



**Wyre Resident Parking Permit Scheme
Task Group**

Final Report

Chairman:

Councillor Lady Dulcie Atkins

Task Group Members:

Councillor Andrew Cropper
Councillor Colette Fairbanks
Councillor Phil Orme
Councillor Cheryl Raynor
Councillor Mary Stirzaker

**Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Chairman: Councillor John Ibison**

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Introduction

Wyre's Resident Parking Permit Scheme has been in operation since 2002, without a full review.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has intended reviewing the scheme for some time, and a task group was commissioned at the meeting held on 3 June 2019.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was aware from the outset that other discussions regarding the Scheme were on-going at officer and Portfolio Holder level, but it remained the role of the committee and any task group commissioned, to scrutinise the proposals and to review and comment on any decisions that were made.

Aims of review

The aims of the review, as specified in the scoping document (see Appendix A), were as follows:

- To review the current scheme for Resident Parking Permits
- To identify options for changing the scheme
- To evaluate options for change
- To make recommendation to the Cabinet

The review process

The task group held its first meeting with the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder and the Head of Engineering Services. The group subsequently interviewed the Head of Finance (Clare James) and Mel Close, the Chief Executive of Disability-Equality North West.

Town and Parish Councils were consulted about the Scheme, and the Visit Cleveleys website (which broadly covers Cleveleys and Thornton) agreed to host the same consultation. Responses were also received from Poulton residents who had been made aware of the consultation through their own community forum.

Evidence about the likely implications for Blue Badge holders was provided by the Chief Executive of Disability-Equality North West.

The task group investigated the occurrence of similar resident parking permit schemes in other local authorities.

Summary of evidence provided by Councillor Roger Berry (Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder) and Carl Green (Head of Engineering Services)

The Resident Parking Permit Scheme (RPPS) has been in operation since 2002, all residents initially being given free parking in the borough. There is uncertainty about how many resident permits are in circulation as they are purchased for the lifetime of a vehicle, initially at a cost of £25. Replacements or renewals for new vehicles cost £10 to existing members of the scheme. Over the past five years an average of 1,850 per year have been issued [this figure was corrected subsequently to 1,290 by the Head of Finance]. The number of permits in Poulton is reducing as a result of the increase in free parking availability. The take-up in Fleetwood is historically small as the town has a substantial amount of free parking.

There are very few comparable schemes in the country, and they are generally more expensive with permits renewed annually, reflecting the cost of such schemes.

The scheme allows two hours of free parking a day. A clock needs to be set and the permit cannot be transferred from one car park to another on the same day. The scheme is very popular with residents, but it needs to be made easier to manage. (A day ticket, which is transferrable, can be bought for £3.50).

The Cabinet has taken a lead and has devised a new scheme that will come into operation in April 2020. Three criteria have to be taken into consideration:

- (i) Council tax-payers and the need for the council to continue to fund and deliver services
- (ii) the scheme must be attractive to people who use the car parks as informed by the recent car park survey in 2017/18, and
- (iii) the scheme should attract people into Wyre's town centres

The RPPS will be retained in a new format, with effect from April 2020. The key aspects of the new scheme are:

- (a) A charge of £30 (£25 + VAT) will be made for a permit lasting two years, for use in long stay car parks.
- (b) The entitlement to free parking will be extended from two to three hours.
- (c) Residents who bought or renewed a permit within two years of April 2020 will be given a new permit free of charge for two years, provided they request one by 31 March

The scheme means that residents who make a minimum of fifteen three-hour visits will effectively get their money back.

Task group members asked a number of questions, to which the following responses were given:

- The council will sell more of the new permits as they have to be replaced every two years, but income will be lost through those who would otherwise pay. It is estimated that overall the council will break even;

- Lancashire County Council's plans for on-street parking are not known currently;
- There is no additional provision planned for visitors, other than the £3.50 day ticket;
- Blue badge holders will have to pay for parking under the proposed new scheme.

