

CONTROLLED PARKING ZONE POLICES SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

20 January 2015

Present: Councillor Collett (Chair)
Councillors Hastrick (for Minute numbers 7 and 8), Jeffree, Joynes
and Walford

Officers: Transport and Infrastructure Section Head
Parking Services Manager
Deputy Parking Services Manager
Committee and Scrutiny Officer
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (RW)

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

6. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

7. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2014 were submitted and agreed.

8. CONTROLLED PARKING ZONE ISSUES FOR TASK GROUP

The Parking Services Manager explained that consultations on the parking schemes had been conducted in 2007 and also 2013 and that residents' views were taken into account. He noted that in numerous instances residents felt that they qualified for a parking permit but that reference to individual circumstances and to existing policies demonstrated that they were excluded. He considered that the policies relating to CPZ issues required further clarity to ensure they remained fit for purpose or required amendment.

The Parking Services Manager drew attention to the issues outlined in the agenda and asked for guidance on whether changes should be introduced to the current policies.

The Chair referred to the survey sent by the Committee and Scrutiny Officer to all Members whose wards had a CPZ and explained that six replies had been received from: Central (1), Holywell (1), Nascot (1) and Park (3).

The Committee then discussed the issues as outlined in the report.

1 - Vehicle Length Limit

Councillor Jeffree expressed surprise that the current length limit was 5.25m as the standard parking bay length was 4.8m and 2.4m width.

The Parking Services Manager noted that 5.25m was a standard length and comparable to the standards applied in other authorities.

The Transport and Infrastructure Section Head advised that a maximum of 6m was the standard length for vehicles in business use.

It was noted that officers had no powers of enforcement with regard to vans in CPZs unless complaints were made. The Parking Services Manager pointed out that in the case of a complaint, officers would need to first measure the vehicle in order to establish that the length exceeded the permitted length. He advised that applicants were required to declare the length of their vehicle when applying for a permit.

The Transport and Infrastructure Section Head asked Members to consider how business vans could be accommodated in CPZs during the day.

The Parking Services Manager suggested that:

- vehicle length for business use should be 6.0m
- residents' permits remain at 5.25m

The meeting agreed that:

- the height limit of 2.3m should be unchanged.

Recommendation:

The 5.25m length limit to be retained for all residential permits.
To extend the length limit for business permits (in CPZs) to 6.0m.

2 - Business Permits

The Parking Services Manager explained the difficulties inherent in determining which businesses were entitled to permits. He felt that the rules were not sufficiently stringent to prevent abuse of the scheme.

The meeting then discussed the differing needs of individuals and companies in order to carry out their businesses; it was noted that in some cases vehicles were not such as would generally be used for business purposes.

The Parking Services Manager noted that business vehicles should not usually be present in the CPZs for long periods of time. He advised that officers had monitored the zones and vehicles' lengths of stay; this information would enable officers to determine where rules were being breached.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer asked whether it would be possible to ask businesses for examples of their daily delivery schedules.

Councillor Hastrick suggested that the rules specify that vehicles be used during the day rather than simply parked in the zones and then left in situ. Councillor Joynes agreed that it would then be possible to state that the vehicle did not meet the criteria.

The Transport Infrastructure Section Head suggested that officers produce a draft criteria which would then be emailed to Members for their views.

The meeting considered that:

- It would be wise to continue to monitor CPZs and to inform residents and businesses of this fact.
- That the criteria for permits be considered and changed where necessary; where criteria were changed, permit holders be fully informed of all aspects of the new regulations
- Vehicles for which a business permit was granted should be used throughout the day and not left in situ
- That the type of vehicle to be used for a business permit should be specific if this were possible

Recommendation:

Criteria to be revisited

Vehicles should be registered to the company (but not necessarily at the CPZ address, e.g. Head Office) – not to an individual at a residential address

Vehicles must realistically be usable for the stated operation

Vehicles to be used during the day rather than parked throughout entire business hours

ACTION: Officers to prepare and email draft revised criteria to Members

3 - Blue Badge Drivers

The Parking Services Manager reminded the task group that free permits were only available for those Blue Badge holders who were drivers. Requests for free permits had been received from applicants who had caring responsibilities for members of the family in the same household.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer advised that other authorities used a variety of methods of charging; these were itemised on the comparator tables in the agenda.

The meeting discussed:

- the issue of free parking permits for carers of disabled children who were under 16 years of age
- areas in which Blue Badge holders could / could not park for free

Recommendation:

Retain free permits for drivers who hold a Blue Badge.

Extend free permit issue to cover parents caring for disabled children under 16 years old who holds a Blue Badge

4 - One Permit per Person

Currently each Council Tax property would be entitled to up to two permits but only one permit per person.

The Parking Services Manager advised that an increasing number of residents were applying for two permits where two vehicles were registered under one name. It was considered that to introduce this change would result in an increase in vehicles on the highway.

Recommendation:

The current Rule should remain: up to two permits to be available to each household but only one permit per person.

5 - Funerals

The Parking Services Manager spoke to the meeting on the subject of funerals and advised that a suspension of parking rules near places of worship was frequently requested by individuals and Members. It was agreed that sensitivity was required when addressing these requests. He noted that only hearses and limousines for mourners were exempt from parking restrictions in CPZ areas. It was also noted that sites of places of worship varied greatly across the borough and that changes to the current policy would, in some areas, significantly impact on residents and businesses.

Members pointed out that if precedents were set for funerals, then requests would inevitably be received for other religious service attendance: weddings, christenings etc.

