

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 26th March 2018

Wards: All Wards

Subject: Action Plan arising from the Scrutiny Task Group review of Crossovers in London Borough of Merton

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Lead member: Councillor Martin Whelton – Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing

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Recommendations:

1. Highways Team to strengthen advice and guidance for residents who wish to implement crossovers. Including design and materials. Will be completed by end of March 2018
 2. Merton crossover policy to be reviewed to ensure it complies with plain English guidance. Will be re-written and approved by Merton User groups.
 3. Highways team to hold information sessions with councillors about crossover policy. These will be arranged after the new Criterion goes live April 2018
 4. Increase Short Frontage Agreements from 4.0 metres to 4.3 metres minimum. Increase Standard Crossover from 4.5m to 4.8 metres.
 5. Highways Team to adopt and implement effective enforcement action to tackle the rise in illegal crossovers. Appendix D
 6. Highways Team to conduct a review of fees charged for crossovers to ensure these covers the full cost of managing the service. Appendix D
 7. Highways Team to take action to reduce parking stress caused by the rise of crossover applications in controlled parking zone areas. Parking stress met at 2.5 permits issued per on street bay. Appendix B1
 8. Highways Team to implement a process to manage the increase in applications for crossovers when a controlled parking zone is proposed.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The process for the application and approval of Vehicle Crossovers had been called into Scrutiny to ensure the needs of our residents are Met.
- 1.2. Through this process detailed within this report are the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review Task Group which have been Approved by Cabinet on 13th November 2017.
- 1.3. Contained in Appendix A are the updates and progress made thus far. Please read in conjunction with this report for your ease of reference.
- 1.4. Officers recommend, after careful review by Cabinet, that the recommendations are formally approved and be included in the Vehicle

Crossover Application Process through the Information pack and Crossover Approval Criterion.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. Highways Team to strengthen advice and guidance for residents who wish to implement crossovers. Including design and materials.
- 2.1.1 Working with Planning and colleagues within futureMerton we are developing a reference document which will include all links to Best practice and design guides to steer applicants to retain soft landscaping where possible within their off street parking designs. We will have our community groups view this for comments to ensure it meets our expectations especially in plain English.
- 2.2. Merton crossover policy to be reviewed to ensure it complies with plain English guidance.
- 2.2.1 Crossover Policy and criteria will be updated to reflect the changes. These are underway at present but cannot be finalised until the details have been formally approved. Please see Appendix A for progress to date.
- 2.3. Highways team to hold information sessions with councillors about crossover policy.
- 2.3.1 futureMerton Infrastructure Team manages Highway planned and reactive works. We will repeat the work we arranged for new councillors and will include all councillors to assist them in understanding the process, the criteria for approval and more importantly why applications are refused.
- 2.3.2 This will include an insight into the Controlled Parking Zone complexities and the improved methodology used to assess parking stress if approved. (2.8 Below)
- 2.4. Council to consider extending Short Frontage Agreements from 4.0 metres to 4.3 metres.
- 2.4.1 Under the review in June 2007 a Short Frontage Agreement was introduced for crossovers between 4.0m and 4.49m (4.50m + being an approval without the need for the SFA). Vehicles were set to reduce in length as Electric vehicles were becoming more available. 10 years on we are seeing the size of vehicle increasing not reducing.
- 2.4.2 Electric vehicles include four wheel drives and even the small car range with petrol and electric dual fuels are remaining moderate family saloons. A review has shown the average car length to be closer to 4.44m.
- 2.4.3 Please refer to Appendix C for details in reaching the recommendation to increase minimum depth to 4.3m for Short Frontage Agreements. Increase depth for Standard Crossovers to 4.8 metres.
- 2.5. Highways Team to adopt and implement effective enforcement action to tackle the rise in illegal crossovers.
- 2.5.1 futureMerton have over 170 known locations of illegally crossing the footway to access parking within a private property. The cost to take enforcement

against these properties cannot be met within current budgets. These numbers are increasing.

