

TO: EXECUTIVE
12 APRIL 2016

RESIDENTS PARKING SCHEME – TWO YEAR TRIAL UPDATE
Director of Environment, Culture & Communities

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Council agreed to introduce resident parking initially on a trial basis so as to draw out learning in order to inform the introduction of a permanent scheme in advance of the opening of the Town Centre. The trial has enabled officers to gain the necessary experience in its basic application and a number of learning points have been taken on.
- 1.2 The trial was never intended to be self-funding. Accordingly the cost has been borne by the general rate payer rather than those who get the benefit. This paper details the key areas of learning to date and a proposed fee structure that is intended to make the scheme self funding. The introduction of a self funded cost recovery scheme will give rise to further learning that can be rolled out to other areas should there be a need or local demand.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 That the Executive agree to consult the existing householders living in the relevant areas regarding the extension of charging for parking permits as per the consultation papers in annex A.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 The resident parking trial has now successfully run for just over a year, which recently included the first permit renewal period. During the first year of the trial, budget monitoring has enabled the officers to better understand the costs associated with its running. The original charging regime set out within the rules of the scheme does not generate sufficient income, combined with the income from any associated Penalty Charge Notice income to balance the expenditure. There is currently a shortfall in funding of approximately £90,000 per year. To continue to operate a subsidised scheme is not sustainable in the current economic climate. The fee proposals seek to close that gap over the coming year.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 To withdraw the scheme altogether and deregulate the streets accordingly.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Reasons for the trial

- 5.1 When complete, the regenerated town centre should create an additional 2,800 jobs and attract 8 million shoppers each year. This brings with it a potential pressure locally from workers and would be shoppers who look to park in the streets so as to avoid car parking charges. The trial was introduced in response to this longer term threat but also possible parking pressures by the developer's workforce themselves during the construction period. To date this threat has been mitigated in the short term through an agreement for developers to use Charles Square Car Park.

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- 5.2 At its inception the scheme had four principle objectives:
- To protect residents from increased parking pressures
 - To be simple for residents to use
 - To be cost effective to operate
 - To be enforceable by parking attendants
- 5.3 It was considered that the best parking solution for residents would be one which caused little change to their existing parking habits. The scheme that was introduced used modern day methods which allowed this by avoiding the need for official marked parking bays, instead only requiring that vehicles display a permit in the streets affected. Vehicles parked in a road where the scheme operates need to display a permit in their windscreen during the hours of operation with permits being issued for use by residents, their visitors or other legitimate users of the street. Accordingly, vehicles not displaying a permit during the schemes' operating hours may then be issued a parking fine. Standard exemptions apply to postal deliveries, public services and for general loading/unloading of goods or passengers etc. It is not proposed to change the rules of the scheme based on the learning prior to consultation with the residents.

The trial so far

- 5.4 The scheme was introduced in October 2014. A total of 1,500 properties are within the area and all householders can apply for up to 5 permits. They can also have a free 4hr reusable permit and 100 of each of the 4hr and 24hr scratch cards. At the date of producing this report there are 1,400 valid resident parking permits. Of these, only 80 permits were chargeable under the current regime. This generated just £2,000 in income and this is not sustainable.
- 5.5 The Council received a first year income of £9,000 from PCN's. However, as expected the number of PCN's issued has significantly dropped since the first 2 months of enforcement and has not risen back again. Between April 2015 and January 2016 (10 months) a total of £6,400 has been paid. It is possible that there may be more tickets issued in the future when the town centre is completed, however there is no guarantee that this will be the case as the scheme is well signed, enforced and respected at the moment.
- 5.6 Enforcement Officers work between the hours of 8am to 8pm (6.30pm on Sundays) and will patrol resident parking areas at least once per week. Patrols would be increased if parking violations were seen to be increasing.
- 5.7 Accounting for the income from PCN's, the scheme has a net cost of about £90,000. The costs arise from scheme administration and management by our contractor, parking patrols, printing cost of permits, various licences and some costs from the council.

Current charging regime

- 5.8 The current charging regime is set out in the table below. The take up figures during the trial confirms that the first 2 permits per household, together with all the available visitor permits and scratch cards, all of which are currently issued free of charge are the most commonly issued. Out of the 1,400 permits issued, only 80 were a third permit or higher and therefore able to be charged for.