Officers suggested that:

- maps be produced indicating where parking was available near to places of worship. These could then be passed to churches etc for distribution to guests / participants
- officers consult with funeral directors on suitable measures to facilitate parking in CPZ areas.

Recommendation:

The policy to remain unchanged

Officers to produce leaflets indicating parking places near places of worship which can be given to churches and funeral directors.

6 - Visitor Voucher Abuse

The Parking Services Manager advised on abuse of the visitor voucher scheme and explained that the parking service had no power to act in this regard.

The meeting agreed that it would be wise to amend the traffic regulation order: where abuse is identified residents would be penalised through the loss of their vouchers.

Recommendation:

Amendment to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to allow for the revocation of vouchers when they are abused and confirm that all minutes on Visitor Vouchers must be scratched, including zero.

7 - Doctor and Health Visitor (DHV) Permits

The Deputy Parking Services Manager explained that there were no formal criteria for the application for DHV permits. He added that the cost (£20) was cheaper than for residents.

The Parking Services Manager outlined problems associated with use of these permits and said that criteria were needed which were suited to individual organisations.

The meeting then discussed charges; the following points were raised:

- a tiered pricing system to be introduced eg. The first five permits per organisation to be £25 but additional ones to be more expensive
- DHV and residents' permits costs to be equal
- Permit cost to be vehicle specific rather than shared use

Recommendation:

The price of DHV permits to be: £25 for the first five permits for any one organisation and subsequent permits to be priced at £55 each. Charges to be reflective of the residents' permit pricing structure.

A formal criteria to be created and a clause inserted in the TRO to reflect this. All current DHV permits to be revoked and reissued to applicants under the new criteria and pricing structure

8 - Staff Permits

For a number of Council staff their roles required them to visit sites within CPZs. Staff were issued with parking permits for this work at a charge of £100 per permit; these were used on a 'pool' basis and charged to the relevant service.

The meeting noted that there was no formal criteria for the application of these permits. The Transport Infrastructure Section Head suggested that fees and charges could be reviewed during the following year.

The Committee and Scrutiny Officer noted that officers other than those from the Council were also issued with Staff Permits. These included: Watford Community Housing Trust, Herts County Council, Herts Highways.

Recommendation:

A formal criteria for use to be created and a suitable clause inserted in the TRO to reflect this.

9 - Late Night Enforcement (Residential Roads)

The Parking Services Manager explained that enforcement officers did not generally patrol residential roads after 6.30 p.m. He noted that problems occurred in Euston Avenue and St Mary's Road both of which included a 'turning head' at the closed ends of the streets. Double yellow lines had been installed in these roads to facilitate turning; residents had complained, however, that this action had minimised parking spaces.

In response to a suggestion by Councillor Jeffree that additional signs could be installed, the Parking Service Manager said that such signs could only be advisory. He added that officers could write to residents in these roads to advise that the part of the road painted with yellow lines must remain clear.

The meeting discussed issues concerning yellow lines and agreed that whilst officers would not monitor residential roads after 6.30 p.m. they would act in cases of specific complaints in these areas.

Recommendation:

To continue with the current arrangements and to be reactive to specific yellow line complaints in circumstances where safety or access concerns may exist.

10 - Period of Residency (Vehicle Ownership)

The Parking Services Manager advised that permits could be renewed on line. It was not necessary to update details of vehicles unless they had been changed since the previous permit although proof of residency was required for each renewal since this was an important safe-guard to ensure that permits were not issued to individuals who were no longer residents. .

Recommendation:

Proof of residency to be produced for each renewal of permit.
The requirement for the a V5 or insurance document to be produced each year should be removed if the renewal relates to the same vehicle.

11 - Refunds

The Deputy Parking Services Manager advised that refunds were given but that there was no formal ruling.

The Parking Services Manager confirmed that a significant number of requests for refunds were received and a considerable amount of staff time was utilised in dealing with this issue. It was debatable whether the amount refunded was worth the work required.

The meeting looked at the refund tables in the agenda and noted that the figures showed the amount refunded after the administration fee had been taken into account.

The task group agreed that the new structures as indicated in the second table be introduced.

Recommendation:

That a standard administration fee of £10 is deducted from the refund due on each permit and a pro-rata refund for the remaining months is provided by BACS upon application. This rule to apply only to those permits with more than three months remaining.

12 - Driveway CPZ parking for permit holders

Complaints had occasionally been received where permit holders parked in front of vehicular access points and driveways. It was noted that residents signed a declaration agreeing not to park across driveways.

The task group agreed with the officers' recommendation.

Recommendation:

A suitable clause to be written into the TRO in order that persistent instances of abuse can be dealt with.

13 - Residents permits minimum tenancy period

The Parking Services Manager advised that applications were occasionally received from individuals who had short lets on properties in CPZs e.g. holiday agreements or for temporary tenants. He considered that proven residency for a minimum of six months should be a requirement for a parking permit.

Recommendation:

To formalise the minimum six months tenancy period to qualify for a 12 month permit. All other residents remain entitled to visitor vouchers.

14 - Other issues

In reply to a query from Councillor Joynes the Parking Services Manager confirmed that non-residents landlords would not be entitled to a parking permit.

The Chair thanked officers for their input and for the detailed report.

9. **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

- Monday 2 February 2015

Chair
CPZ Policies Scrutiny Task Group

The meeting started at 6.00 p.m.
and finished at 7.30 p.m.