

Report to Norwich highways agency committee

Item

28 November 2013

Report of Head of city development services

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Subject Review of visitor parking permits

Purpose

To propose changes to the current on-street visitor permit parking scheme, following the review requested by committee in November 2012 and to agree to consult on those proposals.

Recommendation

- (1) To agree in principle to replace the current on street visitor permit parking scheme with
 - (a) a new visitor permit scheme which provides a 'Resident's Visitor Pack' priced at £25 containing a two-hour limit waiting permit (operated by a 'clock'), and 10 'pay as you go' day permit scratch-cards. This pack would be free to low income households
 - (b) additional 'pay as you go' day permit scratch-cards limited to up to a further 40 per household per year, priced at £1 each.
- (2) To ask the Head of city development services to consult on these proposals.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority 'A safe and clean city' and the service plan priority of managing the on street parking civil parking enforcement scheme

Financial implications

The financial consequences of this report result in administrative changes within the Customer Contact Team that will be absorbed within day to day operations, and recharged to the permit parking scheme.

Ward/s: Many

Cabinet member: Cllr Mike Stonard – Environment, development & transport

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Background documents

None

Report

Introduction

1. The permit parking scheme has been subject to a substantial review, with changes to both residents' permits, and all non-residential permits having been agreed at previous meetings. Implementation of many of these changes has now taken place, with the implementation of the changes to the non-residential scheme to be implemented next spring. Consultations on the agreed changes have highlighted the concerns that many users of the permit parking areas have with misuse of the visitor permit scheme by a minority of residents, and members will recall that this has been a recurring issue. Review of the Visitor permit scheme is therefore the last substantive change to the permit parking scheme recommended as part of the major review that has taken place.

Background

2. Area –wide controlled parking Zones were first introduced into the City in the early 1990s and most of them have now been in operation for almost twenty years. When the schemes were first introduced, these were primarily aimed at ensuring that residents and local businesses had first call on the available parking spaces, and that commuter parking was deterred in order to support the emerging 'Park and Ride' system. At the time it was not anticipated that there was any need to consider the level of demand from residents themselves, and it was only with the introduction of the City Centre CPZ in 1999-2000, that any restriction was placed on permit issuing.
3. In the intervening period, the enforcement of parking controls has been decriminalised, meaning that the City Council now enforces parking controls, and car ownership levels have risen, both with households having increasing numbers of vehicles and more households owning cars in the first place. This has led to an increasing pressure for the limited on-street parking available.
4. Except in those zones which have a significantly suburban character (C,D,G,L,UW,BB and WE), the number of permits for residents cars is already close to or exceeds the number of spaces available (and, of course, visitor, and other permit types are also valid in the spaces). There are still many households in the City which do not have a car, but would be eligible for permits if they did.
5. Concerns about abuse of various types of permit are relatively commonplace across the Permit Parking areas, and these complaints have almost always relate to those permits which are not vehicle specific. In particular, across the zones, issues have been raised about abuse of visitor parking permits and the various 'Q' permits that are on offer, and in specific locations, business permits. The non-residential permit types have been reviewed and the new scheme will only allow for 'long stay' permits to be used on specific vehicles, with the non-specific permits having a limited waiting period of two hours. During the consultation on these new arrangements, abuse of visitor permits was one of the most frequently raised concerns and we did promise that we would be reviewing the visitor permit scheme as well as the other permit types. The Residents Visitor permit scheme remains as the only permit type yet to be reviewed
6. Members will recall that it is almost impossible for enforcement staff to prove that these permits are being used in an unreasonable way and beyond the terms and conditions without excessive staff time being spent. The Civil Enforcement Officers

have confirmed, however, that they are well aware of widespread abuse of visitor but do not have the resources to deal with any but the most flagrant misuse.

The current visitor permit scheme

7. Currently each household located within a CPZ is entitled to one visitor parking permit which is valid for any length of stay. There are 8750 visitor permits issued to households in the outer areas of the CPZ and 1300 in the City Centre
8. These permits were introduced to ensure that residents had the opportunity to receive visitors once the permit schemes were introduced, and the permits are valid for any vehicle. Whilst the conditions of use are that residents can only use the permits for their guests, in practice a significant minority of residents allow their permits to be used for other purposes including commuter parking. Residents and the Civil Enforcement staff are well aware of these issues, which are very difficult to quantify, because the permits are so flexible and therefore sustained surveillance is needed to be certain that abuse is taking place. However, 'snapshot' surveys have shown that typically one in five permits displayed in the Zones are visitor permits, rising to one in three in more central areas. Officers believe that illegitimate use of visitor permits is placing significant additional strain on an already limited parking resource

What do other councils do?

