

Cabinet

11 April 2019

On-street parking pricing review and change to virtual permitting system

Recommendations

That Cabinet approves:

1. the variation of charges for on-street parking throughout the Civil Parking Enforcement areas of Warwickshire pursuant to section 46A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 in accordance with the pricing structure proposed in this report.
2. making and consulting on the necessary variation orders pursuant to section 45(2) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 throughout the Civil Parking Enforcement areas of Warwickshire to introduce a virtual permit system and make the other changes to that system proposed in this report.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Warwickshire County Council is responsible for on-street Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in the districts of Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon and the boroughs of Rugby and Nuneaton and Bedworth.
- 1.2 CPE has been introduced throughout Warwickshire on a district and borough basis since 2007 with the objective to follow suit in North Warwickshire Borough Council in due course. This is still the intention and initial contact has been made with the DfT to this effect. However, DfT has informed us that preparations for leaving the EU will prevent any progress in the introduction of CPE until 2020 at the earliest.
- 1.3 The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 makes provision for a local authority to designate parking places on highways, to make charges for vehicles left in designated parking places and to issue parking permits for the long-term use of such places.
- 1.4 Warwickshire currently issues a range of permit types with the predominant categories being residents' permits and visitors' permits.
- 1.5 Residents parking schemes are intended to deal with the problems caused by other parking attractors such as shops, businesses, hospitals and railway stations, all of which

may decrease the likelihood of homeowners being able to park at or close to their property.

- 1.6 Visitors' permits are also available to residents. This recognises that infrequent, repeat visitors to the property, friends and family for example, should not be penalised by finding it impossible to park close to their destination as a result of general public parking.
- 1.7 Currently, all residents' and visitors' permits issued by Warwickshire County Council are issued on a paper-based system, for display in the vehicle.
- 1.8 Warwickshire also offers dispensations which allow parking in on-street locations where waiting is normally restricted. This facility is at present offered on an informal basis. In addition, there is also a facility to suspend designated parking places such as pay and display parking bays for periods of time. Both of these functions enable, for example, builders or utilities workers to carry out essential works at roadside premises. A charge is applicable both to dispensations and to parking place suspensions.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Service Area has carried out an appraisal of its approach to parking management within CPE as part of its on-going regular review of service provision. To understand the existing situation, identify best practice, and assess the reasonableness and likely impacts of available options, the Council has carried out a benchmarking exercise which compared its parking policies and charges with neighbouring authorities of comparable size and populations. The full report is available in background papers.
- 2.3 On-street parking is a function of the County Council as the traffic authority under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and this report proposes the exercise of powers under that Act. Section 122 of the Act makes it the duty of traffic authorities to exercise their functions under the Act (so far as practicable having regard to certain specified matters) to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway. Full details of section 122 and the specified matters are in the Appendix.

Permit pricing

- 2.2 On-street parking spaces are at a premium in many of the residential and urban areas of Warwickshire. As a result there is often a competition for parking space between residents, visitors, shoppers, commuters, businesses and other vehicle users.
- 2.3 Tackling these competing demands is a complex issue. One of the ways Warwickshire does this is through the introduction of residents parking schemes, which are, in the vast majority, shared use between residents and short stay general parking.

- 2.4 On the whole, residents parking schemes are broadly successful in allowing homeowners to park at or close to their properties, while still providing for a good turnover of parking spaces for other users.
- 2.5 However, it is recognised that there is some misuse of visitors' permits, dispensations and suspensions which further reduces available parking for residents.
- 2.6 At present Warwickshire CC annual permit charges are:

Residents			Visitors
1 st permit	2 nd permit	3 rd permit	
£25	£25	£25	£25

- 2.7 Comparison with neighbouring local authorities' resident annual permit charges:

Local Authority	1 st permit	2 nd permit	3 rd permit	Visitors permit*
Warwickshire	£25	£25	£25	£25
Derbyshire	£35	£50	£50	£13
Leicestershire	£50	£50	£50	£10
Staffordshire	£48	£48	n/a	£48
Gloucestershire	£50	£100	n/a	£10
Oxfordshire	£60	£60	£120	-
Northamptonshire	£35	£35	n/a	£35
Solihull	£103.50	£103.50	£103.50	£103.50

* restrictions to use of visitors permits vary by local authority, so direct comparisons are difficult.

