

Report for Resolution

Report to Norwich Highways Agency Committee
23 September 2010

Report of Head of Transportation

Subject Review of On Street Parking Fees and Charges

10

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to review all existing fees and charges for on street parking and to recommend changes where appropriate.

Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

1. Agree that there should be no increase in the Monday to Saturday daytime rates for on street pay and display bays, and that no charge should be made for blue badge holders.
2. Consider whether charges should be made for on street parking on Sundays and in the evening, and if agreeable in principle to the idea ask the Head of Transportation to bring a further report to a future meeting
3. Increase the cost of parking dispensations to £5 for a single voucher and £20 for 5 vouchers, with a condition that no more than 4 books of 5 vouchers can be purchased at any one time.
4. Agree that parking dispensations can only be used on commercial vehicles, and cars that have a business livery.
5. Ask the Head of Transportation to investigate the possibility of charging for pay and display bays that have been suspended.
6. Agree to widen the definition of those eligible to a Statutory Q permit to include any organisation with a legitimate business use in any CPZ other than the City Centre, and allow the Head of Transportation and Landscape to approve these permits when it is not practical to use other parking facilities in the area.
7. Increase the cost of parking permits for the controlled parking zone as detailed in appendix 1.
8. Consider whether the number of free parking permits issued in CPZs should be reviewed, and if so ask the Head of Transportation to bring a further report to a future meeting

Financial Consequences

The financial consequences of this report are that additional income should be generated. Details of these are contained in the body of the report.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority “Strong and prosperous city – working to improve quality of life for residents, visitors and those who work in the city now and in the future” and the service plan priority of administering CPE

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Background Documents

None

Report

Background

1. As part of the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) scheme in Norwich a number of charges are made for on street parking. These need to be reviewed periodically to ensure that they are fit for purpose. This report looks at the existing charges levied and looks at the potential for making other charges. The 3 main areas for charging are; on-street pay and display bays, permit parking bays, and the dispensations used by trades-people.

On Street Pay and Display Bays

Daytime charges

2. Currently on street parking in limited waiting bays is chargeable during the daytime Monday to Saturday. For the bays in the central core that operate 7:30am to 6:30pm the charge is £1.60 and hour, while in the bays on the edge of the core that operate 8am to 6:30pm the fees are 80p per hour. These prices were last increased in Sept 2007. There are approx 650 pay and display spaces in the City Centre.
3. Since that date, there has been no increase in the fees charged in council off street car parks and neither have there been significant changes in the privately operated car parks. Cost increases are only practical at 5 pence increments (per 15 minutes). However, inflation since Sept 2007 can only justify a 1.7p pence increase.
4. A separate report on the agenda reviews the current charges in the City Council car parks and of those within the area, where on street charges apply. It recommends increasing the rate in St Saviours car park from 90p to £1 per hour. There are less than 20 on street bays that could be seen as being alternatives for that car park. It is therefore suggested that the current daytime charges remain the same, but that they are monitored to see if the increase in the cost on St Saviours car park impacts on usage.

Evening and Sunday Charges

5. Parking in on street bays is currently free in the evenings and on Sundays, except in those bays that are reserved for permit holders outside of the chargeable times, or those that become taxi ranks. There are 115 of those bays, leaving 535 free on street spaces.
6. All car parks in the City Centre charge on Sundays and in the evening. On Sundays the fees are charged per hour, in the evenings it is usually a flat rate similar to the charge for one hour during the day. Looking at other similar local authorities shows a wide variation in practice on this issue; some charge for neither, some for both and some just on Sundays but not evenings. For those that do charge in the evening, many have made concessions to permit holders

or local residents exempting them from the charge.

7. If a similar charging regime to car parks was adopted on street a crude assessment suggests that it would raise in the region of between £65,000 and £90,000 a year, on top of the £570,000 that is currently raised from the Pay and Display machines. However, this assumes that every existing free bay is made chargeable, that there are no concessions made for free parking to any groups and there is no migration to off street car parks. To confirm these figures further work is necessary.
8. If charges were to be introduced for evenings and Sundays changes would be needed to the Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) covering both the parking restrictions and the charges made. This would involve extensive public consultation, and any change on street would require the signs describing the restrictions and in some cases the carriageway markings to be changed and the pay and display machines would have to be reprogrammed. Initial estimates indicate this would cost in the region of £60,000, which would need to be funded by the on-street parking surplus.
9. If members are minded to consider evening and Sunday charges, a further report will be prepared to examine feasibility in detail. Parking on single yellow lines is unrestricted during evenings and on Sundays. With potentially even greater demand and problems already caused by single yellow line parking on Sundays when traffic levels are high, it would be necessary to consider these restrictions as part of any review as well.

