated in Watford since the legislation came into force in April 2008.

The enforcement function is contracted out to NSL Ltd and managed by Watford Borough Council, operating in accordance with policy objectives agreed by the council. Subsequent processing of Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) is undertaken by the council, as directed by the regulations; once issued, all processing of PCNs and the investigation of challenges, representations and appeals are dealt with by Watford Borough Council officers, working in accordance with statute, regulations, guidance and council policy.

The council's Parking Service is also responsible for the operation and maintenance of all on and off-street pay display machines, lining and signage across the town and administration of the Controlled Parking Zone scheme and match day parking arrangements, which have been in place since 1997.

THE PURPOSE OF CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT (CPE)

“CPE is a means of achieving transport policy objectives... but raising revenue should not be an objective of CPE, nor should authorities set targets for revenue or the number of Penalty Charge Notices they issue”

(Department for Transport Traffic Management Act 2004 Operational Guidance to Local Authorities)

The primary purpose of CPE, as identified in the statutory guidance, is to support local authorities (county and district) in their delivery of their overall transport objectives in areas such as those detailed below.

- Managing the traffic network to ensure free movement of traffic, (including pedestrians and cyclists), as required under the TMA Network Management Duty.
- Improving road safety.
- Improving the local environment.
- Improving the quality and accessibility of public transport.
- Meeting the needs of people with disabilities, some of whom will be unable to use public transport and depend entirely on the use of a car.
- Managing and reconciling the competing demands for kerb space.

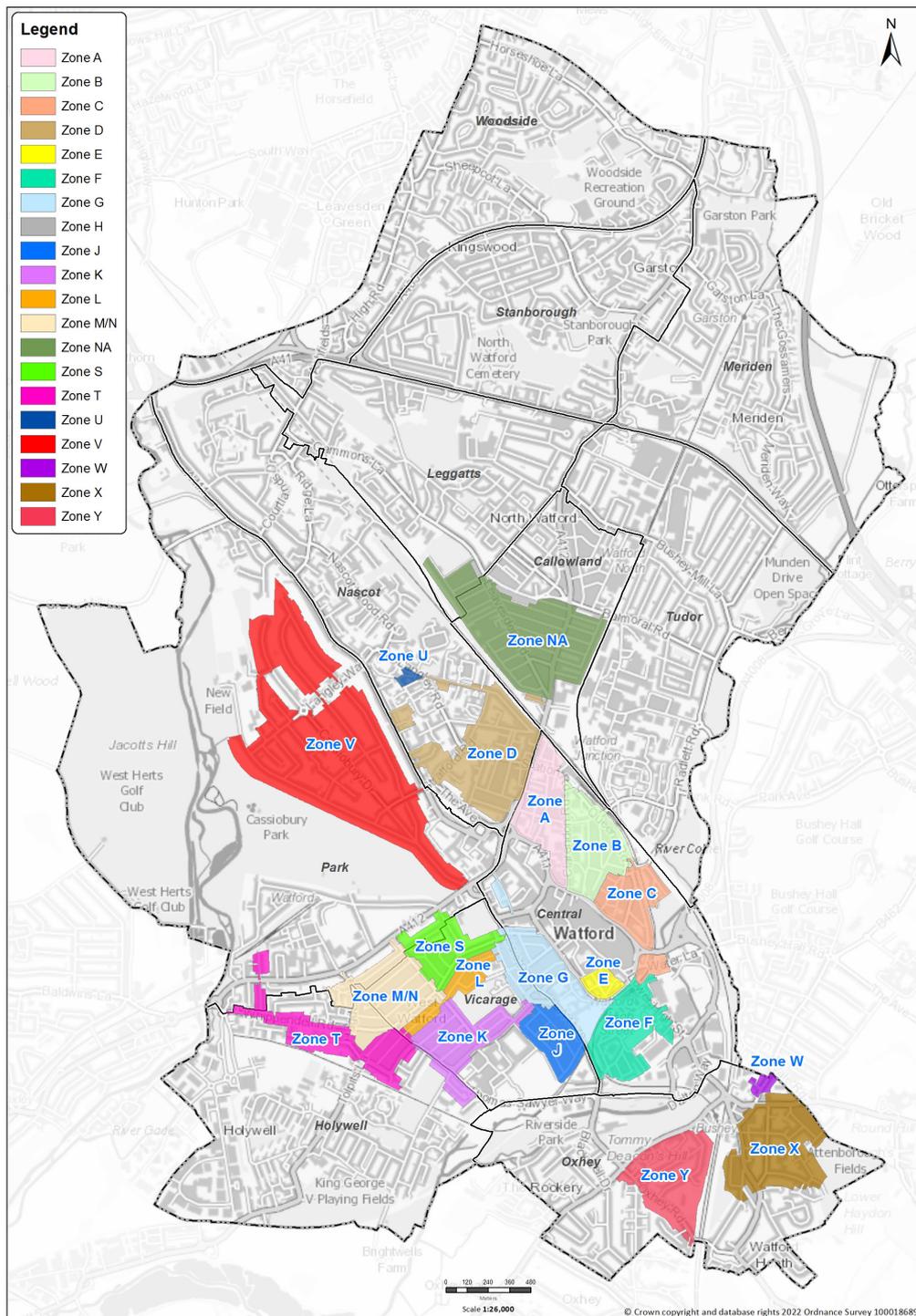
It is not always easy to prove that CPE has a positive effect. Driving along a free flowing road or walking along a footway without being blocked by parked cars is rarely noted or associated with CPE. Likewise, finding space in a clean, safe, well lit car park is taken for granted. It is often noted, however, when these essential benefits are not available.