It was underlined that this is a policy that has been agreed and will be implemented in April 2020. It was suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee might like to consider reviewing the effect of its implementation once it had been in operation for twelve months.

The task group took the view that, although the policy was already agreed to be implemented, the role of scrutiny is such that it remains valid to ask questions and to make recommendations about possible improvements.

Summary of evidence provided by Clare James, Head of Finance

The Head of Finance, Clare James, submitted a report and presented it to the Task Group.

The report included information about the 'off street car parking account summary 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19, a high level summary that provides an overall context for off street car parking.

The report also included an extract showing the year-on-year outturn on relevant metered parking income, alongside the current year forecast:

| <u>Detail Code</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Actual 2016/17</u> £ | <u>Actual 2017/18</u> £ | <u>Actual 2018/19</u> £ | <u>Upd. Orig. Est 2019/20</u> £ |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 93429 | Season Tickets | -5,290.83 | -4,798.93 | -7,192.89 | -4,130 |
| 93432 | Residents Parking Permits | -10,638.17 | -8,680.57 | -10,005.22 | -8,500 |
| 93430 | Parking Fees (includes Ringo) | 518,001.24 | 502,766.29 | 488,875.40 | 492,200 * |
| | | 518,001.24 | 502,766.29 | 488,875.40 | 492,200 |
| | | 533,930.24 | 516,245.79 | 506,073.51 | 504,830 |
| | Reduction year-on-year | | 17,684.45 | 10,172.28 | |

* Reflects a £20,000 reduction on latest Management Board update

The above shows an overall decline in car parking income which, Clare James indicated, is a cause for concern if it continues.

Residents Parking Permits (RPP)

Currently RPPs can be purchased for £20.83 (ex VAT) or renewed for £8.33 (ex VAT). The split of new vs renewed RPPs is 18% new/82% renewed based on 2018/19 data. Printing of RPPs costs £1,212 for 2,000 or 61p per permit.

Administration costs associated with the current scheme have not been quantified but it is reasonable to assume that a more frequent renewal process will lead to increased back office costs although more automated processes may mitigate the impact over time.

As of August 2019 there were 6,448 permits in circulation of 5yrs or less (an average of 1,290 issued per annum).

From a purely income generating point of view and based on the assumptions modelled, ceasing the RPP scheme would be the most economically advantageous option for the council.

Based on every permit holder parking once a week, every week, for up to one hour, this represents a loss of income of £279,392 each year (ex VAT). If only 50% use their permit on the same basis, the loss of pay and display income is £139,696. If only 10% use their permit on the above basis, the loss of income is £27,939. In all the above examples, the loss of income on pay and display fees would be partially offset by income from the sale of RPPs (current annual income budget £8,500).

Based on the most recent car parking survey there is some evidence that those who responded use their RPP at least twice a week. However, a sufficiently large and varied sample was not obtained in order to be able to draw definite conclusions hence the more modest assumption basis of one use per week.

At the task group meeting Clare James confirmed that income from the pay-and-display car parks has been decreasing over the past three years. The new fees and charges have been designed to address this reduction, but quarter one results indicate that the reduction is continuing. All car parks apart from two show a reduction. There is hope that the opening of a new Iceland store in Cleveleys will provide some bounce-back, but that is by no means assured. It is unknown whether reduced income from pay-and-display is a national trend.

The figure provided previously to the Task Group for the number of permits being purchased or renewed annually (1,850) is out of date. The current figure is approximately 900 based on 2017/18 and 2018/19. The scheme is not as popular as it once was.

Clare James confirmed a point made in her report to the task group that, for purely financial reasons, the best option would be to scrap the scheme, although it was acknowledged that this would not be popular with residents. The next best solution would be along the lines of the scheme being proposed by the Cabinet, with the purchase of a time-limited permit, which would last for two years for £25 + VAT.

In response to a question, Clare James confirmed that NSL carry out the enforcement on behalf of the council. The Fixed Penalty Notices issued cover the cost of the contract with NSL. A small surplus or deficit is made each year by the Council but the aim is to cover the costs.

