

RESIDENTS PARKING INFORMAL MEMBER/OFFICER GROUP

7 December 2005

BACKGROUND AND PRINCIPLES OF THE PERMIT SCHEME

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Contact Officer: Alan Jowsey Tel No: 01962 848 583

RECENT REFERENCES:

Minutes of Residents Parking Informal Working Group, 26 October 2005

CAB 1044 – Proposed Variation of Fees for On-Street Parking Permits – 19 May 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

As requested at the first meeting of the Working Group, this report sets out the background, principles, history and justification of the residents parking permit scheme.

This report was initially considered by the Working Group on 22 November 2005. The only changes are in paragraph 3.1 relating to the history of the scheme and in paragraph 4.2 relating to the usage of limited stay parking bays.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That the contents of this report be noted.
- 2 That there should be no changes to the general principles of the permit scheme.

DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Working Group on 26 October 2005, the Group requested a paper setting out the background, principles, history and justification of the residents parking permit scheme. The following information summarises some facts that are known from City Council files and personal recollections of staff. It does not set out to be a definitive history of all the considerations and decisions relating to the permit scheme, but it provides background information on the general issues under consideration.
- 1.2 A plan showing the area of the residents permit scheme and zones within the scheme is attached as Appendix 1.

2 Background and History

- 2.1 The first residents permit scheme was set up by the City Council in the Hyde area of Winchester in 1970. This remained a very small scheme until some additional areas were added during the early 1990s. Significant expansion of the residents permit schemes was restricted by enforcement limitations at that time. On-street yellow lines were enforced by the police and their traffic wardens service with the income from fines going direct to central government, while the residents permit bays were enforced by City Council parking attendants.
- 2.2 In Summer 1996, there was a major expansion of the residents permit area in Winchester to its current size. This was possible as a result of Winchester City Council becoming the first local authority outside London to take on decriminalised parking enforcement. This change enabled the City Council to take over the enforcement of all on-street waiting restrictions under a system where the income from penalty charges was retained by the City Council and used to offset the costs of carrying out on-street parking enforcement.
- 2.3 As part of the Summer 1996 expansion, a new policy was introduced that the number of permits available to any household was reduced by the number of off-road parking spaces available within the curtilage of that property. This policy was unpopular with many residents and was difficult for the Parking Office to regulate, so it was withdrawn after about 12 months.

3 Parking Charges

- 3.1 A residents permit charge was first introduced in 1970. The earliest residents parking Order held on traffic management files came into operation on 1 September 1984, and at that time the charge for a residents permit was £32 per annum. The Order applied to Hyde Abbey Road, Culver Road, King Alfred Terrace and Lawn Street. However the permit price was reduced to £25 per annum on 1 April 1987, and then was reduced over the period between 1987 and 2002 to £10 per annum.
- 3.2 In January 2003, permit prices were increased from £10, and at the same time a two tier pricing structure was introduced. The first two permits for any household were increased in price to £15. Within outer zones only, up to two further permits can be issued and these were increased in price to £30.

- 3.3 The latest increase in permit prices was implemented in July 2005. A two tier pricing structure was retained but only the first permit for any household was priced at £20. The second, third and fourth permits for any household were increased to £50. At the same time a daily scratchcard option was introduced so that any permit holder could purchase up to 20 daily scratchcards per annum at a price of £10 per book of 10 scratchcards. At the end of October 2005, about 420 households had purchased daily scratchcards, and it appears that many households are purchasing these daily scratchcards as an alternative to purchasing additional annual visitor permits.
- 3.4 At its meeting on 15 December 2004, Cabinet also agreed that in future the permit scheme should be cost-neutral. This was a result of complaints from some residents that decisions on permit charge increases were not being considered objectively. A cost-neutral approach was considered appropriate because this is a service that only benefits a minority of residents in the Council's area and it is detrimental to those residents who live outside the town area and wish to park in Winchester. Compared to other transport items, it was considered that this is not an essential service that should be subsidised as for example Dial-A-Ride and Shopmobility are, but it also not a service that should generate income for the City Council as for example off-street car parking does. A cost-neutral target when setting permit charges was therefore considered to be reasonable.

4 Principles and Justification

- 4.1 The principles of the permit scheme are not appreciated by many residents, particularly those who have moved into the area after a scheme was introduced. The permit schemes have been introduced to give priority to residents for on-street spaces in the vicinity of their property. This is achieved by prohibiting parking by those who are not residents in a particular street, and this can be those working within the town centre, those shopping in the town centre, employees and visitors at major sites outside the town centre such as the Hospital, or students at the University of Winchester or Peter Symonds College.
- 4.2 The problems do vary according to location, and as a result the restrictions imposed also vary. In the outer zones, there are some roads where parking is allowed for up to 2 or 4 hours without a permit, and this is useful for visitors to properties in those areas. However this is not appropriate in some inner zones where 2 hour parking would be dominated by shoppers to the detriment of residents who need to park on-street. Similarly some roads in the inner zones have restrictions to 10pm instead of the standard 6pm because there are restaurants and entertainment venues that attract evening customers who would otherwise utilise the available on-street parking spaces. It has been suggested that in some areas, there is usage of free limited stay on-street parking by shoppers but where this is significant, the restrictions can be varied either to prohibit all limited stay parking or to control it by on-street pay and display machines.
- 4.3 In each zone the restrictions are set to maximise the benefits to residents. However in some zones there are many more permit holders than there are spaces available. The size of zones does vary considerably depending on the demands of residents when the zones were first established. If residents in a particular road consider they have enough spaces for residents in that road but it is possible that residents from another road will overflow into "their" road, then the residents will want a small zone. However those residents in a road where there are insufficient spaces will want larger zones to give flexibility when they are unable to find a space in their own road.

- 4.4 There has been some confusion regarding the difference between resident and annual visitor permits. Resident permits are issued for a specified car registration number and cannot be used for other vehicles. Annual visitor permits are not restricted to a specific vehicle and some residents do use a visitor permit on their own vehicle. This can be because they drive a variety of vehicles from a work pool for example, or it may be because they want to use the permit for visitors vehicles when their own vehicle is not being parked on-street. There have been concerns that annual visitor permits are vulnerable to abuse by being sold or given to those who are not residents or genuine visitors to a property, but the flexibility of annual visitor permits is useful to many residents.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

5 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 5.1 Parking policies can encourage more sustainable approaches to transport, and in so doing improve air quality in central Winchester.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 As set out in Reports 3 and 4 to the Residents Parking Group.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

File of Traffic Management Orders.

APPENDICES:

1. Drawing No. 810402 – Residents Parking Zones