CPE in Watford is undertaken in partnership with NSL Ltd on behalf of the council under a contract that commenced in April 2018 and will expire in April 2027. NSL Ltd has extensive experience in the delivery of enforcement services and is the largest local authority partner in the sector with over 50 such contracts. The provision of this contract includes:

- 18 Civil Enforcement Officers
- Notice Processing staff
- Uniforms and equipment
- Maintenance and cash collection of Pay and Display machines
- Enforcement vehicles/cycles
- Suspension services
- Removal and pound services
- Stationery

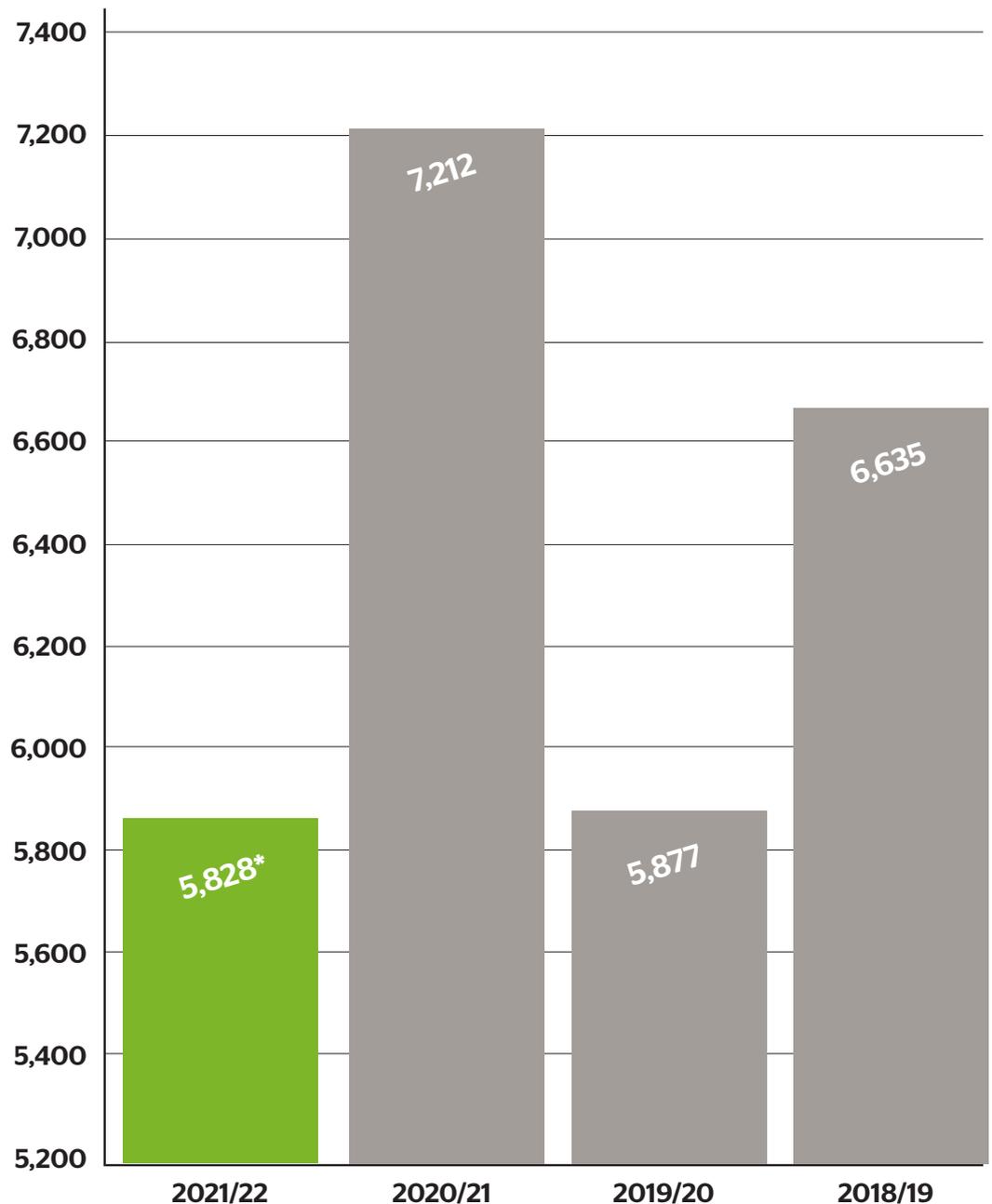
CONTROLLED PARKING ZONES

In order to fulfil our obligation to manage kerb side space effectively, Watford Borough Council has introduced a number of Controlled Parking Zones which effectively restrict all on-street space within its boundaries to particular users. There are now 19 Controlled Parking Zones in Watford requiring varying hours of enforcement between 8am and 10pm, Monday to Sunday, including Bank Holidays.



PERMITS

During 2021/22 the following residents' parking permits were issued across the Controlled Parking Zone scheme:



*The number of resident permits has fallen because a large quantity of permits issued 2020/21 were subject to a 4 month extension to compensate for reduced service during the pandemic and as a result will not be reissued until April 2022

Breakdown of the permits issued per zone:

Zone	Permit type	Number of permits	1 st permit	2 nd permit
Zone A	Resident	142	100	42
Zone B/C	Resident	740	567	173
Zone D	Resident	473	366	107
Zone E	Resident	48	34	14
Zone F	Resident	238	165	73
Zone G	Resident	351	260	91
Zone J	Resident	364	246	118
Zone K	Resident	484	358	126
Zone L	Resident	267	196	71
Zone M/N	Resident	696	472	224
Zone S	Resident	264	178	86
Zone T	Resident	342	233	109
Zone U	Resident	19	14	5
Zone V	Resident	341	265	76
Zone W	Resident	18	15	3
Zone X	Resident	221	159	62
Zone Y	Resident	85	60	25
Zone N/A	Resident	735	504	231
Total permits		5,828	4,192	1,636

Of the 5,828 residents' permits issued during 2021/22, the following were issued as first and second permits:

- 1st permits = 72% (£25)
- 2nd permits = 28% (£55)