Task group members discussed the proposal that people with disabilities are to be charged to park under the new arrangements. The view was expressed that disabled people would feel that they are being charged twice – once for the Blue Badge and once to park. Clare James confirmed that increasing the number of disabled spaces is being explored, so not charging for those spaces would be likely to result in a loss of income. Councillors agreed that they would like to obtain evidence from an organisation that represents disabled people.

Summary of evidence provided by Mel Close, Chief Executive, Disability-Equality North West

Mel Close advised the task group that, in her opinion, no charge should be made for a Blue Badge designated space under any parking scheme. A Blue Badge entitles the holder to park on double yellow lines for up to three hours so by charging for the designated space the likelihood is that more and more people will park on double yellow lines. There is no incentive for a Blue Badge holder to buy a permit as they can park for free elsewhere.

Disabled people will be disadvantaged if they have to pay as they will take longer to do what they have to do simply because of an impairment. There will also be an issue for visitors to the area who have a Blue Badge if the expectation is that they had to pay even when parked in a designated bay.

The widening of the criteria for qualifying for a Blue Badge will mean that more people will be included in the scheme. It is essential to ensure that any spaces specifically designated for Blue Badge holders are only used by people with mobility issues. This is because of the proximity to shops, for example, and the fact that they are wider spaces in order to cope adequately with a user's disability.

Mel Close proposed that Blue Badge holders should be able to park in any space in a car park without charge. An increase in the number of people with a Blue Badge does not require any increase in the number of wider, designated bays, as the increase in the number of Blue Badge holders is not because of an increase in the number of people with mobility issues.

The Council needs to be ready to accommodate Blue Badge holders who do not have a mobility problem and to try to ensure that those people who do struggle with mobility are prioritised in terms of access to the wider parking spaces. Appropriate and clear signage would be required, but this would be seen very much as a forward-thinking initiative.

Consultation

The task group carried out a short consultation with Town and Parish Councils and Wyre residents in order to obtain a broad view about opinions on the Resident Parking Permit Scheme and the proposals to charge Blue Badge holders to park. The consultation questions are attached at Appendix B.

Town and Parish Councils

Responses were received from the following Town and Parish Councils:

- Barnacre-with-Bonds
- Cabus
- Catterall
- Claughton- on-Brock
- Garstang
- Inskip
- Pilling
- Preesall

The main points from these responses were as follows:

- It is a good scheme (6 out of 8)
- Publicise the scheme more (3 out of 8)
- Increase time period to 3 hours (2 out of 8)
- Provide a free permit to all residents (4 out of 8)
- Scrap the scheme if less than 25% residents use it
- Enable online purchases to be made
- Should Blue Badge Holders be brought within the Scheme? Yes 3, No 3

It was recognised that, because the consultation period spanned the Christmas and New Year period, it might not have been possible for some Parish Councils to co-ordinate a response when they would like to have done so, give more favourable timescales.

Thornton and Cleveleys residents

The Visit Cleveleys website hosted the consultation questions, which elicited 37 responses from Thornton and Cleveleys residents. The main points from the responses were as follows:

- Overwhelmingly supportive of the scheme.
- A general view that “the price is fair”, clearly from a resident perspective but not the Council’s.
- Most suggestions are in line with increasing the benefits to residents – e.g. longer stay for same price. 8 (22%) of the 37 website respondents mentioned this specifically.
- York scheme mentioned positively four times

- 5 respondents commented on the fact that either they were not aware of the scheme or that it was not well publicised.
- 16 of the 37 (43%) mentioned the Blue Badges specifically. 13 of the 16 (81%) think that Blue Badge Holders should not be brought within the Scheme and should be able to continue to park free in designated spaces.