Blue Badge Holders

10. Currently blue badge holders are entitled to park for free in the on street pay and display bays. Any change in this policy would require a full diversity impact assessment and is likely to generate considerable opposition, given that the pay and display bays are often the closest parking facilities to the areas that disabled people visit. Considerable work, at a significant cost, would be required to bring the ticket machines up to the standard required under the disability discrimination act and it is likely that accommodation works in the form of dropped kerbs in the parking bays would be required. It is therefore suggested blue badge holders continue to be allowed to park without charge in the on street pay and display bays.

Dispensations

11. Drivers who require access to their vehicle for the purposes of carrying out their business (e.g. builders, cash collectors, window cleaners etc) can purchase dispensations that exempt them from the on street charges, and from certain parking restrictions. Currently these dispensations are issued as scratch cards on which the user marks off the date that it is being used and writes in the registration number of the vehicle that it is using it. The current charge for the dispensation vouchers is currently £4 for an individual voucher or £75 for a book of 90 vouchers (equating to 83.3p per voucher)
12. Having looked at similar authorities in the eastern region, the dispensation charges in the City are considerably lower than elsewhere and the scheme is

significantly more flexible, with many restricting the use of a waiver to a specific location, and many not granting them for more than 7 days.

13. In March 2004 NHAC agreed a policy to restrict the number of dispensations used, and to introduce a realistic price. The changes were required to improve the management of the network, reduce fraud and to bring the charges in line with neighbouring authorities, who charge significantly more. However due to failures with the IT system those changes were never introduced.
14. To take forward the March 2004 changes would require considerable investment in IT systems (~£50,000) and a significant amount of staff time to progress it. With current resources this is not considered feasible. Instead it is suggested that the cost of the dispensations should be increased to reflect the charges in neighbouring authorities. It is also suggested that the number of dispensations that can be bought at a time is decreased to reduce the chance of misuse of the scheme. One final change suggested is that the dispensations can only be used on commercial vehicles and cars that are liveried with a company logo on the bodywork, and not on private cars.
15. The following charges are recommended
 - Daily Voucher - £5
 - Weekly Voucher (5 tickets) - £20 (Maximum 4 x 5 tickets issued at any one time)
16. For vehicles that need to be parked in CPZs on a regular basis it is suggested that the definition of a statutory permit Q permit be widened to allow anyone with a legitimate business reason for being in a CPZ to purchase one. This would be beneficial to those who make short visits to CPZs or who move their vehicle frequently such as window cleaners or meter readers, to whom the £5 charge per location would be too onerous. For organisations without a statutory function, any application will have to be accompanied with a statement as to why other parking facilities in the area cannot be used, and each application must be approved by the Head of Transportation. To overcome potential abuse problems there will be a general presumption that such permits are not valid in the City Centre CPZ.
17. Currently no charge is made if a pay and display bay is occupied by a skip, scaffolding or hoarding. It is suggested that consideration be given to levy a fee for the occupation of such bays to compensate for the loss of revenue.
18. It is difficult to predict what the likely effect on income for parking dispensations these changes would have as the proposed changes, while substantial are likely to decrease the number of dispensations issued. Any reduction could result in an increase in the use of the on street pay and display bays and of city centre car parks.

Permit Parking Bays

Charges by Vehicle Length

19. In May 2008 residential parking permits were changed so that residents paid more for permits for longer vehicles. This was part of the Civitas initiative to encourage people to drive smaller cleaner cars. The new permits were phased in, being issued when the old permits expired and all permit holders now have the new style.
20. There are 8374 current residential permits. Of these 36% are for short vehicles, 34% are for medium vehicles and 14% are for long vehicles. The remaining 16% of vehicles have free permits and for these the vehicle length is not recorded. There are 17 permits issued for alternative fuel vehicles (0.2% of the total).
21. It is too early to tell whether charging by vehicle length has had any impact on peoples choice of vehicle; this was always a long term project and it will be many years before it can be properly evaluated.