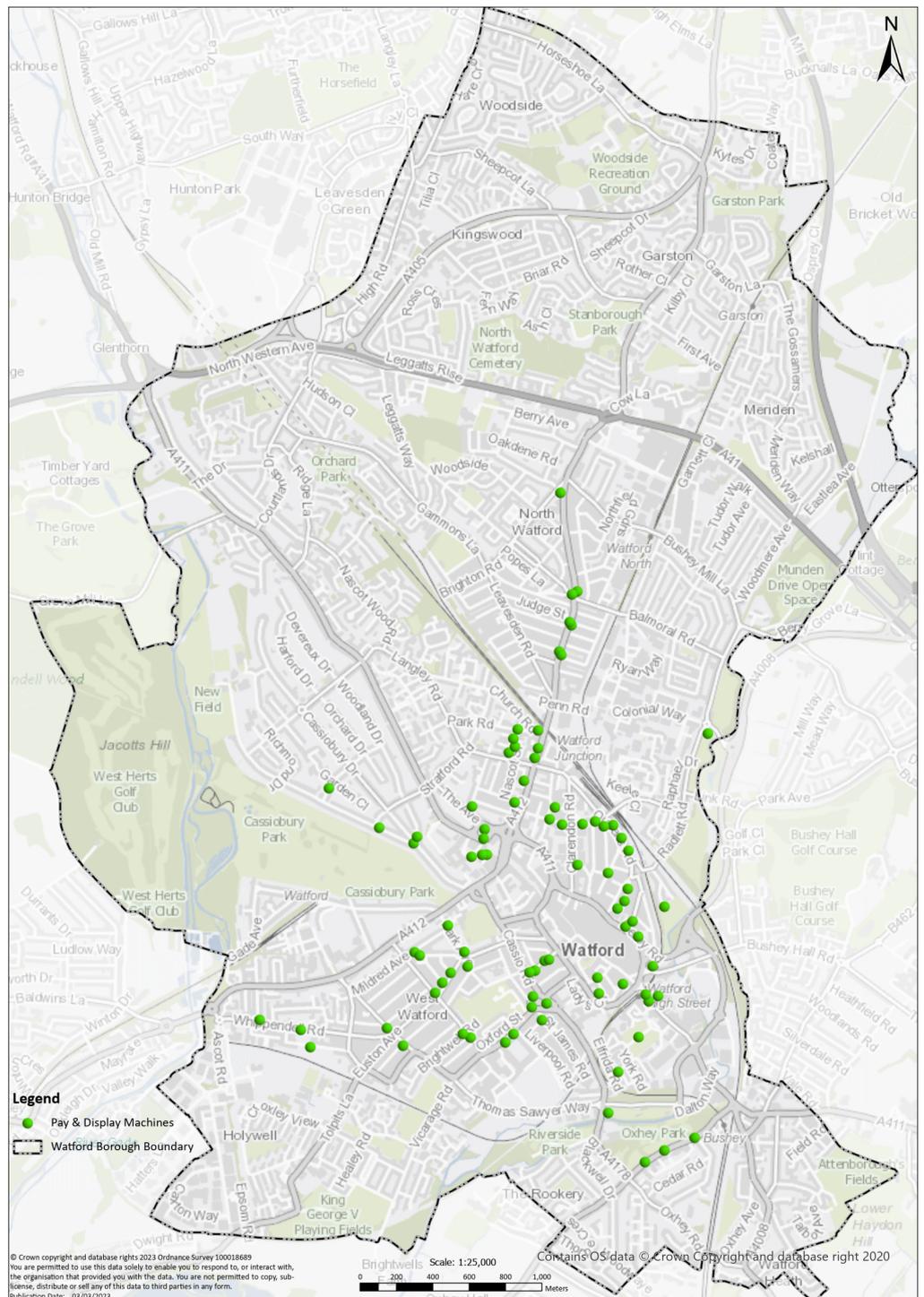
Visitor Permits

Residents of our Controlled Parking Scheme can purchase virtual visitor vouchers for their visitors/tradesman use. The table below details the volume of virtual visitor permit transactions for 2021/2022:

Date	Quantity
April 2021	15,045
May 2021	18,174
June 2021	19,411
July 2021	19,300
August 2021	18,971
September 2021	19,400
October 2021	19,240
November 2021	18,934
December 2021	19,406
January 2022	17,096
February 2022	16,580
March 2022	19,289
Total	220,846