9. As part of the review, officers investigated the approach that other similar Councils have taken when implementing their permit parking schemes, and a resume of other councils' visitor parking scheme is included in Appendix 1. The Norwich scheme is significantly more generous in providing a very flexible visitor permit and partially explains the difficulties there are in enforcing the scheme.
10. No other Council operates a Visitor permit scheme as flexible and permissive as ours. In some areas, visitors are expected to use existing limited waiting, pay and display or off-street public parking, whilst in others, visitor parking is allowed for a limited period on a pay as you go basis. Day permits, often based on scratch-cards, similar to our dispensation scheme are the most common option. Residents are typically restricted to between 20 and 100 day permits per year (although York City Council offers 200), In some locations, residents are expected to rely on short stay parking provision in their area.

Proposed new visitor permit scheme

11. It is not possible to rely on existing limited waiting facilities in most of the CPZs because they were not introduced with the expectation of providing parking in this way for residents vehicles, and the cost of modifying the existing restrictions to allow this would be excessive. Instead it is suggested that the visitor permit parking scheme be amended to include two types of permits to cater for both short and long stay visits.
12. The short stay element can be achieved by introducing a time limit of 2 hours on the use of the existing visitor permit. This would be managed requiring the permit user to display a clock, in a similar manner to the 'Blue Badge' scheme for disabled drivers.
13. The long stay element can be achieved by introducing a day long permit. This would be in the form a scratch-card that the user has to mark off the date of use.

14. It is suggested that each household within a CPZ that is entitled to permits be allowed to purchase one visitor permit pack containing the 2 hour visitor permit with clock and 10 day permit scratch-cards. The cost of this pack would be £25, and as with the existing permit scheme, households in receipt of qualifying means tested benefits would be entitled to a free pack. In addition households will have the option of purchasing up to a further 40 permit scratch-cards at a cost of £1 each.
15. Limiting the number of permits available on an annual basis would reduce the current level of misuse. It would not prevent residents from having people to stay, but could disadvantage those residents who need regular all day care. Consequently, there will need to be some relaxation of the restriction on the number of day permits available to people who do need regular long-term care. Currently such residents can, at the discretion of the Head of city development services, have an additional visitor permit. The number of additional visitor permits is low and it is suggested that the Head of city development services be given the discretion to approve additional all day permits, above the proposed limit to those with long term care needs. This will also act as a counterpoint to the proposed 'short-stay' non-residential permits which will be offered to organisations offering services in people's homes. This will mean that organisations making several short visits during the day can have the benefit of the 'short stay' permits, whilst those residents in need of longer periods of care will be able to offer a permit to those providing it.
16. The proposed changes will not eradicate abuse, but should help to reduce it. The day vouchers offered will provide parking (particularly in the City Centre) at rates much lower than that available elsewhere. Consequently, a balance needs to be struck between the availability in terms of entitlement, and cost, to ensure that the scheme meets residents' needs, whilst minimising the potential for abuse.
17. Increasingly, the use of mobile phone and internet technologies are allowing 'pay as you go' facilities to be offered over a wide area, and officers are investigating this as an option as the introduction of new technology might make it possible to offer visitor parking for any pre-arranged period. However initially the visitor permits will be paper based.
18. The suggested terms and conditions for these permits are contained in Appendix 2

Impact of proposals

19. Based upon 'spot' surveys, we estimate that a typical customer will spend between £25 and £35 pa on visitor parking as opposed to £31 pa now. This is based on the assumption that many visits will be catered for by the 'short stay' permit, and allows for between 10 and 20 full day visits per year. Using the maximum entitlement (50 full day visits per year and a 2 hour permit) would cost £65.
20. It is anticipated that whilst the levels of abuse of the scheme that are currently experienced will reduce, they will not, and can not be eradicated completely.

Equality Impact Assessment

21. During the review of the permit parking scheme, potential negative impacts on elderly and disabled residents were identified and have been built into the permit review. The 'Short Stay' Visitor permit is to be offered free of charge to all those on limited incomes, whilst additional visitor arrangements for those with extended care needs

will overcome any issues for those people which may include some elderly and disabled residents.

Appendix 1 - Comparison with other Local Authority Visitor schemes (October 2013), unless otherwise stated **Cheapest** **Most Expensive**

Local Authority	Type of scheme	Cost
Norwich	'Any vehicle' permit - One per Household 'Special Occasion day permits – max 15 per year	Visitor permit - £31 Day permits - £1 each
Brighton and Hove	Single day scheme only	25-50 per year (dependent on location) £1.60 or £2.60
Cambridge	Vehicle specific 5 day permit. All other visitors have to use short stay provision	£8 for a five day permit – vehicle must be stated. Max 12 per year
Winchester	Single day scheme only	Books of ten (max 2 books per year) £1 per permit
Bath	Single day scheme only	Max 100 per year £1 per permit – also hourly charged e-system
Chester	Day permits and 2 hour vouchers	Day permits book 10 for £9 2 hour permits book 20 for £6 Max one book per month
York	Day permit scheme	£5 per book of 5 day permits. Max 200 permits a year