Poulton-le-Fylde residents

A further 9 responses were received from Poulton residents, who had accessed the consultation via their local forum. The main points from the responses were as follows:

- Very positive about the value of the scheme as it is
- An increase in price might cause more on-street parking
- No comments made specifically about implications for Blue Badge holders

Conclusions and recommendations

The task group is aware that the decision has already been taken to revise the Resident Parking Permit Scheme with effect from April 2020. Members took the view that it was still appropriate for the proposals to be scrutinized and comments made about the possible impact of the changes, some of which will be significant, particularly for people with disabilities. One member of the task group is a Blue Badge holder.

The task group agreed with the view put forward by the portfolio holder, that the scheme should take three criteria into consideration:

- (i) Council tax-payers and the need for the council to continue to fund and deliver services
- (ii) the scheme must be attractive to people who use the car parks as informed by the recent car park survey in 2017/18, and
- (iii) the scheme should attract people into Wyre's town centres

The task group took the view that there were three other specific points regarding the proposed new scheme which, if accepted, would help deliver the three criteria listed above in a balanced way.

First, it should be possible for a resident to use a permit in more than one car park on the same day, enabling a resident, for example to visit the Poulton market in the morning and then shops in Cleveleys later in the day. The current proposal only permits the use of the permit in one car park on any particular day.

Second, if a resident changes their vehicle within six months of purchasing a new permit, it should be possible to obtain a replacement at a reduced cost, covering the administration involved. A fee of £10 was thought to be appropriate.

Third, it should be possible to purchase a second permit for a second car at the same address at a reduced cost. A fee of £20 was thought to be appropriate.

The evidence provided to the task group made it clear that, in purely financial terms, the Resident Parking Permit Scheme was run at a cost to the council. However, there were other more significant factors that needed to be taken into account, including the very clear benefits of the scheme to Wyre residents, as the scheme continued to encourage and facilitate people visiting and spending time in town centres rather than relying on an 'out of town' shopping and entertainment provision.

The task group takes note of the expert evidence provided by the Chief Executive of Disability-Equality North West in relation to the implications of parking policies for disabled people.

The group concluded that it was unreasonable to charge Blue Badge holders, partly because they had already had to pay for their badge. It was also unnecessary to increase the number of designated spaces for Blue Badge holders, even though it was likely that the number of people who are entitled to have a Blue Badge would increase with a broadening of the qualifying criteria; a Blue Badge holder should be entitled to

park in any bay, free of charge, although the designated bays, which were bigger, should be reserved for people who have mobility issues. Additional clear signage would be needed to ensure that people knew that this was the expectation.

It was also relevant that the likely increase in the number of Blue Badge holders would lead to a consequent loss of income from parking charges if charges were not applied to all car park users.

The task group concluded that the following recommendations be made to the Cabinet:

RECOMMENDATION ONE

That the proposals for changes to the Resident Parking Permit Scheme be supported, with the exception of the proposals for introducing charges for Blue Badge holders (see Recommendation Two).

The proposals supported by the task group include the following:

- a. A charge of £30 (£25 + VAT) will be made for a permit lasting two years, for use in long stay car parks.**
- b. The entitlement to free parking will be extended from two to three hours.**
- c. Residents who bought or renewed a permit within two years of April 2020 will be given a new permit free of charge for two years (provided they request one by 31 March 2021).**

RECOMMENDATION TWO

That no parking charges be made for Blue Badge holders.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

That no additional designated parking bays be set aside for Blue Badge holders.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

That all parking bays, other than designated parking bays, be available for use by all users, with or without a Blue Badge.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

That appropriate signage be put in place to make it clear that the designated bays are for people with mobility issues and that other Blue Badge holders, who do not have mobility issues, can park free of charge in any other bay.

RECOMMENDATION SIX

That permits be valid for use in more than one car park on the same day.

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN

That if a resident changes their vehicle within six months of purchasing a permit, a replacement could be available to purchase at a reduced cost (a fee of £10 was thought to be appropriate).

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT

That a permit for a second car registered at the same address could be made available for purchase at a reduced cost (a fee of £20 was thought to be appropriate).

