

CABINET– 17 SEPTEMBER 2019

IMPLEMENTATION OF A STREET WORKS PERMIT SCHEME FOR OXFORDSHIRE

Report by Director of Community Operations

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**
 - (a) **Approve in principle for a Street works permit scheme for Oxfordshire to be implemented.**
 - (b) **Approve the contents of the Street works permit scheme document at Annex 1 which has considered feedback from public consultation.**

Executive Summary

2. Oxfordshire County Council was advised by the Department for Transport on 18/07/2018 to implement a street works 'permit' scheme to replace the existing 'noticing' scheme currently in operation. See letter at Annex 1.
3. In response to this, there has been preparation to move to a Street works permit scheme. A scheme document stating the terms and conditions of a scheme has been developed supported by an external consultancy, "Geoplace".
4. This scheme document has been publicly consulted upon. Overall the proposal has been well received. The comments received have been considered and were appropriate the draft has been amended with the proposed final scheme document as at Annex 2.

Introduction

5. This report presents responses received to the formal consultation on the contents of the permit scheme document and the proposed final scheme document for consideration to ensure it is both suitable for Oxfordshire and manageable for those who operate the scheme.

Background

6. A feasibility study and cost benefit analysis were completed which confirmed a scheme would be beneficial to Oxfordshire. A 'scheme document' detailing proposals has been developed and its contents have been consulted upon both informally and formally with works promoters and wider stakeholders.

See Annex 2 for a copy of the proposed scheme document.

7. A permit scheme will assist the County Council in achieving tighter management of roadworks on the highway, including reduction of durations which will enable more works to be completed, supporting the delivery of developments and increased infrastructure programmes.
8. As part of developing the scheme, Officers have completed a series of benchmarking exercises with other authorities including Cambridgeshire, West Sussex, Warwickshire and have worked closely with external consultants to ensure best practice was proposed as part of the scheme for Oxfordshire. The outcome of this is a scheme document which operates in line with the majority of schemes in England.
9. The scheme is expected to show a Benefit Cost ratio of 2.05:1 which exceeds the Department for Transport's value for money expectation of 2:1 for a scheme and also represents a positive return to both the residents and businesses of Oxfordshire.

Consultation

10. Following a period of informal consultation with works promoters reviewing the terms of the scheme, a public formal consultation took place between 19 July and 23 August 2019.
11. The consultation was sent to a broad range of key stakeholders. Consultees included emergency services, passenger transport providers, surrounding local authorities, town and parish councils, County Councillors, utility companies, major local employers and other interest groups.
12. 41 responses were received. 28 responses with no objections / support for the scheme document, 6 responses proposing amendments to a scheme, 2 responses which were neutral towards a scheme and 1 response which was unrelated to a street works permit scheme. Responses have been broken down by individual point with officer comment and can be found at annex 3.
13. County Councillors, town and parish councils, and neighbouring local authorities are broadly supportive of the proposed scheme.
14. Responses were also received from the emergency services and public transport providers who were supportive of the implementation of a scheme.
15. The Utility Companies and work promoters submitted specific requests for changes and where considered appropriate amendments have been made.
16. Copies of the full responses are available for inspection by County Councillors and have been shared with consultees.

Responses to objections and other comments.

17. Proposed changes were received from 5 works promoters/ utilities. The basis for the proposed changes were surrounding referral to and updating of legislation stated within the document and technical amendments to the scheme document including references to future software solutions and clarification of points raised within the scheme document.
18. In response to the changes proposed, all requests were reviewed by our external consultant, Geoplace alongside Council Officers, to determine whether they would be suitable for Oxfordshire. Where accepted changes have been made to the permit scheme document reflecting these proposals.

Key risks and benefits

19. If a permit scheme is not progressed, using our own developed terms for local needs, then there is a risk that a national scheme will be imposed.
20. The benefits that the scheme is expected to achieve include:
 - Reduction in roadwork duration - removal of 8,934 days of works from counties roads annually. (c. 10% reduction).
 - Improved quality of works completed and enforcement of failed works.
 - Improved coordination and management of works.
 - Reduction in the 'hassle factor' (such as additional journey planning) and inconvenience works put on the travelling public.

Financial and Staff Implications

21. Anticipated income and expenditure associated to the scheme have been calculated using tools provided to us by the Department for Transport and have been benchmarked against comparable authorities (Cambridgeshire & West Sussex) to ensure suitability and robustness.
22. The forecasted income realisable through the charges agreed with the DfT and based on known works from 2019/20, is estimated to range from between £1.1m - £1.2m per annum. This income will recover the full cost of administering the scheme and includes direct administration costs, service management indirect costs as well as corporate overheads.
23. The current year net upfront costs of the scheme are estimated to be £90k and this pressure will be managed within current revenue budgets.

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Director for Community Operations

Background papers: NONE
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