

A REVIEW BY THE RESIDENTS, EDUCATION & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: PAYMENT MODERNISATION ACROSS KEY RESIDENT SERVICES

Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Jonathan Bianco Councillor Keith Burrows
Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Finance, Property & Business Services Planning, Transportation and Recycling
Officer Contact(s)	Neil Fraser, Democratic Services
Papers with report	Final review report

HEADLINES

Summary	To receive a review by the Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee which looked at the topic of payment modernisation across several key residents services. The review makes some recommendations for Cabinet to consider, consistent with the Council's direction of travel.
Putting our Residents First	This report supports the following Council objectives of: <i>Our People</i> .
Financial Cost	The Committee's recommendations are supported within the Council's capital programmes and decisions within the relevant service areas, and appropriate budgets are available.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Residents, Education and Environmental Services.
Relevant Ward(s)	All

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet welcomes the Committee's report and approves the recommendations detailed below:

1. That Cabinet note the Committee's conclusion that there are a variety of ways in which residents can choose to pay for Council services, in person or online, noting that whilst further modernisation is required in certain areas, the Council is bringing forward plans to improve payment options and technology, as part of its digital and broader service transformation plans.
2. In respect of residents' and non-residents paying for parking, which was a key focus of the review, the Committee welcomed the planned £1m investment within the 2019/20 budget for modernising payment machines and, based on its review's findings, recommends to Cabinet the roll-out in 2019 of new integrated cash and card parking payment terminals that are also compatible with the HillingdonFirst Resident Card.
3. The Committee welcomes the investment within the 2019/20 budget in respect of ICT transformation, along with the development of a new digital roadmap and recommends that Cabinet:
 - a) Endorse the planned website upgrades to provide residents with clearer and more intuitive ways to pay for Council services;
 - b) Agree the introduction of a new single sign-on account for residents to access a variety of Council services and make their payments online with ease;
 - c) Agree that while digital online payments will be the preferred method for receiving future payments, that the Council continues to support residents who prefer to pay by cash;
 - d) Takes into consideration the emerging payment technologies set out in its report, which residents in the future may wish to utilise.

Reasons for recommendations

To receive the Committee's review into the payment modernisation of key residents services, along with recommendations to Cabinet to assist in the modernisation of both back-office and resident-facing payment technology. The Committee's findings seek to support how residents wish to pay, both now and in the future, for core council services, improving their experience.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject some or all of the Committee's recommendations.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Committee's review

During 2018/19, the Committee undertook a review into how residents currently, and will in the future, wish to pay for key Council services. The review began on 19 July 2018, and through various witness sessions, the Committee heard evidence from key service areas, the Council's transformation lead, along with private sector experts and case studies from other organisations innovating in this area. The Committee's final report was endorsed at its meeting on 21 March 2019 for submission to Cabinet and is set out in the Appendix.

Undertaking the review, the Committee concluded that residents in the London Borough of Hillingdon enjoyed access to a wide range of valued services provided by the Council and a range of different payment options were in operation. Notwithstanding this, the Committee sought to better understand how residents and other users currently pay for such services and to suggest any improvements in receiving and processing the payments made. From the outset, the user / resident experience was at the forefront of the Committee's mind. In this regard, a particular focus for the Committee was how residents and other motorists pay for parking in the Council's car parks, given the high volume of daily payment interaction for this service and that currently only cash could be taken by pay and display machines.

The Committee looked at how user habits had changed, noting that residents today expected quick, secure and intuitive payment options. It was welcomed that the Council was refreshing its digital roadmap and beginning to transform and embed the necessary online and website infrastructure to support these expectations going forward. Members also fully endorsed proposals to develop a single online account for residents, with all their interactions and payments for council services in one place, providing a modern user experience.

Members of the Committee explored what emerging payment technologies were coming to market or being developed that may change how residents wish to pay for services in the future. The Committee felt this would provide a useful steer for the Council in shaping its technology and payment methods in the medium to longer-term.

Whilst the Committee recognised that online payments provided more efficiency in operations, it was also mindful, where required, to retain traditional 'cash' options for those residents who did not have access, or had limited skills, using online payment technology.

The Committee's recommendations complement, and help progress, recently announced investment plans by the Cabinet, particularly on refreshing parking pay and display machines, where the Committee recommends the roll-out of new integrated cash and card payment terminals.

Officer comments on recommendations

Online Payments

Officers note the Committee's review and subsequent findings that the Council is providing a number of varied payment options for residents, though there are opportunities to make improvements that would provide easier, more convenient and more consistent ways of paying. Officers concur that the Council will need to support the growing demand for online payments, whilst continuing to support residents who wish to use other ways to pay. Work is underway to update the Council's website and develop an account for residents that consolidates their interactions with the Council, and supports an easy to use booking and payment process.

Parking payments

Other than the two multi-storey car parks in Uxbridge, pay and display (P&D) machines are used to control car parks and on-street parking bays. The Council currently has a total of 252 P&D machines which only accept coin payments. These machines operate differential, cheaper, charges for Hillingdon residents (which are triggered by presenting a contactless HillingdonFirst card at the machine). The majority of which were installed in early 2009 to coincide with the introduction of the HillingdonFirst card, with additional machines purchased to operate in new residential and shopping parking schemes areas.

Officers have investigated the replacement of these with cashless payment options for future P&D machines and an indicative budget has been set aside in this financial year for their purchase which would be consistent with the findings of the Committee's review. Such machines would also reduce the risk of theft, as they are not as attractive to thieves because they do not contain such high levels of cash. As well as improving the range and ease of payment for motorists, cashless parking systems also provide benefits with less cash to collect, count and bank.

Financial Implications

The Committee's recommendations are supported by recently approved capital programmes and decisions within the relevant service areas, and appropriate budgets are available.

The Council's General Fund Revenue Budget for 2019/20 approved at the Council meeting held on 21 February 2019, sets out provision within the Capital Programme with an indicative budget of £1,040k for the replacement of the existing pay and display machines with new integrated payment terminals.

In February 2019, the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services approved pump prime funding of £228k to deliver a programme of digital transformation including a newly designed website, payment and on-line service transformation in Housing, Waste, and Social Care. These costs are to be funded through capital receipts, in line with Government legislation on the use of capital receipts, as one off costs to deliver the transformation agenda. This programme is designed to deliver significant operational savings over a three year period.

Any further payment technologies to be considered in the medium-long term future would be based on business cases presented as part of the Business Improvement Delivery programme.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

The Committee's recommendations, if approved, will seek to improve the user experience for residents and visitors paying for Council services, particularly by offering refreshed, modern payment options through new car parking terminals and a modernised suite of payment options available via the Council's website.

Consultation carried out or required

The Committee sought a wide range of internal witness testimony, as set out in the report.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed the report and concur with the financial implications set out above, noting that the use of the funding identified to support the recommendations in the report will be the subject of further cabinet/cabinet member reports to agree both procurement of equipment and its support plus requests for capital release of associated funding.

Legal

The Borough Solicitor confirms that there are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[The Committee's reports and minutes relating to the review available online.](#)