

**INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
14 AUGUST 2018**

**PART I - DELEGATED**

**PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO PARKING OPTIONS  
FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES (DCES)**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 This report explores the options and recommends a proposal to replace the outdated business permit criteria, while creating new parking opportunities for the staff of local businesses, in Rickmansworth and Chorleywood.
- 1.2 The report addresses both the review of business permits that was required by the Policy and Resources Committee and the issues identified with the recent short-stay charging scheme (which are set out in detail in the background paper to the Policy and Resources committee of the 17 October 2017, attached as Appendix A).
- 1.3 That background paper identified solutions to the negative impacts on specific user groups caused by the apparent inappropriate use of short-stay car parks; the relevant solutions were options D and E on pages 3 and 4 of that paper (which suggest enhancing the number of parking spaces in some car long-stay car parks; or converting the business permit bays to promote more flexible use including by the user group identified as 'local workers').
- 1.4 Evidence indicates that there is unserved demand for local worker parking which has probably affected the issue of business permits. As the District Council strongly wishes to support local businesses and particularly retail uses on the High Street, the options include promoting parking at a reduced rate for businesses at addresses within the surrounding parking Zones, or in car parks.

**2 Details**

- 2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee of the 23 January 2017 requested: That a review of business permit criteria be undertaken, and an investigation of demand for the associated costs of increased numbers of business permits, e.g. at the Rose Garden car park Rickmansworth, together with other types of permit types such as commuter season tickets in Rickmansworth.
- 2.2 This request followed the recommendations of the specialist parking consultant employed for the former Working Party to investigate ways to improve parking revenue to address the budget shortfall, in 2016/17. The recommendations of that investigation relevant to this report included a review of business permit criteria in Rickmansworth (with a view to refusing some permit applications where local workers were commuting in their own vehicle, so should have been paying the full price for a season ticket rather than the reduced rate for a business permit to which they were not entitled).
- 2.3 One specific recommendation was the introduction of new Business Permit bays to the Rose Garden car park, which is currently a short-stay car park. This recommendation was not progressed and is not considered by this report, as this car park was recently agreed as one of the continuing short-stay car parks to provide short-stay parking in Rickmansworth. The Rose Garden was identified by the consultant because the surveys showed that it had significant daytime capacity. However, this may have been affected by public perception of this car park as one attached to the Council offices rather than a general public car park.

- 2.4 This report also does not consider the use of the 'ST' and 'TX' permits, which are not 'Business permits' in the sense that the request at section 2.1 refers to.
- 2.5 It is essential that the Committee is aware that 'Business permits' are not intended (under the current traffic regulation order) to be used by commuting employees of local businesses (hereon 'local workers'), but by businesses with local addresses to park their own vehicles (for example, a florist's van). Local workers have options to pay for all-day parking in the long-stay car parks managed by the District Council or in the private long-stay car parks; or to seek free parking on uncontrolled nearby streets or other parking areas.

Current situation: -provision and take-up

- 2.6 This report relates to an investigation into the above request set out at section 2.1, looking at the general provision of business permits in Rickmansworth.
- 2.7 There are 37 'Business Permit' bays (restricted to holders of business permits) in Chorleywood, in the Ferry car park. There are 32 dedicated business parking bays in Rickmansworth, in the Talbot Road car park and in Bury Lane car park. There are 10 additional bays available in Talbot Road South car park, which are 'share-use' also available to vehicles displaying resident permits and pay-and-display.
- 2.8 Business permits are charged at £540 for one year (or £240 in Chorleywood). In December 2017 there were 29 valid business permits for Chorleywood and 20 for Rickmansworth.
- 2.9 However, it is difficult to estimate precise permit take up as these are issued all year round, with some variants available in six-monthly issues; so the number at any one time varies considerably.
- 2.10 For example, more detailed data shows that 18 six-monthly permits were issued in Chorleywood in the first half of 2017/18 and 22 in the second half; with 8 annual permits over the whole year (a total of 26 and 30 permits in Chorleywood for the first half and second half of 2017/18 respectively). There is also a waiting list for business permits. A total of 20 were issued in Rickmansworth in 2017/18.
- 2.11 These figures indicate that the number of business permit bays actually exceeds the number of permits issued, which shows that more permits could be issued. This suggests that there is less demand for the current bays for business vehicles.