Cost of Residential Permits

22. Prior to the vehicle length scheme being introduced there had been no increase in permit costs since CPZs were first introduced in the mid 90's. For this reason the costs of the permits were set so that for short vehicles (under 3.95m) there was no increase in costs, for medium vehicles (3.95m-4.45m) the cost went up by the equivalent of inflation between 1994 and 2007, and for long vehicles the cost went up by double that inflation figure. The stated aim at the time of introducing the variable prices was that the differentials between the categories should increase on a regular basis.
23. The permit charges were set in May 2007, since then the retail price index (RPI) has risen 8.4%. It is suggested that the same principle is applied as when the original charges were set; no increase for short vehicles, RPI increase for medium vehicles (8.4%) and double RPI for long vehicles (16.8%)

Cost of Visitor Permits

24. Visitor permits are currently charged at the same rate as for a medium vehicle. Some residents have commented that this is not fair as the permit can be used on a long vehicle. At this stage it is not proposed to change this. It is suggested that the cost of visitor permits be increased in line with the medium permit price, e.g. by 8.4%.
25. Ideally a review of visitor permits is needed, and an alternate method of accommodating visitor parking devised, as the current system can be subject to abuse, with residents selling on their permits, or allowing friends and relatives to use them for commuter parking. However at the current time the resources are not available to undertake this.

Cost of Other Permits

26. Currently we offer business permits in for businesses with premises in a CPZ and Q permits for those people who need to regular make visit s to the CPZ. There are 2 types of Q permits; statutory Q for organisations with a duty to enter premises in the CPZ (e.g. gas fitters, environmental health officers etc) and community Q for individuals who have a caring role (doctors, midwives etc). Business and Statutory Q are charged at £100 a year and community Q at the medium vehicle rate.
27. It is suggested that both business permits and Q permits are increased in line with RPI.
28. The table attached as appendix 1 sets out the revised prices for all permits. It is anticipated that the suggested increases in permit prices would result in an increased income of approximately £33k, assuming no reduction in the number of permits issued.

Free Permit Entitlement

29. At present, any resident in a CPZ who is over 60 or in receipt of means tested benefit is entitled to a free permit, either for their own car or a visitor's permit. Comparing Norwich with other local authorities shows that this is considerably more generous than other authorities. Of those we have benchmarked our CPE scheme with only Chelmsford offers free permits on the grounds of age (for the over 65's), while Gt Yarmouth offers free permits to Blue Badge holders, and Cambridge allows Blue badge holders to park without a permit.
30. Currently there are around 5400 free permits in circulation. It is estimated that if all these permits were charged at full rate around an extra £118k would be generated at current prices. (£128k if the price increases suggested above are agreed).
31. There are several possible ways of revising the free permit scheme including;
- Remove all free permits
 - Remove the entitlement from certain groups
 - Remove the entitlement to free residential permits
 - Charge a £5 admin fee for each permit
 - Charge half price for the permit
32. If members are minded to look further at free permits it is suggested that a Diversity Impact Assessment is carried out and a full report presented to a future NHAC meeting. While there are no legal changes required in terms of traffic orders such a proposal is likely to generate considerable debate.

Appendix 1

Current and Proposed Permit Prices

Permit Type	Duration (Months)	Cost per Permit	Revised Cost of Permit
Short	6	£11.00	£11.00
	12	£16.00	£16.00
	18	£20.00	£20.00
Medium	6	£14.00	£15.20
	12	£22.00	£23.90
	18	£30.00	£32.50
Long	6	£18.00	£21.00
	12	£30.00	£35.00
	18	£40.00	£46.70
Visitor	6	£14.00	£15.20
	12	£22.00	£23.90
	18	£30.00	£32.50
Business	6	£53.00	£57.50
	12	£100.00	£108.40
Community Caring Q	6	£14.00	£15.20
	12	£22.00	£23.90
Statutory Q	6	£53.00	£57.50
	12	£100.00	£108.40