



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

*Secretary of State for Levelling up Housing &
Communities*

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

2 Marsham Street

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To council leaders in England

4th April 2023

Dear Leader,

Public Parking Provision

I write regarding public on and off-street parking provision, which is the responsibility of local authorities. There has been extensive recent coverage about the increased use by councils of digital apps and cashless payment for parking. Concerns have rightly been raised about the accessibility implications of these new technologies, in particular for the elderly and others with vulnerabilities.

As a government, we are committed to supporting local authorities to improve public services through innovation and digitisation. We recognise that making digital payments for parking via mobile phone apps or online can provide a more convenient, efficient, and secure way for the public to pay and can help local authorities reduce costs and raise standards. We also recognise that some local authorities have reported concerning levels of attempted fraud in relation to payment machines.

All local authorities, however, have existing statutory duties to ensure that they do not discriminate in their decision making against older people or those with vulnerabilities. Cash remains legal tender and it will continue to be used in our daily lives by people who favour its accessibility and ease. I am therefore concerned that local authorities should ensure that there are alternative provisions for parking payments available so that no part of society is digitally excluded. This is of course important for many areas in preserving the accessibility of our high streets and town centres for all the public.

I expect you to make sure that parking services for which you are responsible remain accessible. For example, it would not seem appropriate for parking on a high street to be solely available for those who have access to a mobile phone. Nor would it appear sensible for local authorities to phase out paper-based parking options such as 'scratch cards' if the only available replacement is an entirely digital option.

More generally, the Government is determined to ensure that our town centres, high streets and public spaces are accessible to all. We are committed to improving the regulation of the private parking industry by implementing the Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019. This includes the development of an independent code of practice for private parking companies in an attempt to raise the overall standards of the car parking industry. We are considering some elements of the code to ensure that it provides the best possible protection for motorists while giving parking companies the tools to crack down on motorists who park obstructively or dangerously, and we will continue to work with industry and consumer groups to ensure the code comes into effect as quickly as possible. The combination of this and your actions to maintain an accessible public parking system is important for protecting motorists and businesses for whom parking is so key.

With every good wish,

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

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