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The number of all permits currently issued is summarised below;

Number of permits	Current cost	Number taken
1	£0	851
2	£0	435
3	£20	64
4	£40	14
5	£70	2

Plus:

- 1,570 of the 4 hour reusable permits.
- 1,570 of the 50 x 4hr scratch cards (some properties have applied for a further 50).
- 1,570 of the 50x 24hr scratch cards (some properties have applied for a further 50).

Proposed charging regime

- 5.7 Consideration has been given as to the possible means of balancing the shortfall in income generated by the Resident Parking Scheme to make the scheme self funding to a zero detriment to the Council. It is impossible at this stage, based on the experience to date, to predict the number of successful PCN's issued as this is solely dependent on the number of offences. Therefore the only other possible means of generating income is thorough the charging regime for the permits.
- 5.8 As mentioned above, only 80 chargeable permits have been issued. This confirms that the vast majority of properties are only applying for the first two free issue permits. Therefore any new self funding charging regime will have to include charging for such permits as the cost can not be borne by the few that pay now.
- 5.9 It is therefore proposed to introduce a charging regime to recover all costs based on the numbers of permits issued. In proposing these fees regard has been given to the other charging regimes with Berkshire for the purposes of benchmarking. An assumption of 80% take up has also been made in calculating the income as demand for permits is unknown if charging is introduced.
- 5.10 As part of the scheme, the proposal is also to introduce a charge for all visitor permits as follows:
- 4hr reusable permit - £25
 - 50 x 4hr scratch cards - £15
 - 50 x 24hr scratch cards - £40
- 5.11 The current charge for a tradesperson is £20. Whilst only 4 of these permits have been issued in the first year it is felt that the cost of a permit to tradespeople who are parking in the zones should be charged more than the basic rate for the residents themselves. Therefore it is proposed that this rate be increased to £60. There is also a proposed increase to the cost of landlords scratch cards and replacement permits (where the original has not been surrendered) inline with the proposed charging regime.

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- 5.12 It is not proposed to amend any of the following charges at this time:
- a) **Carer** - Free of charge. Healthcare Professional Permits (GP's, District Nurse, Midwife, Home Care Assistant, Health Visitor, Mental Health Nurse, Occupational Therapists etc) are permitted under the Resident Parking Permit Scheme. These are separate specific permits for reasons of practicality. The NHS (Berks Healthcare NHS Trust) are authorised to self-manage an agreed access permit system in agreement/liaison with the Council. As the Council does not administer this part of the scheme, no charges are applied. There have been 274 carer permits issued free of charge for the whole area. Many of these will be NHS carers. However others could be from profit making organisations.
 - b) **Discretionary** - Free of charge. The Discretionary Parking Permit process considers applications for permit issue where the standard criteria is not met. Applications through this process are made in writing and each case is considered individually. An appeals process applies. There have been 13 discretionary permits issued.

Additional issues for consideration

- 5.13 Currently due to the very low number of permits that require payment, the online systems do not allow applicants to purchase the permit. They complete the form and then the payment is taken manually. There would need to be a development in the software to enable online payment as if every permit and visitor permit were charged for this would increase the administration cost of the service. It is anticipated that this would be an additional capital expenditure of £25,000 to develop the software. This additional sum has not been factored into the calculations.

Resident consultation

- 5.14 Annex A shows the resident consultation that is intended to be delivered to all properties within the current resident parking zones to invite comment. All households in the zones will also be able to respond to the consultation on line using the Councils web page.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The Council has the power to charge for permits but may only recover the full costs of operating the permit scheme. The proposed charges meet this requirement.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The basis of the proposed charges are anticipated to allow full cost recovery but no more. There are reasonable assumptions about the take-up of the permits but if these do not materialise the Council may have to continue to subsidise the scheme, at least in the short term.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 Undertaken as part of the trial.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Projecting income for a scheme like this relative to costs is difficult and the charges proposed could significantly under recover the costs.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Not applicable to this report

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Not applicable to this report

Representations Received

- 7.3 Not applicable to this report

Background Papers

Residents' Parking Scheme - Bracknell Forest Borough Council (Waiting Restriction and Permit Parking) Order 2014

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