RECOMMENDATION NINE

That the revised Resident Parking Permit Scheme be publicised widely throughout the borough so that all residents are aware of it and have the opportunity to take part in it.

RECOMMENDATION TEN

That the implementation of the recommendations agreed by the Cabinet be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee after twelve months.

RECOMMENDATION ELEVEN

That the impact of the changes to the Resident Parking Permit Scheme, including the impact of any changes made regarding Blue Badge holders, be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee two years after the revised scheme has come into operation.

Councillors' attendances

There were four meetings of the task group.

| Name | Meetings attended (maximum 4) |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Councillor Lady Atkins | 3 |
| Councillor Cropper | 3 |
| Councillor Fairbanks | 3 |
| Councillor Orme | 3 |
| Councillor Raynor | 3 |
| Councillor Stirzaker | 3 |

List of Appendices

Appendix A - Resident Parking Permit Scheme Task Group – Scoping Document – FINAL

Appendix B - Resident Car Parking Permit Scheme - Consultation

**Resident Parking Permit Scheme Task Group
Scoping Document - FINAL**

| | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Review Topic | Resident Parking Permit Scheme | |
| Chairman | Councillors Lady Dulcie Atkins | |
| Group Membership | Councillors Andrew Cropper, Colette Fairbanks, Phil Orme (Vice Chairman), Cheryl Raynor and Mary Stirzaker | |
| Officer Support | Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer Emma Keany, Governance Trainee | |
| Purpose of the Review | To review the current Resident Parking Permit Scheme and make recommendations. | |
| Role of Overview and Scrutiny in this Review (mark all that apply) | Holding Executive to account – decisions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Existing budget and policy framework | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Contribution to policy development | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | Holding Executive to account – performance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Community champion | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | Statutory duties / compliance with codes of practice | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Aims of Review | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To review the current scheme for Resident Parking Permits ○ To identify options for changing the scheme ○ To evaluate options for change ○ To make recommendation to the Cabinet | |
| Methodology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consideration of documents, reports and performance statistics ○ Reviewing costs of current scheme ○ Interviewing witnesses at task group meetings ○ Make comparisons with other similar schemes | |
| Scope of Review | The review will focus on the Resident Parking Permit Scheme and not on wider car park charging policy. | |
| Potential Witnesses | Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder Service Director People and Places Head of Finance Head of Engineering Services Local residents | |

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| | |
| Documents to be considered | |
| Risks | |
| Level of Publicity | Potentially high |
| Indicators of a Successful Review | A revised scheme agreed. |
| Intended Outcomes | A revised scheme that provides a sustainable benefit to local residents and supports the economy whilst improving the return from our assets |
| Approximate Timeframe | 3 months |
| Projected Start Date | 16 September 2019 |

Resident Car Parking Permit Scheme - Consultation

You will be aware that Wyre residents can currently purchase a permit for use in the borough's car parks. It costs £25 and lasts the lifetime of the vehicle. Replacements for lost or replacement permits cost £10.

It is anticipated that there will be some changes to the scheme from April 2020, in the light of which the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has set up a Task Group to review the Scheme, looking at its costs and benefits, in particular.

The Task Group has met with a number of witnesses who have provided evidence to the review and councillors wanted to ensure that the views of local communities were also part of their consideration.

Your responses to these broad questions would be very helpful to the Task Group's deliberations:

1. What are your views about the Resident Parking Permit Scheme? Please remember that the permit is currently purchased by a one-off fee which lasts for the lifetime of a vehicle.
2. Is the Scheme widely used?
3. Are there any ways in which the Scheme might be improved or brought more up to date?
4. What would be your views if people with Blue Badges were brought within the scheme, meaning that Blue Badge-holders would have to pay for car parking (which they do not have to currently if parked in a marked bay) even though an increased number of disabled spaces would be made available?
5. Do you have any other comments about the Resident Parking Permit Scheme?

December 2019