Chorleywood

- 2.12 There is no strong rationale to change the availability of business permits in Chorleywood as spare capacity has been identified in the relevant parking location, the Ferry Car Park. However, it is recommended that the criteria for these permits are amended, to make these permits available to local workers as well as to local businesses. It is also the case that permits are currently issued without limitation as to which vehicle they permit.
- 2.13 This practice is deprecated because the Local Authority would not have any control over abuse of such permits, as the permitted vehicle cannot be associated with a permitted address set out in the traffic order. It is alleged that abuse of this kind already occurs. It is therefore also recommended that such permits are tied to a specific vehicle. Demand demonstrated from a survey to all local businesses indicate that investigations should be carried out into provision of similar local worker permits to those promoted in Rickmansworth, on similar terms. Some initial

investigation of permit take-up in residential roads near the main centre demonstrates that there is significant unused on-street capacity that could be used in the same way as that suggested below in Option C for Rickmansworth.

### Rickmansworth

- 2.14 The arrangement in Rickmansworth is unusual as it means that other permit holders cannot use business permit spaces even when they are available, so empty bays are blocked. This does not cause a problem while there is low demand for parking.
- 2.15 However, typical Controlled Parking Zones (which are introduced where there are existing conflicts from parking demand) promote flexibility by allowing permits to be available to people at any local address, whether resident or business, so as to promote local needs over the parking needs of long-distance commuters who are effectively using uncontrolled streets as a free car park.
- 2.16 As a result, permit bays tend to be generic and are typically available to a range of permit types. The current practice in Rickmansworth also limits the number of business permits that can be issued to a number close to the number of bays available, which appears to have been considered necessary because of the small number of bays in total.

### Criteria

- 2.17 Business permits are intended (under the current traffic regulation order) to be used by businesses with local addresses to park their own vehicles. Although the application form requires this, actual use is not monitored and it is alleged that some permits are used by local workers who commute, to park their own vehicles.
- 2.18 The current system is not working to support a key need expressed by local businesses, whose need appears to be for additional local worker parking. A survey carried out in July 2018 of all businesses with a local address in Rickmansworth and Chorleywood demonstrates that there is significant demand for parking for local workers from local businesses.
- 2.19 This survey data is supported by direct evidence - the waiting list for business permits; the recent short-stay charging scheme which uncovered a large number of businesses claiming that their staff rely on parking in short-stay car parks, citing two reasons, an alleged shortage of long stay capacity and the cost of long-stay parking (£4 per day, which would be around £1,080 per year).
- 2.20 There are indirect effects of this system: alleged local worker parking on nearby residential streets; alleged abuse of resident visitor permits.

### Analysis

- 2.21 This evidence indicates that there is unserved demand for local worker parking. A reduced rate is considered appropriate, however, as the District Council strongly wishes to support local businesses and particularly retail uses on the High Street.
- 2.22 These businesses have addresses within the surrounding parking Zones, but are not eligible to park in those Zones, so they have no opportunity currently to park on-street in the town centre, even where bays are available. Local workers are limited to parking in long-stay car parks which are limited in scope to providing around 140 bays for the town, which are available to any long-stay users (such as rail commuters) as are the private car parks.

- 2.23 This situation has been masked, it appears, from evidence set out in section 2.16 above, by the inappropriate use of the short-stay free car parks. As there is a corresponding oversupply of true business needs, this small number of 32 dedicated bays for which a lesser number of permits have been issued (and which survey data shown in Appendix B indicates are often not at capacity) should be considered as part of the wider picture.

### **3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations**

#### Options

- 3.1 Three strategic options have been identified and the implications listed below.
- 3.2 Option A - Continue with current practice, providing dedicated business permit bays only to businesses for use by their owned vehicles (not local workers).
- 3.3 This option does not offer dedicated provision for workers at local business addresses. Local workers must use either long stay car parks, paying the full rate (estimated at £1,080 each year based on working days). This would especially affect low-margin retail businesses and non-profit organisations whose ability to recruit may suffer.
- 3.4 The supply of long-stay capacity is finite and is anecdotally in short supply, which would potentially provide no option for some parking demands. This anecdotal evidence is not supported by survey data but parking income figures indicate high demand for long-stay parking since April. A key issue in the provision of public long-stay parking is likely to be the dispersal of the total long-stay provision around the town (with two car parks offering around 40 bays each and four others offering under 20). The two largest long-stay car parks are privately owned, for which data is not available.
- 3.5 The existing problems due to parking pressure would not be resolved, with local workers who do not pay to park in long-stay car parks (some of whom are likely to be unable to afford the £1,080 annual fee) attempting to park in uncontrolled streets or uncontrolled car parks.
- 3.6 Option B - Convert 'Business Permit' bays in off-street car parks to generic permit bays and offer permits to local workers.
- 3.7 This would enable the designation of permits allowing local workers to park for a lower annual charge but would not resolve the shortage of capacity with a maximum of 31 spaces for Rickmansworth town centre.
- 3.8 Note that the consultant to the Member Working Party suggested converting short stay bays to business bays.
- 3.9 Option C - New provision of permits for local workers' use in on-street permit bays in addition to implementing option B above.
- 3.10 This option proposes the designation of permits allowing local workers (at a local business address) to park for a lower annual charge, perhaps set at either 75% or 50% reduction in the annual long-stay charge (around £750 or £500).
- 3.11 This would be targeted at local workers (people who work at a local address) who commute but whose firm occupies a local address. This would provide a cheaper,

targeted and feasible option (compared with current long-stay capacity) to benefit local businesses.

- 3.12 These permits could be valid either in long stay car parks or on-street permit bays. Short-stay car parks are not considered suitable for this as they are intended for short stay visits and shoppers as highlighted in the recent charging decision.

Option Analysis

- 3.13 The implications and risks attached to each option are set out above under each option.
- 3.14 It is strongly recommended that permits are valid in on-street permit bays rather than in long-stay car parks to make use of the existing oversupply of parking capacity on-street and reduce impact on the existing undersupply of long-stay parking bays in off-street car parks. This is feasible, subject to local consultation, as demonstrated by a long-running occupancy survey in residential streets in CPZ C in Rickmansworth which provides clear evidence that on-street permit bays here are underused during weekdays.
- 3.15 This would of course potentially affect existing permit holders but, in view of the data collected, it is clear that there is spare capacity in this area. It is proposed in addition to this that the current business permit bays are released for general permit use to provide further opportunities for permit parking.
- 3.16 Permit bays would become 'dual-use' - available to current permit holders but also available still for business permit vehicle needs. The effect of this would be to increase the number of permit bays available to residents or to other permit holders.
- 3.17 The long-stay car parks are a valuable resource for people who are visiting and unfamiliar with the town, who therefore require a centrally located, easily located car park. Use of long-stay car parks for the proposed permits would simply lead to increased discounted use by local workers. This situation should be reviewed in the next year, based on future surveys of long-stay car parks.
- 3.18 This Permit Zone includes permit bays on- and off-street. It is very unusual that resident permit bays are provided off-street due to the rationale for off-street parking being to address parking congestion, which does not typically occur in residential roads during daytimes, as demand is low because residents tend to go out at this time.
- 3.19 The occupancy surveys support this view as, while many properties in Zone C do not have off-street parking (these streets being characterised by high-density terraced dwellings in narrow streets), there are typically between 50 and 70 unused parking bays during weekday daytimes (see table in Appendix B).
- 3.20 While this capacity is clearly demonstrated, consideration would be given to implementing a formula aimed to ensure that parking permits issued to local workers did not adversely affect parking capacity for residents. A formula could be considered that provided the issue of a certain amount of local worker permits for the whole Zone, or collection of Zones. More effectively, a formula could be used cap the number of permits issued to use in any one street at a level lower than the evidenced spare capacity. This would enable residents to park as well as allowing some spare capacity for visitors, at the same time as local workers. It should be

noted that existing permits are available for a whole zone to allow parking demands from permit holders to flow around the Zone.

- 3.21 A less comprehensive occupancy survey shows that CPZ B, also within easy walking distance, has significant daytime capacity (Nightingale Rd, Meadow Way and adjacent streets) in existing on-street permit parking bays. The bays assessed as part of this survey are all located within a short walking distance of the town centre (under 10 minutes) measured using existing walkable paths.
- 3.22 As suggested in the Background Paper (Paragraph 39, described as option D), there is opportunity to increase off-street parking space immediately by around 17 marked bays within the town centre, without any impact on parking arrangements, and this is also recommended.
- 3.23 There remains the option for local workers to park for free within easy walking distance of the town centre, at a range of uncontrolled locations.

#### **4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets. The relevant policy is set out in the Regulatory Services Plan and relates to reducing the budget shortfall in the Parking Account.
- 4.2 The recommendations in this report do not relate to the achievement of any performance indicators set out in the Service Plan.

#### **5 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 Expenditure on any of the proposed measures is likely to be restricted, with the only change requiring a traffic order amendment which would cost around £5,000 to include legal changes and any new signs and lines, with a further £2,000 in consultation costs.
- 5.2 Evidence of likely quantum of take-up is available only anecdotally and no specific price is proposed at this stage, so income from this source has not been estimated in this report. However, indicative surveys suggest that there is demand for around 250 permits in Rickmansworth.
- 5.3 A full business case would need to be prepared for any scheme. However, on the basis of these figures, assuming that around 50 permits can be justified on available capacity, and are issued at £500 or £750; and assuming that there is minimal cost to issue permits (which would be virtual, applied for and issued online), indicative income could be:
- Option A (no change): No additional income.
  - Option B (Business permit bays accessible to local workers): No additional permits could be issued due to the limited number of bays; and the cost of business permits being the same, there would be no additional income; although these bays would now be accessible to non-business vehicles owned by local workers.
  - Option C: At permit cost of £500, indicative income would be £25,000; at permit cost of £750, indicative income would be £37,500.
- 5.4 The impact on alternative parking provision such as long-stay due to the availability of permits has not been assessed at this stage, as there is no evidence to indicate

likely transfer of parking activity from the long-stay car parks, or other car parks, should new permits be introduced. Due to the lack of data on users of long-stay car parks, it is considered likely that some transfer would occur. However, this would potentially enable other demands to be served in these car parks, such as for other long-stay visitors to the local area.

## **6 Legal Implications**

- 6.1 Parking control schemes are progressed in line with the District Council's powers under its relevant Agency Agreement with Hertfordshire County Council.
- 6.2 There are no specific legal risks associated with this proposal of introducing new permits for use in existing permit bays.

## **7 Equal Opportunities Implications**

### **7.1 Relevance**

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact?	No – no policy change and the proposed new parking option will be available to any relevant applicant.
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required?	No

## **8 There are no Staffing Implications, Environmental Implications, Community Safety Implications, Public Health implications, or Customer Services Centre Implications.**

## **9 Communications and Website Implications**

- 9.1 Information about individual schemes, and the Council's general approach to parking schemes, will be made available online and at key locations such as libraries and parish offices as appropriate.

## **10 Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications**

- 10.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.
- 10.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Regulatory service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan.
- 10.3 There are no risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s).

## **11 Recommendation**

- 11.1 That the committee agrees:

- 11.2 A) to authorise investigation into a scheme to introduce new local worker permits as set out in Option C above, in Rickmansworth and potentially in Chorleywood
- 11.3 B) To delegate authority to the Director of Community and Environmental Services in consultation with the Lead Member for Economic Development, to agree details of any proposed scheme, following provision of details of each scheme to relevant local Ward Councillors and the Lead Member.

That public access to the report be immediate.

Report prepared by: P. Simons, Senior Transport Planner

**Data Quality**

Data sources: Survey data collected by TRDC

Data checked by: P. Simons, Senior Transport Planner

Data rating: Tick

<b>1</b>	<b>Poor</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Sufficient</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>x</b>

**Background Papers**

None

**APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A - Background paper to the Policy and Resources committee of the 17 October 2017

Appendix B – Supporting evidence of parking availability in Rickmansworth