CAR PARKS AND PAY AND DISPLAY FACILITIES

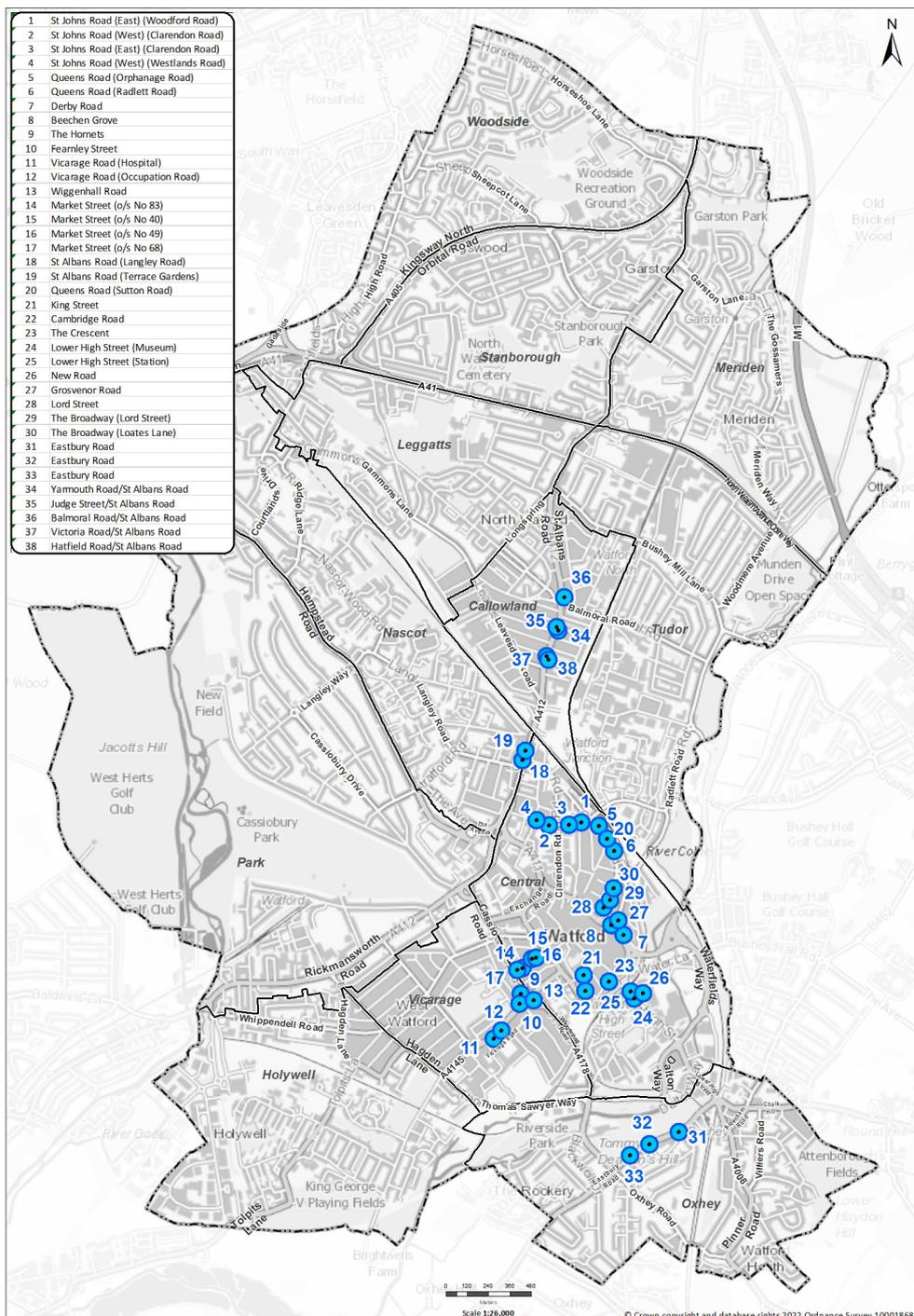
Pay and display machines are situated throughout the Controlled Parking Zones and close to shopping facilities and local amenities. Permitted durations of stay are generally limited to 1, 2 or 4 hours and on-street charges are commonly £1.10 and £1.60 per hour commencing at 30p for 12-minutes and 40p for 12-minutes respectively. There are a total of 75 on-street pay and display machines.



Introduction of cashless payment service for Town Centre on-street pay & display locations

With the reduction of cash being used over the last few years the Parking Service made the decision this year to widen payment options for motorists using our on-street pay and display facilities around the Town Centre. As of July motorists have the choice to make payment for parking either by cash at the machine or by purchasing a parking session using the RingGo App or 24 hour RingGo payment line

This additional payment option is available in the following on street pay and display locations.