- 2.8 Provision is made for guest house visitors to park on street through a permitting system in Stratford and Warwick districts only, with differential charging for each district. Warwick guest houses may apply for one permit per lettable room at a charge of £25 per year per room. Stratford guest houses currently apply for a 24 hour parking permit at a cost of £3 per 24 hours per visitor's vehicle.
- 2.9 Dispensations (allowing parking where it is normally restricted) and suspensions of designated parking spaces, such as pay and display, are made available primarily for businesses and contractors to park on-street close to their sites of work.
- 2.10 An examination of neighbouring local authorities' approaches to the issuing of dispensations and suspensions was carried out as part of the benchmarking report. Warwickshire currently charges significantly less than many of its neighbouring authorities in the region.
- 2.11 Current WCC charges for dispensations and suspensions are:

Dispensations			Suspensions
1 day	1 week	1 month	£60 application + £10 per day or £40 per week for P&D bays
£5	£15	£30	

Neighbouring authorities' charges for dispensations are:

Local Authority	Charge per day	Charge per month
Warwickshire	£5	£30
Birmingham	£16	£480
Coventry	£20	£150
Solihull	£0	£30
Gloucestershire	£10	£155
Staffordshire	£22	£366
Northamptonshire	£0	-

- 2.12 The charge for suspending parking bays in most councils matches that of dispensation fees, with the additional cost of preparing DfT approved suspension signs and installation of these on street.
- 2.13 Warwickshire currently operates a £60 application fee for each parking bay suspension plus a £10 per day or £40 per week charge for the suspension of each P&D bay.

On-street parking charges

- 2.14 WCC parking policy specifies that on-street parking charges should be maintained at a level to encourage use of district and borough owned off-street car parks. Cheaper off-street parking will reduce demand for on-street parking, thereby freeing up space and reducing congestion on the road network.
- 2.15 The current charges for on-street parking and comparable costs for car parks in Warwickshire are as shown in the following table:

	On-street (Warwickshire)	On-street (Kenilworth only)	Stratford car parks	Warwick car parks	Rugby car parks
30 mins	£0.55	£0.50	-	£0.50	-
60 mins	£1.10	£1.00	£1.00	£1.00	-
90 mins	£1.65	-	-	-	-
120 mins	£2.20	£2.00	£2.00	£2.00	£1.00

- 2.16 It can be seen from the above table that, with the exception of Rugby, there is little difference between the charge levied for on-street parking and that applied by the districts and boroughs in their car parks, providing little incentive to park off-street and ease kerbside demand in some of the more congested areas of the county.

Online virtual permitting

- 2.17 The vast majority of permits issued by Warwickshire CC which allow on-street parking in one form or another are paper-based and require display in the appropriate vehicle.
- 2.18 The current system is becoming obsolete, is costly to run and can lead to issues of lost, damaged or stolen permits which may result in unnecessary enforcement and penalty charge notices (PCNs) being issued to residents and visitors.
- 2.19 The contract between Warwickshire and our service provider NSL seeks continuous improvements through increased efficiencies and this move towards an online permitting system is a programmed development through the delivery of the contract, which ends in 2021.
- 2.20 As a result of the government's drive towards online systems there is a general reduction in the use of paper based systems on the market. Warwickshire's current system is approaching the end of contract and becoming unsupported as the move towards online gathers pace.
- 2.21 The Council has also taken up the move towards online systems as it seeks to increase efficiency through better use of online channels and technology.

3. Proposal

Permit pricing

- 3.1 Previous work carried out in-house shortly after the adoption of on-street CPE by Warwickshire CC identified that the actual cost of running a residents parking permit scheme was in the region of £60 per permit.
- 3.2 The proposed increase in permit charges therefore addresses the fact that, for many years, the price of the permits has not reflected the actual cost of running a parking permit scheme, issuing permits and carrying out the appropriate enforcement to ensure its effectiveness.
- 3.3 The County Council proposes to increase the charges for residents' and visitors' parking permits within the CPE areas of the county as outlined in the table below. Visitors will have a choice of purchasing one package per year of either up to 25 or up to 50 sessions of all day parking for use throughout that year.

Residents			Visitors	
1 st permit	2 nd permit	3 rd permit	Up to a maximum of 25 visits	Up to a maximum of 50 visits
£35	£55	£80	£25	£75

- 3.4 There is a large majority of households with one permit only. The current breakdown of households with multiple permits is as shown below:

Warwickshire households with parking permits		
One permit only	Two permits	Three permits
5890	1604	371

75% of permit holders have just one residents' parking permit. The proposed tiered pricing structure is therefore likely to have a limited impact with most households being subject only to the £10 price rise. The proposed £35 charge is still significantly below the cost of the administrative process of running a residents' parking permit scheme and will apply to the overwhelming majority of Warwickshire residents using the scheme.