- 2.5.2 Prolific and dangerous instances have been actioned by officers after written requests to desist have failed. Follow up letters and letters advising of preventative action also ignored.
- 2.5.3 Last resort action of installing posts results in almost immediate contact and whilst this is not usually without confrontation, it protects the public from danger from damaged footways and potential accidents from unexpected vehicle movements. Some of these then progress their applications to full crossover construction. The cost of removing the posts is added to the cost of the crossover but installation costs are not recovered.
- 2.5.4 Please refer to Appendix D - By strengthening the policy to include provision to charge the cost of installation of these restrictive measures, as well as the cost for removal, into the cost of the crossover construction, where applications progress, will assist in balancing the crossover costs, allow for enforcement of illegal crossovers and ensure we operate within budget.
- 2.6. Please refer to Appendix D - By increasing the application fee, making it non refundable and not deducting it from the estimate, we will increase the income. Applications that do not progress or are refused will assist financially in dealing with staff costs from repeated visits where refusal is not accepted and escalated with member enquiries and requests for re-measure and alternatives to be investigated.
- 2.7. Highways Team to take action to reduce parking stress caused by the rise of crossover applications in controlled parking zone areas. Refer Appendix B1
- 2.7.1 Objections of loss of available space are overturned as loss of one space on street met by the construction of one space off street is deemed acceptable. Many construct two spaces exceeding this measure.
- 2.7.2 Practice has shown that many retain their permit and park within the remaining bays keeping their off street parking for partners, children and relatives.
- 2.7.3 Introducing a fair calculation in relation to the number of Annual Permits, including Annual Visitors permits, which have been purchased per Zone. against the number of available on street parking bays. Where these are one long designated length of available parking, then these are divided by 5.5m, (current approved space for vehicle kerbside parking) to ascertain the number of available bays. Single marked bays count as one space.
- 2.7.4 No London Borough currently measures parking stress in Controlled parking. Only Comparison is Kensington and Chelsea who have whole borough Controlled Parking and no longer accept residential crossing applications.
- 2.7.5 Implementing a Mathematical formula to calculate parking stress. Using the formula Officers have compiled we are confident we can manage stress to protect zones where high on street parking demand is required. Zones across Merton average 1.19 Permits issued per on street space using this formula. The point where zones have no spaces during the majority of the day have 2.7 Permits per bay issued under this formula. 2.5 permits is deemed to be the correct measure per space to show parking stress. Out of

the 46 Zones currently in operation at the time of this report we have 2 zones Exceeding Parking stress. These are VC and W5. We have a further 2 zones that are above 1.75 permits per bay which would indicate as High Parking Demand and applications affecting on street parking may be refused prior to consultation.

- 2.8. Highways Team to implement a process to manage the increase in applications for crossovers when a controlled parking zone is proposed.
- 2.8.1 futureMerton Commissioning Team face real pressure when carrying out formal consultation on proposed Controlled Parking Zones. Pressure to find a way to prevent the loss of allocated on street parking space to vehicle crossover applications that can then affect the viability of the scheme during the consultation process.
- 2.8.2 At present the suspension of applications for vehicle crossovers only applies at the point the Cabinet Member approves the start of the Formal Consultation.
- 2.8.3 At this time the public informal consultation will have taken place and applications for vehicle crossovers always increase and this can be very high in some areas. Some applicants delay their decision to go ahead until the formal consultation starts. This can affect the number of on street parking spaces available between informal and formal consultation. This increases the number of objections and makes support for a scheme difficult.
- 2.8.4 Brining in a criterion that suspends new crossover applications at the stage the Ward Councillors agree the boundary of a new zone or extended zone. Any application already received will continue to be processed until the Formal Consultation start date is agreed. Any application not already fully paid for construction at the start of the Formal Consultation will be suspended until after the consultation has concluded. This would ensure consultations are robust and less subjected to changes. Those held applications would then be subject to parking stress test in the order the applications were received.

3 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 3.1. Report for Cabinet approval.

4 TIMETABLE

- 4.1. All areas of the review have been progressed. Formulas have been completed tested and are robust. Work on the referencing and plain English for the Criteria and application process will be completed ready for April 2018.
- 4.2. Criterion and information pack will be re-written in plain English and will have been through user groups to test and strengthen understanding.
- 4.3. Advice on acceptable materials and design principles from many sources will be made available through the website as selectable links. Should an applicant be unable to use the internet we will provide this material in Printed form. We will not hold copies and will only print as a last resort.

5 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. Through this review the Crossover Process will be more robust, will provide an enforcement function and will finance the full time position making the whole function self funded.
- 5.2. No extra resource is required
- 5.3. There are no property implications

6 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. No Changes to the legal or Statutory duties. This will in fact improve our enforcement process and improve the street scene for our residents

7 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. Crossover applications, where refused, have been criticised for unfair treatment of our residents. By implementing these changes and improving the plain English of our documents we will improve the experience for our customers.

8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. There are no Crime and Disorder implications.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Illegally crossing the footway is a danger to our residents. By bringing into force an enforcement process we will be able to reduce the risks to our residents and reduce the damage to our streets and pavements.

10 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- Appendix A – Vehicle Crossover Task Group Recommendations Timeline
- Appendix B – Controlled parking zone information
- Appendix B1 – Controlled Parking Zone Stress Calculation Summary
- Appendix C – Vehicle length data information
- Appendix C1 – Vehicle length data Summary
- Appendix D – Fees and Charges information