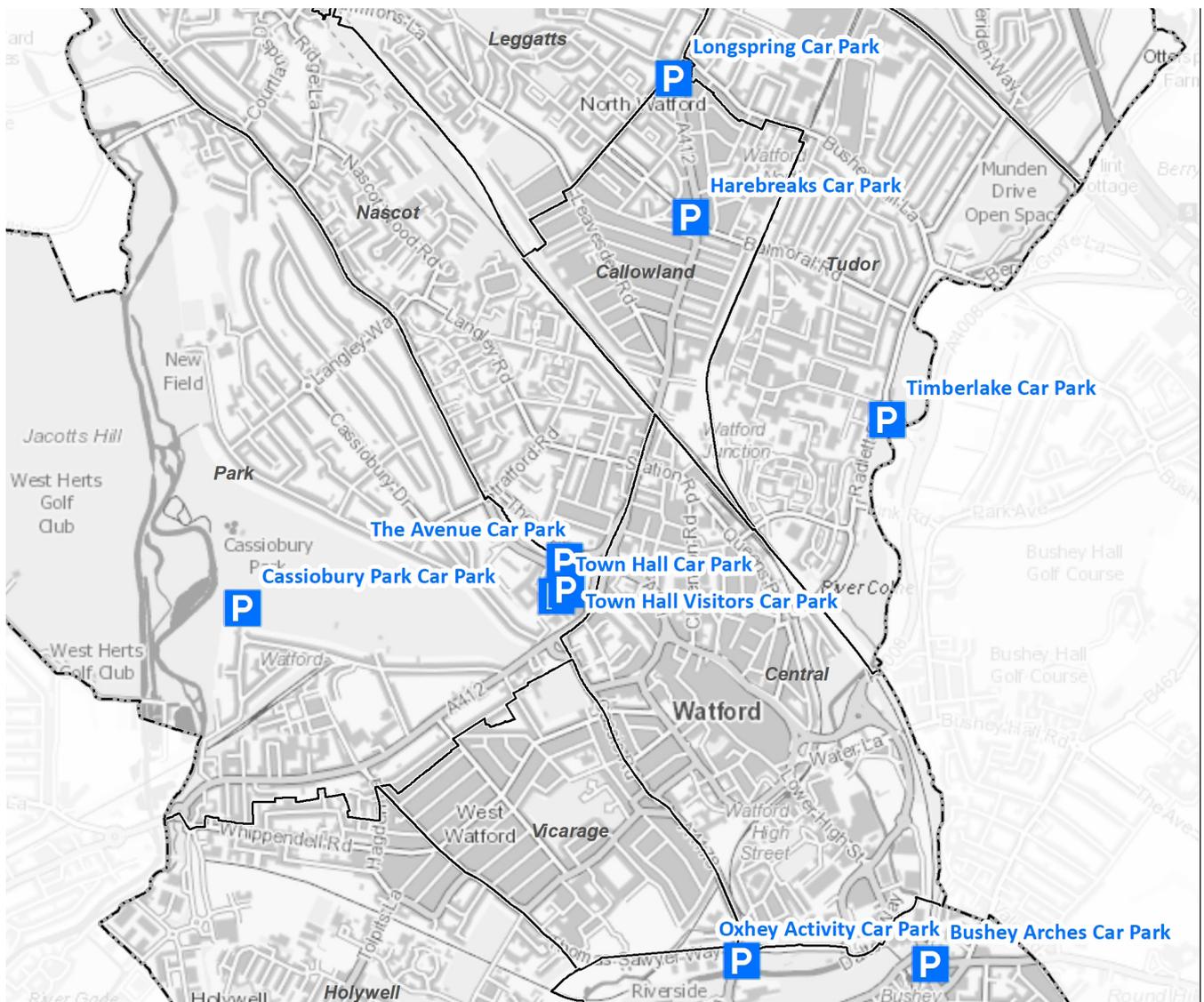
Car Parks

There are 9 off-street council operated car parks.

- The Avenue
- The Town Hall
- Town Hall visitors
- Longspring
- Central Leisure Centre (no charges apply)
- Woodside Leisure Centre (no charges apply)
- Timberlake
- Cassiobury Park Car Park
- Bushey Arches Car Park (no charges apply)

A further machine is located within the Harebreaks on-street car park.

The majority of these car parks are pay and display car parks, with the exception of the Leisure Centre car parks where motorists are not required to pay for parking, but must obtain a free ticket from the machine.



The RingGo cashless parking service which previously was only available in Cassiobury Park Car Park has been extended to all other payment car parks.

Below is a table of the number of RingGo sessions booked in 21/22 compared to 20/21

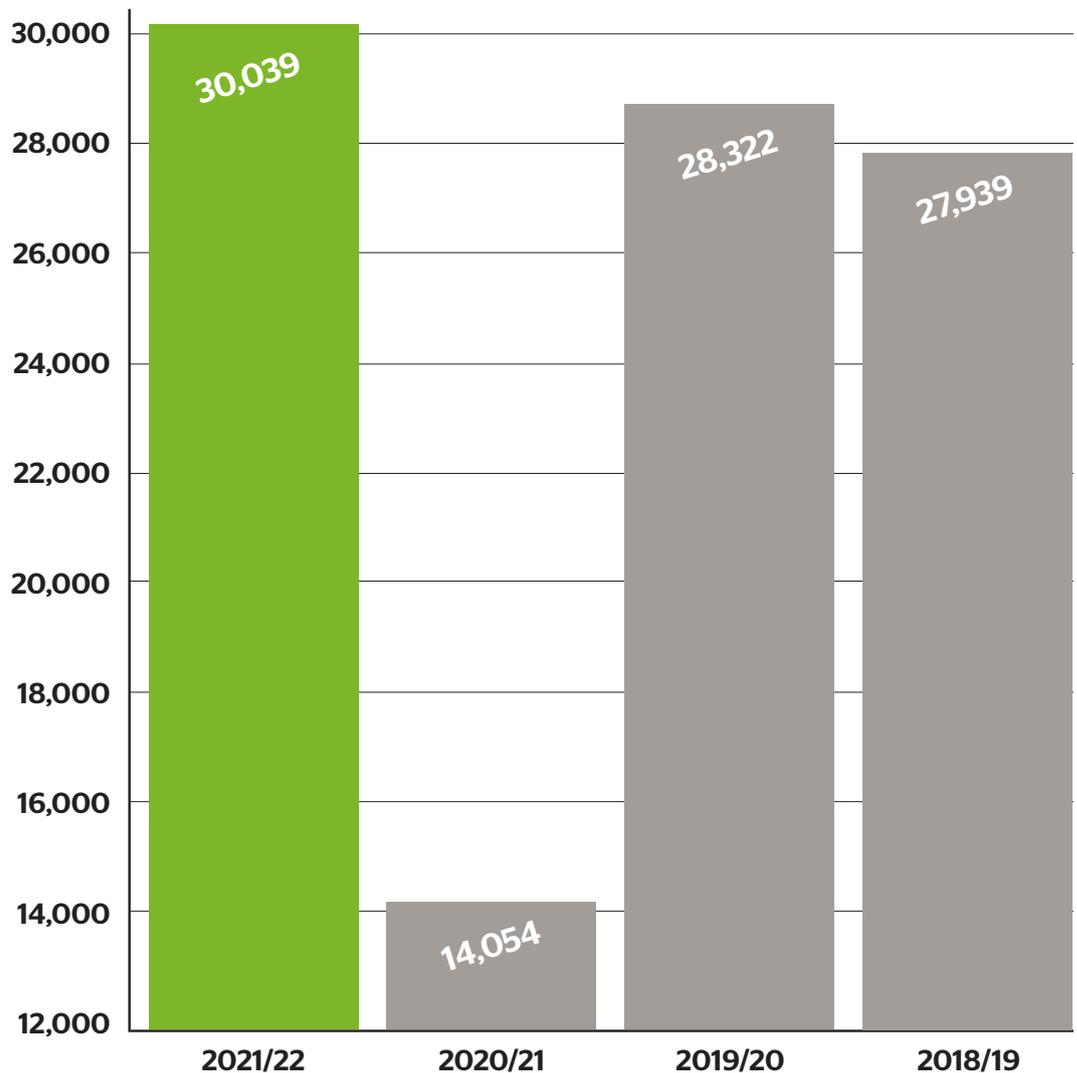
Date	Quantity	Date	Quantity
April 2021	4,444	April 2020	38
May 2021	3,847	May 2020	2,107
June 2021	9,136	June 2020	3,085
July 2021	10,960	July 2020	4,430
August 2021	13,966	August 2020	4,495
September 2021	11,677	September 2020	3,028
October 2021	10,810	October 2020	2,186
November 2021	10,078	November 2020	3,219
December 2021	9,646	December 2020	2,540
January 2022	11,323	January 2021	1,594
February 2022	10,482	February 2021	1,800
March 2022	13,433	March 2021	2,507
Total	119,802	Total	31,029

ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTY CHARGE NOTICES

The council and NSL Ltd have entered into a partnership using the British Parking Association model contract, which encourages best practice by ensuring that performance is measured on the quality of the service delivered. All Civil Enforcement Officers are salaried staff and do not work on any form of commission or ticket quota basis. Civil Enforcement Officers are not afforded discretion to ignore a vehicle parked in contravention. The initial objective of a Civil Enforcement Officer is to encourage compliance to the parking regulations or to move a vehicle on and a penalty charge will only be issued where it is evident that no alternative form of action can be taken.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 became operational in April 2008 and introduced differential penalty charges. The intention being to create a perception of fairness through proportionally applying a lower (£50) or higher (£70) charge according to the perceived seriousness of the contravention i.e. parking on a double yellow line or within a disabled bay (without the required blue badge) attracts a higher penalty than overstaying paid for time in a pay and display bay.

During 2021/22 the following Penalty Charge Notices were issued:



Of the 30,039 penalties issued during 2021/22, the following were issued on and off-street:

ON and OFF Street	Total	%
ON	27,727	92%
OFF	2,312	8%
	30,039	

Of the 30,039 penalties issued during 2021/22, the following were issued as lower or higher charge contraventions:

PCN	Total	%
HIGH band	24,932	83%
LOW band	5,107	17%

Of the 30,029 penalties issued during 2021/22, the following were paid at the discounted or the full charge:

Percentage payment rate in 2021/22

Rate	Total	%
Paid at discount	15,620	52%
Paid at full or higher	3,848	13%

Of the 30,029 penalties issued during 2021/22, the following were cancelled:

	Total	%
Cancellations	2,872	10%
Write off	2,593	9%

Penalties Issued by Contravention

The number of PCNs issued during 2021/22 for the main on-street and off-street parking contraventions is shown below:

On-street contraventions and codes	Number
01 - Parked in a restricted street (yellow lines)	9,364
02 - Parked where loading/unloading is not permitted	1,060
05 - Parked after expiry of pay and display ticket	241
06 - Parked without a valid pay and display ticket/voucher	940
12 - Parked in a permit/shared use bay without permit/voucher/ticket	11,948
19 - Parked in permit/shared use bay with invalid permit/voucher/ticket	2,254
25 - Parked in a loading place without loading	590
27 - Parked adjacent to a dropped kerb	105
30 - Parked for longer than permitted	196
40 - Parked in a disabled bay/space without valid blue badge	225
47 - Parked at a bus stop or stand	96

Off-street contraventions and codes	Number
80 - Parked for longer than the maximum stay permitted	64
82 - Parked after expiry of paid for time	92
83 - Parked in a car park without a valid ticket/voucher	1,688
84 - Parked with additional payment to extend stay (meter feeding)	80
85 - Parked in a permit bay without displaying valid permit	239
86 - Parked beyond bay markings	113
87 - Parked in a disabled bay without a valid blue badge	90
91 - Parked in area not designated for that class of vehicle	2

CHALLENGES, REPRESENTATIONS AND APPEALS

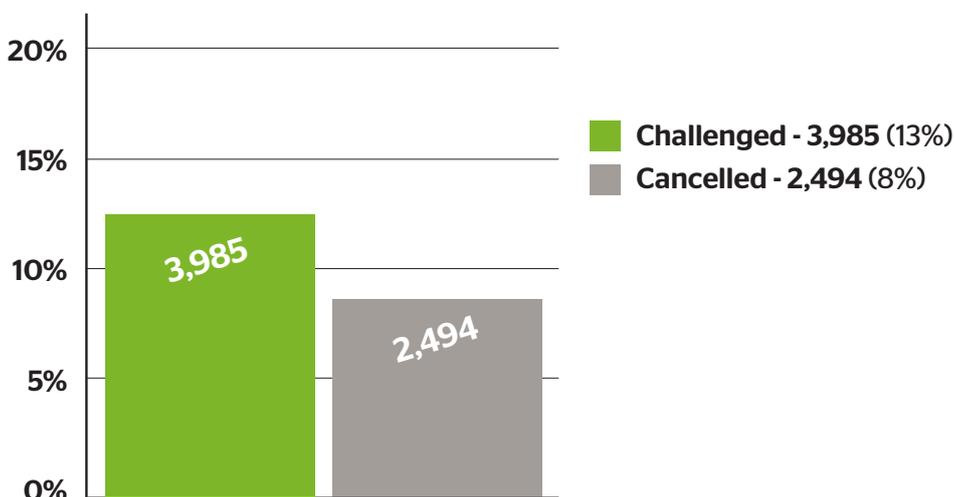
“The process of considering challenges, representations and defence of appeals is a legal process that requires officers dealing with these aspects to be trained in the relevant legislation and how to apply it.”