- 3.5 For single permit holders, the daily cost of parking on-street will be less than 10p per day, every day of the year.
- 3.6 The changes will bring Warwickshire into line with neighbouring authorities in terms of permit pricing.
- 3.7 Warwickshire's Local Transport Plan aims to discourage the use of the motor car, where possible, in favour of more environmentally sensitive transport modes. The proposed tiered permitting structure with increasing charges for second and third car usage per household contribute to a reduction in the reliance on the motor car and encourage the consideration of other modes of transport, especially public options. This will have positive benefits on availability of kerbside space and congestion on an already crowded local highway network, and help to improve local air quality and public health.
- 3.8 Most significantly, the changes will address the issue of over-parking in busy residential streets. The abuse of visitor parking is a substantial problem in certain permit zones in Warwickshire. There is some evidence that visitors' permits are used routinely by regular visitors including commuters in some of the busier residents permit streets and that this contributes to frustration on the part of residents who struggle to find parking close to their homes.
- 3.9 The new visitor parking scheme will prevent the misuse of visitor permits which are currently not vehicle specific and can be lent or sold to commuters for all day parking all year round. The new visitor charging system will be vehicle specific with a maximum of 50 all day parking sessions available for use in one year. This will prevent regular misuse by commuters without penalising infrequent visitors such as friends and family or tradespeople.
- 3.10 Together, these changes will enhance the management of kerbside usage, providing appropriate opportunities for parking, waiting and loading for the majority of users.
- 3.11 It is proposed to introduce a consistent charging structure across Warwickshire for guest house permits, following the approach in Stratford. There have been no price increases

in the guest house visitor parking charge since CPE was introduced in the district in 2008.

- 3.12 A small increase of £2 for each 24 hour parking period is proposed, bringing the total charge to £5 per vehicle per day. This still offers a substantially discounted rate for all day parking in a pay and display bay should a visitor choose to leave their car all day.
- 3.13 The County Council proposes to put dispensations on a statutory footing by varying the relevant orders and to increase the charges for dispensations and bay suspensions within the CPE areas of the county as outlined in the table below.

Type	Charge
Dispensation	£15 per day
Bay suspension	£60 application fee plus £15 per parking space per day

- 3.14 The charge increases for dispensations and suspensions are not significant and in line with the previous rates. However, weekly and monthly rates have been removed. Previously these were discounted rates which, in effect, encouraged lengthier stays, thus depriving kerbside space on the network and reducing residents' parking places. The proposed rates will encourage efficient and timely conclusion of roadside activities which will benefit all of Warwickshire's road users, but especially local residents.
- 3.15 It is proposed to remove the possibility of refunds for residents who wish to return their permits. Currently, refunds are only possible when a period greater than six months is remaining on the permit, with a refund applicable for each whole month remaining. An administration fee of £10 is also applied.
- 3.16 The removal of refund availability will help to ensure that permit applications by local residents are limited to those which are strictly necessary. In particular it will further reduce the likelihood of the abuse of visitor's permits which is thought to be responsible for increased parking demand, particularly in already heavily parked streets.

On-street parking charges

- 3.17 It is proposed to introduce linear charging throughout those parts of Warwickshire where current charges exist for parking on-street.
- 3.18 A minimum charge of 30p will be applicable, providing 15 minutes of parking. Lengthier stays will be charged at a linear rate of 10p for every additional five minutes, up to the maximum permitted parking time. For ease of comparison some examples of the proposed new pricing structure are given in the table below:
A small charge of 15p is also applicable when using the RingGo parking service.

	Existing on-street (Kenilworth only)	Existing on-street (Warwick, Leamington, Rugby and Stratford)	Proposed on-street (all Warwickshire where charges apply)
30 mins	£0.50	£0.55	£0.60
60 mins	£1.00	£1.10	£1.20
90 mins	-	£1.65	£1.80
120 mins	£2.00	£2.20	£2.40

- 3.19 The proposed changes will harmonise on-street parking charges throughout those areas of Warwickshire where fees currently exist. This will remove the anomaly of differential parking charges in Kenilworth which could be seen as unfair towards other areas of the county.
- 3.20 Kenilworth has very limited areas of on-street pay and display parking, with only three streets served by ten machines. The proposed increase in charges is therefore likely to have minimal financial impact locally but does serve to provide a consistency of approach across the county.
- 3.21 On-street parking charges have risen once in the last six years and have not previously been subject to inflationary adjustments. The proposed new charging scheme provides a fair, transparent, county-wide structure.

Virtual permits

- 3.22 The move to a fully virtual permit process will remove the occasional performance issues experienced by the current paper production system. Further, there will be no requirement for permit holders to display a permit, thereby eliminating the possibility of loss, damage and theft of permits.
- 3.23 In keeping with the government's direction to move towards fully web-based, virtual systems wherever possible, the new permit application process will be streamlined and more user-friendly, in line with other similar processes such as the current vehicle excise duty (tax disc) system.
- 3.24 The proposed changes to virtual permitting and online applications, payments and renewals do not currently fully align with the Digital by Design strategy as part of the Council's transformation programme. The increasing obsolescence of the existing system requires swift implementation of a new virtual system to ensure the continuing success of the administration of parking permits in Warwickshire.
- 3.25 It is the intention of the CPE team to seek to complement its online systems with the Digital by Design requirements as part of its ongoing service area reviews.

