

Divisions affected: *All divisions with Controlled Parking Zones*

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT – 24 MARCH 2022**

### **OXFORD, CHERWELL, VALE OF WHITE HORSE & SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE – PROPOSED VIRTUAL PERMITS FOR CONTROLLED PARKING ZONE SCHEMES**

Report by Corporate Director, Environment and Place

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Cabinet Member for Highway Management is RECOMMENDED to approve as advertised the amendments to all Controlled Parking Zones schemes in Oxfordshire to allow applications, payments and issue of Resident's Parking Permits via the County Council online portal, enabling the issue of `Virtual Permits` which will not need to be displayed on vehicles.

#### **Executive summary**

2. This report presents responses received to a statutory consultation on a proposal to amend all Controlled Parking Zones schemes in Oxfordshire to allow applications, payments and issue of Resident's Parking Permits via the County Council online portal, enabling the issue of `Virtual Permits` which will not need to be displayed on vehicles. This is an alternative option to postal applications and the issue of physical permits. Charging levels for parking permits are unaffected.

#### **Financial Implications**

3. Funding for consultation on the proposals has been provided by the Oxfordshire County Council revenue budget; should the proposals be approved the on-going administrative costs will be met through the payment of permit fees.

#### **Equality and Inclusion Implications**

4. No implications in respect of equalities or inclusion have been identified in respect of the proposals.

#### **Sustainability Implications**

5. The proposals would reduce the physical resources required for paper-based applications and permit issue.

## Consultation

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 20 January and 18 February 2022. A notice was published in the Oxfordshire Times newspaper and an email sent to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, Bus operators, Oxford City Council, Cherwell, South & Vale of White Horse District Councils, all County Councillors, Abingdon Town Council, Bicester Town Council, and Henley-on-Thames Town Council.
7. Twelve responses were received during the formal consultation comprising of; 4 objections (33%), 3 expressing concerns (25%), 2 expressions of support (17%), and 2 expressing no comment or no objection.
8. The responses are shown at **Annex 1**, and copies of the original responses are available for inspection by County Councillors.
9. Thames Valley Police and the Vale of the White Horse District Council expressed no objection.
10. Unlimited Oxfordshire, a local group representing disabled people expressed a concern about the possible impact on those without access to the internet and requested that alternative ways of accessing assistance and access to permits are retained for those in this position. It is confirmed that the proposals solely relate to the use of virtual permits, and that those unable to use the internet will as now still be able to apply for permits in alternative ways.
11. The remaining eight responses were from members of the public and included six objections or expressions of concern. The grounds for these were focussed on the difficulty residents would have in identifying vehicles that had no valid permit to park, as this would not be possible with the use of virtual permits, with also one of the responses raising more general concerns about parking policy. Noting these concerns one objective of the proposed use of virtual permits is to make more efficient use of the enforcement resources available and should support rather than adversely impact on the enforcement of permit parking schemes.
12. Two expressions of support were received from member of the public.

Bill Cotton  
Corporate Director, Environment and Place

Annexes

Annex 1: Consultation responses

Contact Officers:

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RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	<b>No objection</b>
(2) Vale of White Horse District Council	<b>No comments</b>
(3) Local organisation, (Unlimited Oxfordshire)	<p><b>Concerns</b> – We do agree that for a cohort of Disabled people than virtual permits (an online application system) is a benefit. As well as being a cost saving exercise for the council it will make the system more accessible for some, and reduce the need to make trips to buy stamps, envelopes etc or visit your offices. For some people attaching a parking permit to their vehicle will be a struggle.</p> <p>However there is a cohort of the wider community that are not online. Although the gap is closing, as a percentage of the non-online community, disabled people are over-represented. This so-called digital poverty affects disabled people adversely. You will have to continue to offer a postal service as a reasonable adjustment. You could consider a phone service as a reasonable adjustment too, so that someone can dictate the details to a customer service officer in the council. Both services could be advertised for use only if someone cannot use the online portal - which the vast majority of people will be delighted to do.</p> <p>Please remember that many disabled people (including children with profound needs) are highly dependent on their car to access goods and services and need to be able to park safely by their homes without worrying.</p>
(4) Local Resident, (Oxford, Holyoake Road)	<p><b>Object</b> – Parking enforcement is already very inadequate in Oxford and frequently relies on people telephoning parking enforcement to come out to a car parked in resident CPZ. By going to virtual permits, residents can no longer report these instances and it will rely on the daily high speed moped ride by of an enforcement officer to check registrations. They then have to check inside the car for a permit.</p> <p>You would still need to post visitor permits to residents so abolishing a physical permit on cars doesn't appear to be</p>

	<p>much of a saving.</p> <p>With this proposal, I fear uncontrolled parking with increase.</p>
<p>(5) Local Resident, (Oxford, Quarry High Street)</p>	<p><b>Object</b> – Residents can't report illegally parked cars if they don't know if they are illegally parked! A permit shows everyone if the car is entitled to park in that area/zone.</p>
<p>(6) Local Resident, (Oxford, Sunningwell Road)</p>	<p><b>Object</b> – 1. By have such <u>extreme</u> CPZ hours, (e.g. Mon-Sat 8am to 6:30pm) and by doing so essentially all across Oxford you are making it DEEPLY UNFAIR on anyone who lives just outside of CPZs, because that's where all the parkers end up.</p> <p>2. Instead what should happen is that CPZs hours should be <u>graduated</u> with the most extreme hours only being true in the town centre. Why have you failed to do this?</p> <p>3. Moreover different streets should have different rules. e.g. One street might prohibit parking on say Mondays, Wednesdays whereas a neighbouring street should prohibit parking on Tuesdays and say Sundays. This will make it difficult but not actually impossible to park in Oxford. Likewise the HOURS of restriction should be graduated and get less severe the further one is from the town centre and towards the outside of town they might only involve restrictions for say 1 hour per day.</p> <p>4. People DO need to get to work. But we don't want people to drive to work if it can be avoided. So the Park &amp; Ride service should be greatly accelerated. In order to keep get the buses running fast, people need to be kept out out of their cars, and so during peak hours, Oxford should implement an ""ULEZ"" (Ultra Low Emission Zone) like London has.</p> <p>5. Park &amp; Ride, parking space needs to be increased and parking should be FREE. This will encourage people to bicycle from the park &amp; ride.</p> <p>6. Don't pretend that Oxford City Council can't afford any such investment. You hare making and estimated £2.5million of profit out of your parking restrictions.</p> <p>I have lived in Sunningwell road for 2.5 years, and I have a long car that even has a tow-bar, but never once have I been unable to park within 2 blocks of my house. But yes, it was made difficult purely because we WERE only just outside of the neighbouring CPZs.</p>

	<p>Either way, the fact is that for Oxford to 'breath' cars DO need to park somewhere, and this burden should be shared. We pay our taxes, so we should be allowed to park. Instead what we have is a ""Police Sate"" growing by stealth.</p> <p>I have a lot more to say about this issue, but I am out of time. I am happy to discuss this issue further if it helps.</p>
(12) Local Resident, (Oxford, Hollow Way)	<b>Object</b> – The parking permits will increase in monetary value on a yearly basis. If this was a fixed amount for 10years this would be more considerable.
(7) Local Resident, (Oxford, Bullingdon Road)	<b>Concerns</b> – A terrible idea. We can no longer report cars without permits - and this is important as traffic officers very very rarely visit the street. Also you need to reduce the number of permits issued to HMOs and have a maximum per house. You issued too many in our street & parking is now difficult.
(8) Local Resident, (Oxford, Divinity Road)	<b>Concerns</b> – A visual permit makes everyone aware that it is a permit area.
(9) Local Resident, (Oxford, Coppock Close)	<b>Concerns</b> – If there isn't a sticker displayed on the windscreen, how will residents know if individuals from outside the area leaving cars on their street?
(10) Local Resident, (Oxford, Binsey Lane)	<b>Support</b> – supporting to allow more efficient and comprehensive enforcement of parking restrictions/permit parking - in my road often vehicles are parked without permits and not enforced against
(11) Resident, (Leafield, Fairspear Road)	<b>Support</b> – Making this easier and less labour intensive must be a good idea.