(Department for Transport Traffic Management Act 2004 Operational Guidance to Local Authorities)

Informal Challenge

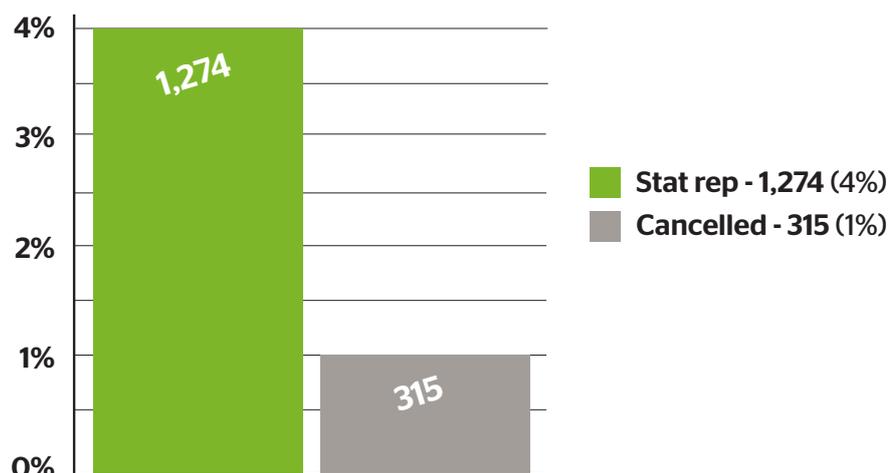
Written correspondence received following the initial issue of the penalty, usually within the first 14 days, is regarded as an “informal” challenge.

Of the 30,039 penalties issued during 2021/22, the following were subject to informal challenge and cancellation:



Statutory Representation

Motorists are served with a Notice to Owner document if the initial penalty charge is not paid or challenged. This document allows “formal” representations to be made against the issue of the penalty on a number of statutory grounds, or where other mitigating circumstances may apply.



Traffic Penalty Tribunal Appeals

Motorists are issued with a statutory Notice of Rejection when formal representations made to the council are not accepted. At this stage motorists may refer their case to the Traffic Penalty Tribunal in order to appeal against the council's decision. A final binding decision will be made by an independent adjudicator.

The Traffic Penalty Tribunal may allow or dismiss an appeal and recognises that local authorities may not contest appeals on occasion, primarily when additional evidence comes to light during the appeals process.

Of the 30,039 PCNs issued in 2021/22:

- 11 were the subject of an appeal to the Independent Parking Adjudicator - an appeal rate of (0.03%).
- Of these, 2 appeals were upheld by the adjudicator and 6 (0.02%) were rejected (won by the council).
- 3 (0.01%) appeals were not contested by the council.

The following tables illustrate Watford Borough Council's performance at appeal in 2018/19 and 2019/20:

Appeals 2021/22	No. of appeals	Rate of appeal per PCN	Not contested by council	Allowed by adjudicator	Allowed by adjudicator inc. not contested	Refused by adjudicator (council win)	Awaiting decision
Watford	11	0.03%	27% (3)	18% (2)	45% (5)	55% (6)	0% (0)

Appeals 2020/21	No. of appeals	Rate of appeal per PCN	Not contested by council	Allowed by adjudicator	Allowed by adjudicator inc. not contested	Refused by adjudicator (council win)	Awaiting decision
Watford	8	0.06%	38% (3)	0% (0)	38% (3)	50% (4)	12% (1)

Cancellation by reason

Principle reasons for cancellation of Penalty Charge Notices during 2021/22 are shown below:

Reason for cancellation	Number of penalties cancelled
CEO error	172
Council decision	101
Evidence provided	217
Signs and lining defects	17
Loading/unloading	28
Valid disabled badge holder	362
Valid P&D	144
Valid permit	765

DEBT RECOVERY AND BAILIFFS

If a penalty is not paid or successfully challenged the statutory process allows for the case to become registered as a debt at the Traffic Enforcement Centre (Northampton County Court). The motorist is served an Order for Recovery and is liable for full payment of the outstanding penalty and the additional court registration fee. Alternatively, a witness statement may be filed only if one of the four outlined grounds is applicable.

Of the 30,039 penalties issued during 2021/22, (9%) were registered as a debt.

The final stage of the Traffic Management Act 2004 statutory process allows Local Authorities to apply to the Traffic Enforcement Centre for the authorisation of a warrant to enable Enforcement Agents (formerly bailiffs) to recover the debt. By the time that a case is passed to an Enforcement Agent the following statutory notices will have been served to the motorist:

- Penalty Charge Notice (14/28 days to respond)
- Notice to Owner (28 days to respond)
- Notice of Rejection (28 days to refer case to independent Traffic Penalty Tribunal)
- Charge Certificate (14 days to respond)
- Order for Recovery/Witness Statement (21 days to respond)

Of the 30,039 penalties issued during 2021/22, 2446 (8%) were referred to Enforcement Agents (formerly bailiffs).

A total of £82,163.31 has been recovered through Enforcement Agent action in 2020/21.

At the stage that a case is passed to the Enforcement Agent for recovery the motorist becomes additionally liable for the payment of their fees, which are set and capped by statute (Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014), as outlined below:

- Compliance stage - £75
- Enforcement stage - £235
- Removal stage - £110

Of the 30,039 penalties issued during 2021/2022, 457 (1.52%) written off. (2446 cases progressed to bailiff, 8%) It is generally expected that 30% of cases subject to Enforcement Agent action will be recovered. The recovery rate in Watford during 2021/22 was an average of 33%.

The council currently instructs Newlyn PLC and Marston Group to act on its behalf as enforcement agents in the recovery of unpaid Penalty Charge Notices.

Further information regarding the governing requirements applicable to Enforcement Agents can be found at the following websites and links:

www.gov.uk (Bailiff and Enforcement Agents: National Standards 2014)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/bailiffs-and-enforcement-agentsnational-standards

www.legislation.gov.uk (Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014)

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/1/contents/made

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

“CPE is a means of achieving transport policy objectives...but raising revenue should not be an objective of CPE, nor should authorities set targets for revenue or the number of Penalty Charge Notices they issue”

(Department for Transport Traffic Management Act 2004 Operational Guidance to Local Authorities)

The income from on-street charging, which includes all Controlled Parking Zone scheme permits and vouchers etc. and all on and off-street Penalty Charge Notices is ring-fenced and must only be used in accordance with the provisions of section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended). This restricts the use of any surplus generated strictly to re-investment in the service or other transport related purposes, which commonly includes the improvement, extension and maintenance of the existing parking schemes, car parks and infrastructure as well as funding new parking restrictions that are requested by residents, members and the emergency services.