Appendix 1 - Comparison with other Local Authority Visitor schemes (October 2013), unless otherwise stated Cheapest Most Expensive

Local Authority	Type of scheme	Cost
St Albans	Day permits and 4-hour vouchers	35p each - Up to 4hrs 70p -All day books of 10 vouchers -max 11 per year
Canterbury	Day scheme only	£4 per day – max 65 per year
Edinburgh	None – off street and on street P&D only	
Oxford	Day scheme only	First 25 free, second 25 - £16 max 50 per year
Bristol	Day scheme only	50 free, then £1 each. Max 100 pa
Ipswich	1-hour 'clock' permit with day vouchers	£1 per day voucher – max 50 per year 1- hour clock permit – included with initial own vehicle permit application (£35)
Kensington and Chelsea	None – off street and on street P&D only	
Manchester	None – off street and on street P&D only	

Appendix 2 – Terms and conditions of revised permit scheme

Residents Visitor Parking Permit Scheme

Who Can get this?	<p>Any resident of an eligible property, but please be aware that the entitlement is per household. Please also be aware that many more recently constructed properties are not eligible for permits. These include most properties built since 2000 within the City Centre (and all those in the central 'Castle' area), and all properties within any permit parking area built since July 2004, unless they have been built with their own permit scheme. If your permit scheme was introduced after July 2004, only properties that were occupied at implementation are entitled to permits. Conversions and subdivisions of older properties are considered to be 'recently constructed'. The date of occupation is taken to be the day on which the property was registered for Council Tax purposes. A household is a single property that is registered in its own right for Council Tax purposes</p>
Is the permit specific to a particular vehicle?	No
What proof is required to enable the issue of permits	<p>1.Residency – Resident must provide proof of residency (dated within three months)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bank statement.• Household bill.• Mortgage agreement.• Tenancy agreement.• Norwich City Council rent card. <p>The Council will accept scanned or photographed copies of original document that can be submitted electronically, as well as hard copies of the original documents. The Council might be able to determine household occupancy if you are not able to provide documentation. There will be an additional fee for this service, whether we are able to confirm the details or not</p>

Appendix 2 – Terms and conditions of revised permit scheme

What the nature of the permit is and how many can I have	<p>The Resident's Visitor permit Scheme includes</p> <p>A 'Short Stay' permit, with a clock allowing visits for up to two hours,</p> <p>Scratchcards, each valid for one day only for longer visits.</p> <p>The initial 'Visitor Pack' includes the 'Short Stay' clock permit, and ten Scratchcards</p> <p>One 'Visitor Pack' and up to a further 40 Scratchcards are available in a Calendar Year per household</p>
What type of vehicle they can be used on	Permits are not valid for use on vehicles with an unladen weight of more than 3.5 tonnes or which exceed six metres in length

Appendix 2 – Terms and conditions of revised permit scheme

How each permit can be used	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 'short stay' permit must be displayed, with the clock, set to the time of arrival, and allows up to two hours parking• The Scratchcard must be completed with the date of use fully exposed and the vehicle registration number and address of the property being visited• The permit or Scratchcard must be displayed on the near side of the windscreen, so that it can be read from the outside of the vehicle.• A permit or Scratchcard does not guarantee a parking space. If no parking spaces are available, this does not justify a parking contravention elsewhere.• Permits are only valid for use on the dates shown on the permit.• Scratchcards are only valid for use on the date exposed, and up to 10.00 am on the following day. Scratchcards beyond their expiry date are no longer valid. You may use more than one Scratchcard at once if you have more than one visitor. A Scratchcard will be invalid if more than one day, month or date is exposed.• A permit or Scratchcard is only valid in on-street permit parking spaces of the parking zone it is issued for. Signs near each permit parking bay will identify the parking zone. <p>The use of permits is monitored. Where evidence is found that the permit is being used wrongly the permit holder will be given the opportunity to provide a satisfactory explanation of the circumstances or agree actions to rectify the situation. Action will be taken by the council if no satisfactory response is received.</p>
Refunds and exchanges	<p>Permits and Scratchcards are non- refundable, so please ensure you only purchase sufficient to meet your reasonably immediate needs. Scratchcards will normally be valid for around one year from date of purchase.</p>

Use of the Clock

Conditions of use of the Clock

- The clock is for use by and on behalf of a permit holder only
- It must be displayed with a valid parking permit, issued for use with the clock in the windscreen, or side window, and must be visible, together with the permit at all times
- When in use, must be set to the time of arrival (the nearest next 15 minutes).

The use of a permit will be invalid if:

- A false time of arrival is displayed on the clock
- The clock is not displayed with the associated permit
- The time on the clock is reset after parking
- The vehicle is returned to the same parking bay within two hours of departure
- The time limit of the permit is exceeded (*this is normally two hours*)