- 3.26 Internet access to the new system will be exclusively through the Council's webpage. Links will take the user to the appropriate sections of NSL's dedicated Warwickshire website.
- 3.27 The new system will not feed directly into the Council's financial information software, Agresso. Our service provider NSL receives payment on our behalf and transfers it to the County monthly. The present system wherein NSL transfers payments and provides the parking management team with monthly financial accounts for scrutiny will continue but we will look to develop more streamlined links between these systems in future.
- 3.28 Currently, the data collected through the permitting process is directly available to Council officers for interrogation, aggregation and analysis and this will continue. With NSL we will pursue closer alignment between the Council's IT systems and those of NSL.
- 3.29 Our service provider will retain a form of permit application by phone which will allow those without internet access to apply. However, it is anticipated that the majority of applications, renewals and contact will be through an online process.
- 3.30 Research shows that in 2018 90% of households had internet access and that the greatest increase in online internet purchases was in the 65 and over age group.
- 3.31 This familiarity with internet and smartphone activity and online purchasing lends itself to a move towards this type of permit application process.
- 3.32 The move to online processes will result in a reduction of tens of thousands of paper correspondence items per year and the costs associated with them. Uptake of the online permit processing system will be monitored with a view to decreasing the amount of postal and telephone applications. These users will be encouraged to use the online system with telephone applicants being talked through the process if necessary.
- 3.33 Terms and conditions will be updated to reflect the new virtual permitting system and the prices associated with it. In accord with the current arrangement, terms and conditions will be readily available for potential customers to inspect through our website and must be accepted before purchasing a permit.
- 3.34 The current proposals are based on Warwickshire's parking policy as agreed previously at Cabinet.
- 3.35 There is currently no intention to introduce a permit scheme with charges based on vehicle emissions. However, this is an approach which may be considered in future but will require a significant and substantial amount of preparatory analysis of its own to determine the financial, practical and operational impacts of introducing such a scheme for Warwickshire's residents, visitors and businesses.
- 3.36 Two equality impact assessments (EqIA) have been carried out, one for the proposed price changes which showed that the proposals will not have any adverse impacts on

Warwickshire's customers and a second for the change to virtual permitting which identified a potential adverse impact on older people which would be mitigated by retaining the availability of telephone and paper-based applications.

Communications

- 3.37 A comprehensive communications strategy will be implemented to ensure that all existing and potential customers affected by the proposed changes will be made aware of them in advance.
- 3.38 It is anticipated that the communications strategy will involve letters to permit holders, online communications, the Council's blog, media briefings and press releases, and notices on street.

4. Financial implications and timetable

- 4.1 All work will be carried out within the existing 2019/2020 budget allocation and is compliant with the current One Organisational Plan (OOP2020).
- 4.2 The changes to the permit system will require variation orders to be made and published for consultation. If objections are received, the decision whether to confirm the orders is normally made by the Portfolio Holder (although Cabinet also has the necessary powers). Such a decision cannot be predetermined and so Cabinet may only give an in principle approval at this stage. The changes to pay and display charges can be made by publishing a notice without any further consultation process.
- 4.3 Subject to consideration of any objections, it is anticipated that the online permit application process and associated charging structure will be fully implemented from 1 August 2019 and the pay and display charges from 4 June 2019.

5.0 Background Papers

- Project Centre – Permit Review: Benchmarking
- Warwickshire CC – Permit parking scheme terms and conditions
- Warwickshire CC – Parking policy
- Equality Impact Assessments

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This report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Councillors Chattaway, Clarke, Roodhouse, Chilvers, Cockburn, Phillips, Shilton

Appendix

Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984

(1) It shall be the duty of every ... local authority upon whom functions are conferred by or under this Act, so to exercise the functions conferred on them by this Act as (so far as practicable having regard to the matters specified in subsection (2) below) to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway ...

(2) The matters referred to in subsection (1) above as being specified in this subsection are—

(a) the desirability of securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises;

(b) the effect on the amenities of any locality affected and (without prejudice to the generality of this paragraph) the importance of regulating and restricting the use of roads by heavy commercial vehicles, so as to preserve or improve the amenities of the areas through which the roads run;

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(bb) the strategy prepared under [section 80](#) of the [Environment Act 1995](#) (national air quality strategy);

(c) the importance of facilitating the passage of public service vehicles and of securing the safety and convenience of persons using or desiring to use such vehicles; and

(d) any other matters appearing to ... the local authority to be relevant.