The aim of the Parking Service is to ensure that it is self-financing and sustained by the revenue that it raises so that it does not seek support from local taxpayers. However, it is intended that the charges remain proportionate and are not set at unreasonable levels.

On-Street

Year	Contract costs	Staffing, supplies and other costs	PCN income	Permit Income	Pay and Display Income On Street	(Surplus) / Deficit
	£	£	£	£	£	£
2006/07	677,984	386,765	(602,007)	(214,197)	(416,633)	(168,088)
2007/08	681,459	444,684	(592,963)	(199,699)	(473,335)	(139,854)
2008/09	672,341	442,956	(625,518)	(209,322)	(482,494)	(202,037)
2009/10	683,393	605,736	(773,374)	(214,943)	(470,230)	(169,417)
2010/11	686,486	564,079	(559,381)	(213,127)	(446,739)	31,318
2011/12	696,052	459,509	(544,471)	(221,034)	(461,413)	(71,357)
2012/13	758,432	521,468	(558,314)	(244,982)	(482,471)	(5,867)
2013/14	751,926	603,780	(627,455)	(261,920)	(499,914)	(33,583)
2014/15	815,158	508,522	(673,969)	(272,858)	(282,673)	94,180
2015/16	780,485	654,329	(609,604)	(299,570)	(313,862)	211,778
2016/17	724,746	661,435	(835,022)	(312,319)	(287,620)	(48,780)
2017/18	906,382	565,846	(694,197)	(326,810)	(266,370)	184,851
2018/19	663,401	504,301	(976,607)	(314,092)	(189,547)	(312,544)
2019/20	787,494	358,088	(1,038,999)	(274,859)	(185,621)	(353,897)
2020/21	822,314	380,686	(799,969)	(234,948)	(127,979)	40,104
2021/22	856,951	415,693	(1,015,243)	(307,691)	(212,313)	(262,603)

Off-Street

Year	Contract costs	Staffing, supplies and other costs	PCN income	Pay and Display income Off Street	(Surplus) / Deficit
	£	£	£	£	£
2009/10	152,324	33,007	(67,250)	incl in on street	25,183
2010/11	256,359	29,756	(48,642)	incl in on street	40,808
2011/12	183,370	23,669	(47,346)	incl in on street	36,850
2012/13	167,175	24,658	(48,549)	incl in on street	42,060
2013/14	164,534	23,365	(40,050)	incl in on street	31,311
2014/15	146,549	21,372	(43,019)	(260,318)	(229,934)
2015/16	140,143	28,584	(45,884)	(241,905)	(200,459)
2016/17	152,507	21,305	(53,299)	(219,970)	(205,704)
2017/18	159,613	28,459	(60,365)	(217,274)	(170,364)
2018/19	56,803	37,682	(84,922)	(234,405)	(223,958)
2019/20	58,280	23,860	(90,348)	(223,480)	(221,490)
2020/21	71,506	21,248	(69,562)	(28,662)	(5,470)
2021/22	74,517	26,092	(88,282)	(109,407)	(97,080)

FUTURE PLANS FOR THE NEW FINANCIAL YEAR OF 2022/23

The Council has received approximately 100 requests within the year to review minor changes and amendments to waiting restrictions, these have come from developers, residents, statutory bodies and elected members. As changes to restrictions can take up a significant amount of resource and time, due to the consultation processes involved, a rolling programme of minor waiting restriction review has been designed. This ensures all requests received are considered collectively by elected members within six months of a request being made.

Our Traffic Engineers will be carrying out a wider review of waiting restrictions in the borough, with the objective to remove those that are no longer required, to increase on street parking capacity for residents. A number of timed no waiting restrictions which were historically associated to deter long term parking, in the Sandringham Road Area have been consulted on already and the aim is to move these to the final stage of removal in early spring of 2022.

Plans for expansion of our current Controlled Parking Scheme

Following the implementation of Permit Parking Area Zone NA in 2020, within the Callowland Area, a subsequent review of extending the hours was carried out in Autumn of 2021 and due to the majority of residents supporting the proposals advertised we plan to move forward with extending the current zone hours, along with expanding the zone itself to encompass a further 5 roads.

We also plan within the Riverside Road Area, which is currently unrestricted, to consult with residents in the area on proposals for a new Permit Parking Area and to review demand for on street parking in Controlled Parking Zones J and K. On street parking beat surveys will be undertaken to gauge the usage of spaces both during and outside controlled hours.

A review of permit parking spaces and allocation of taxi ranks within Controlled Parking Zone B, will be undertaken to ensure there is equitable kerb side use of spaces for both parties based on demand.

Plans to shape the future of our High Street

We will be moving forward plans to introduce a Bus Gate at the junction of the High Street with King Street, which we hope will reduce the level of vehicular traffic, and improve the area for pedestrians and cyclists. This will be the first scheme of this nature to be introduced in the Borough.

Alongside this a review of the High Street and Market Street will be carried out of the current waiting restrictions with the aim to support the public transport trade, whilst still enabling businesses to load and unload. Current taxi ranking spaces will also be reviewed with the objective to create areas that enhance their visibility in the Town Centre. Alongside a review of disabled parking spaces in the area with the aim to introduce further disabled parking bays in the Town Centre to compensate any that will be removed as a result of the progression of the Bus Gate.

Review of the borough's pay and display infrastructure

Next year the service will begin a review of our pay and display infrastructure with a view to widen the choice of payment methods in key areas and to ensure machines continue to service areas adequately.



WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL