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|------------------|---|-------------|
| <b>Report to</b> | Norwich Highways Agency committee<br>21 March 2019                              | <b>Item</b> |
| <b>Report of</b> | Head of city development services   | <b>8</b>    |
| <b>Subject</b>   | Permit Issuing Software Upgrade and the Introduction of Virtual Parking Permits |             |

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### **Purpose**

To note that the existing software that is used to issue parking permits must be updated, and to agree to the rollout of 'virtual' permits once the new system is in place

### **Recommendation**

To:

- (1) note that the software that is used to issue parking permits needs to be replaced;
- (2) agree to the rollout of 'virtual' permits (where appropriate) once the new system is in place;
- (3) authorise the head of city development to make the necessary changes to the permit parking terms and conditions to reflect the move to virtual permits.

### **Corporate and service priorities**

The report helps to meet the corporate priority of value for money services.

### **Financial implications**

Estimated set up costs for the new system are £42k, with on-going costs of approximately £41k per annum. Based on the current cost apportionment mechanism, there will be an 80% contribution from income received from the operation of the permit parking scheme with the city council contributing the rest from existing budgets covering the non-highway permits.

The new platform will allow for the introduction of virtual permits. Approximately 70,000 permit application or renewals are processed on an annual basis, and savings associated with postage and printing will be passed through to the County Council via a reduction in the back office costs that are currently recharged. The level and pace of savings will be dependent on the level of uptake and will be monitored over the next 12 months.

**Ward/s:** Multiple Wards

**Cabinet member:** Councillor Stonard - Sustainable and inclusive growth

**Contact officers**

Bruce Bentley: Principal transportation planner

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**Background documents**

None

# Report

## Background

1. All of the city centre, and many of the surrounding suburbs as well as some areas around the university, are in controlled parking zones (CPZs) where much of the on-street parking is available only to those who are eligible for a permit. Most permits are issued to local residents, but other permit types are available for businesses based outside the city centre, but are in a permit area, or those who routinely frequent premises in the permit zones. The city council issues approximately 22,000 permits for the permit parking areas, around 110,000 visitor day scratchcards and 5000 business dispensations to allow contractors to park and access premises on which they are working.
2. Paper permits are issued through a specialist software package, and the current system is no longer supported by the incumbent software supplier. It is therefore necessary to replace the current system for issuing permits with a new one.
3. On-street parking enforcement is also undertaken by the city council and our Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) regularly patrol all our CPZs and enforce the on-street waiting restrictions, including checking the validity of parking permits. CEOs carry hand-held units which contain information to help them with their enforcement duties and these units (together with the back of house systems that support them) have recently been upgraded. These units have the capability to be updated in real time, and can use automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) to help to establish whether a vehicle should or should not be parked in a particular location.
4. Integrating the system used by the CEOs with an upgraded permit issuing system, presents the opportunity to replace much of our current paper based permits with one that works electronically. By using ANPR, the CEOs would be able to identify which vehicles are legitimately parked without the need for them to display a permit, in a similar way to the manner in which untaxed vehicles are now identified. That is the concept of virtual permits.

## What are the advantages of virtual permits?

5. There are a number of advantages to switching to electronic virtual permits:
  - (a) There is no need to wait for a permit to be issued, so new permits can become valid immediately they are issued, should that be appropriate;
  - (b) It would be possible to manage visitor permits on line in real time.
  - (c) It would not be possible to lose or deface a virtual permit, or get caught out because the permit wasn't visible in the vehicle
  - (d) Virtual permits are hard to fake. Electronic permit data will be held securely behind the council's firewalls. Only authorised staff will be able to access it.
  - (e) Enforcement should be more straightforward and safer as there would be no need to search around the vehicle to find the permit.

- (f) Virtual permits are more cost effective. The current paper based permits use specialist stationery to make forging difficult, and this is expensive. As permit prices are set solely to cover the costs of the permit scheme, this will help to keep permit prices as low as possible.
- (g) The public increasingly expect to be able to manage their lives from their 'phones and we have had requests for the visitor scheme in particular to be available as a 'phone app.

### **Are there any disadvantages?**

- 6. There are potentially a few disadvantages, but these are outweighed by the benefits.
  - (a) Residents would not be able to immediately see whether a vehicle had a valid permit or not. However, it will be possible to check this on line in a way similar to how the public can check whether a vehicle is taxed (this feature will not be available immediately, but will be available within a few months of the launch of the scheme).
  - (b) It might be easier to overlook renewing a permit, thus risking a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN). However, we do send out reminders to all permit holders, and it will be possible to check when your own permit expires on line.
  - (c) When the Vehicle Excise Duty disc was abandoned a few years ago, there was an increase in the number of untaxed vehicles leading to revenue loss. However, this is unlikely to be a significant issue with parking permits as all our zones are routinely patrolled, so any unpermitted vehicle would be quickly spotted.

### **Will paper permits disappear?**

- 7. This is unlikely. Some permit types are relatively straightforward to manage electronically, whether the user has access to the internet or not (such as permits for residents own vehicles). Other types, where the permit can be used by more than one vehicle (for example visitor permits) are likely to remain available as a paper based permit with an on-line version available for those who prefer it.

### **The way forward**

#### **Residents permits for their own cars**

- 8. Initially, the most straightforward permits would be migrated to the virtual platform. These would be any permit that is vehicle specific for one vehicle only, which will primarily be parking permits for resident own vehicles. These account for almost half of the total number of permits that we issue. It will take approximately 18 months for all paper residential permits to expire. As all permits, whether they are ordered on line or over the phone have to be registered on the system, every residential permit user can transfer to virtual permits.

## **The Visitor permit scheme**

9. Unlike the residents own permits (where the permits are vehicle specific, and are tied to that vehicle for a predetermined period) the visitor scheme is much more flexible in that permits can be used on almost any vehicle. Virtual visitor permits would therefore require routine access to an on-line service.
10. Consequently, a paper based system for visitor parking is likely to remain in place for the foreseeable future, as some residents do not have access to the appropriate technology to enable them to access real time systems. However, a virtual visitor system would be more flexible for those who did wish to use it.
11. If residents chose to use the virtual visitor system instead of the paper based one, the principle of the visitor scheme would remain the same (i.e. unlimited four-hour visits (one at a time) and up to sixty full day visits (currently our scratchcards are valid on the day of issue and up until 10.00am the next day to allow for overnight stays). Residents would be able to book and cancel their visitor parking needs on line. The paper based system would be unchanged for those residents who prefer that option.
12. As the scheme will require no stationery (and the scratchcards we use, although effective, are both expensive to produce and have to be subject to a one-year time limit so that we can standardise the stationery) the virtual scheme can be made more flexible. There will not be a need to time limit the virtual scratch cards and whilst this does not affect many residents, the current need to time limit the physical scratchcards been the source of some irritation.
13. It should also be possible to opt to use the virtual equivalent of the four-hour visitor permit and either have it automatically expire after four hours or convert to a virtual scratchcard. It will also be possible to cancel one user of the four hour permit and commence another four hour period for a different visitor. 'Resetting' the clock for the same vehicle or attempting to re-use the four-hour permit on the same vehicle returning within the 'no-return' period (also four hours) will not be possible, making enforcement simpler, and the system more difficult to abuse.

## **Other permit types**

14. The resident permit scheme described above covers over 90% of all the permits and 75% of all scratchcards that we issue and consequently will be prioritised for implementation. We are already offering business dispensations (the scratchcards that contractors use) as a virtual permit in some circumstances as we no longer issue permits over the counter, and very often these are required on demand. Business dispensations will continue to be issued both as physical scratchcards and as a virtual product. This will mean that all current scratchcards will be available as a virtual product for those who prefer this option.

## **Other business permits**

15. Business permits will be offered as a virtual product where this is practical. As they represent less than 10% of permits we issue, this will be a lower priority than the previously mentioned permits. In addition, business permits tend to have more complex operational criteria, so it may not prove practical to offer all of them as a virtual option.

### **Terms and Conditions**

16. Terms and conditions (T&Cs) will need to be updated as currently they state that all our permits are supplied as a printed physical product. T&Cs will need to reflect the changes to virtual permits, so will be updated as the new permit types become available

### **Timescales**

17. It is anticipated that the new software will be in place before the end of the summer 2019, and migration to virtual permits will commence once as soon as the system has been tested (so is likely to be in place before the autumn).

18. Virtual permits for residents own vehicles will then be issued with the online visitor scheme being launched as soon as practicable after that. As previously mentioned, work on business permits will be a lower priority both due to the volume of permits issued and the fact that paper permits might provide the better option for some permit types.

### **Conclusions**

19. The introduction of virtual permits will provide additional options for residents and in particular offer the option of managing visitor parking on-line (rather than having to keep a stock of paper permits at home) and make permits available to them much more quickly than is currently possible. Virtual permits also have the benefit of being less prone to fraud and easier to enforce as well as being more cost effective.

## Integrated impact assessment



**NORWICH**  
City Council

### Report author to complete

**Committee:** Norwich Highways Agency Committee

**Committee date:** 21 March 2019

**Director / Head of service** City Development

**Report subject:** Permit issuing software upgrade and the introduction of virtual parking permits

**Date assessed:** 31 January 2019

|   | Impact                              |                                     |                          |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Economic</b><br>(please add an 'x' as appropriate)                             | <b>Neutral</b>                      | <b>Positive</b>                     | <b>Negative</b>          | <b>Comments</b>  |
| <b>Finance (value for money)</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The proposals reduce the overhead costs of running the permit parking scheme |
| <b>Other departments and services</b><br>e.g. office facilities, customer contact | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Proposals will streamline the issuing and operation of the permit scheme     |
| <b>ICT services</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | Software upgrade is required whether virtual permits are issued or not       |
| <b>Economic development</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> |  |
| <b>Financial inclusion</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are no changes to the permit scheme which already make allowance.      |
|   |                                     |                                     |                          |  |
| <b>Social</b><br>(please add an 'x' as appropriate)                               | <b>Neutral</b>                      | <b>Positive</b>                     | <b>Negative</b>          | <b>Comments</b>  |
| <b>Safeguarding children and adults</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | This is a mechanism for delivering the same service in a different way       |
| <b><u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u></b>                                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | This is a mechanism for delivering the same service in a different way       |
| <b>Human Rights Act 1998</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | This is a mechanism for delivering the same service in a different way       |
| <b>Health and well being</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | This is a mechanism for delivering the same service in a different way       |



|  | Impact                              |                                     |                          |   |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)</b> |                                     |                                     |                          |   |
|  | <b>Neutral</b>                      | <b>Positive</b>                     | <b>Negative</b>          | <b>Comments</b>   |
| <b>Relations between groups (cohesion)</b>                       | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | This is a mechanism for delivering the same service in a different way                        |
| <b>Eliminating discrimination &amp; harassment</b>               | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | This is a mechanism for delivering the same service in a different way                        |
| <b>Advancing equality of opportunity</b>                         | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | This is a mechanism for delivering the same service in a different way                        |
| <b>Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)</b>          |                                     |                                     |                          |   |
|  | <b>Neutral</b>                      | <b>Positive</b>                     | <b>Negative</b>          | <b>Comments</b>   |
| <b>Transportation</b>  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |
| <b>Natural and built environment</b>                             | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reduce the production of paper based permits which are no recyclable due to security features |
| <b>Waste minimisation &amp; resource use</b>                     | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reduce the production of paper based permits which are no recyclable due to security features |
| <b>Pollution</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | There is a negligible positive impact   |
| <b>Sustainable procurement</b>                                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | There is a negligible positive impact   |
| <b>Energy and climate change</b>                                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | There is a negligible positive impact   |

|                                    | Impact                              |                          |                          |  |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| (Please add an 'x' as appropriate) | Neutral                             | Positive                 | Negative                 | Comments   |
| Risk management                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | This is a mechanism for delivering the same service in a different way |

| Recommendations from impact assessment                                 |
|--|
| <b>Positive</b>  |
| Scheme reduces costs and reduces waste                                 |
| <b>Negative</b>  |
| none   |
| <b>Neutral</b>   |
| This is a mechanism for delivering the same service in a different way |
| <b>Issues</b>  |
| none   |