

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND FLOODING****DATE: 10 JUNE 2015****LEAD OFFICER: TREVOR PUGH, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE****SUBJECT: ON STREET PARKING REVIEWS AND CHARGES FOR PERMIT SCHEMES****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The purpose of this paper is to look at the current parking review process and ways of improving the service we provide including better communication, timely implementation and reducing unproductive work.

To consider whether we should increase the charges for resident parking schemes and parking suspensions and waivers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that, as part of parking reviews:

1. Parking schemes that reduce obstruction, improve road safety and meet the councils other transport plan objectives are prioritised .
2. In order to include a permit parking or other residential parking management scheme in a review, support should be demonstrated by at least 70% of frontages or a representative consultation group. (Exception by agreement of the Local Committee chairman/local member and parking team manager)
3. The size of parking reviews should be limited to a maximum of 50 sites per district review. (Exception by agreement of the local committee chairman/parking team manager)
4. To also seek comments in support of proposals as part of the statutory consultation process, not just objections.
5. To letter dropping all affected frontages as part of the parking review statutory consultation.
6. To actively aim to minimise displacement in new parking schemes
7. That there is no change to the minimum existing charges for resident and visitor permits for on street parking schemes. These will be considered again during 2016 in conjunction with preparations for the review of parking enforcement agency agreements.
8. That local committees have more flexibility to set charges for business

permits, however the minimum should be £150.

9. There is no change to the current level of charges for parking bay suspensions and waivers.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Updating the Council's parking review process will:

- Improve communication with the public about new parking restrictions.
- Help the Council to understand the level of support for parking schemes and make sure we are implementing parking schemes that not only fulfil transportation requirements but also serve the needs of local communities and businesses.
- Help the Council to deliver parking reviews in a timely way and reduce unproductive work.
- District and Borough enforcement teams consider the current charges for parking schemes are adequate and cover the costs associated with them.

DETAILS:

On Street Parking Reviews, What happens now?

1. Parking reviews are carried out on a rolling programme in all the district and boroughs across the county except Guildford (where the borough council do them as part of their on street parking agency agreement).
2. Requests for new parking restrictions are received from a number of sources including the public, councillors, other SCC teams, local authorities and the emergency services.
3. The current district based review process started about 5 years ago to manage the number of requests (about 7000 per year across the county) and has been refined to some extent in light of experience and feedback from councillors and the public. At the moment the reviews in each district generally follow this process.

Table highlighting stages in the current parking review process with a timeline.

Planned number of months before or after committee	Stage in parking review process
-15 to -3	Requests for changes to restrictions are collected and held on a review list prior to the start an assessment process.
-3	About 3 months before the review is due at the local committee, the unrefined list is sent to county councillors and for comment and to ask for priorities and comments.
-3 to -1	Parking Team members may meet members/residents/district and borough enforcement colleagues to discuss some locations.
-2	The review list is assessed in a 'desktop exercise' to whittle out unrealistic proposals and then site visits and assessments are carried out.
-1	Report and drawings prepared for the local committee
0	Local Committee meeting is held
+1	In some cases changes are made at committee or new sites added and these are investigated after the meeting and any proposals agreed as per the delegation agreement at the meeting.
+2 to 3	Formal statutory advertisement of the draft Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) follows about 2 or 3 months after the committee. By law a notice must be placed in a locally circulating newspaper. We also put up street notices and make full use of our website. Consultation documents are available in the local civic centres and libraries.
+4	At the end of the 28 day consultation process and objection report is prepared summarising the objections to each location in the review.
+5	Discuss objections with members. In most cases we would resolve objections using the council's scheme of delegation but sometimes we need to go back to the local committee. Update district & borough enforcement team about what's included and if relevant agree implementation timetable for any resident parking schemes.
+5	Carry out detailed design for the contractor to lay lines and put in signs.

+5	Place works order with contractors.
+6	Make the TRO. This involves another advert on the newspaper and putting all the amended plans and documents, with reasons for the changes, on our website.
+6 to 8	Implementation. This can take longer during the winter months when the weather is wetter. Overall the timescales in the review process depend on many factors including size and the level of complication.

4. There are two reviews at each committee each cycle. This means there are eight at committee each calendar year, resulting in a 15 month gap between reviews for each committee. This allows enough time for parking patterns to settle down between reviews. The four parking engineers in the team are simultaneously working on 10 reviews at any one time and each will be at different stage in the process.
5. The Council aims to implement parking reviews within 6 months of committee approval, and this works best when kept to a manageable size and objections are dealt with under delegated powers rather than being referred back to committee. This isn't always the case and some reviews do take longer, particularly if there are complicated sites or residents parking schemes to co-ordinate with the local enforcement teams who will manage them. In some cases officers would recommend taking more time to deal with sensitive parking issues rather than pressing ahead just to keep to a rigid time table.
6. Parking restriction schemes generally fall into these categories:
 - **Safety and obstruction** – double yellow lines to provide sightlines/safety/prevent obstruction. These should generally be included where there is evidence of a problem or in accordance with good practice and highway code guidelines about parking.
 - Requests for restrictions to prevent '**nuisance**' parking in residential roads. These usually comprise single yellow lines or residents permit schemes and can be far more controversial. Councillors and the parking team are often at the end of persistent requests for such parking schemes from vocal residents in a road without any real idea how much support there really is. When a letter drop or statutory consultation is carried out as part of a review we can find there is no support or consensus from the area. The proposals are then dropped but have contributed towards the cost and time of the review.
 - **Larger CPZ schemes** (typically comprising more than 4 streets or a total of 200 properties). The development of large parking schemes can be very labour intensive and as a consequence costly due to the amount of consultation and public interaction involved. These are too much to manage as part of a parking review and we will need to use our 'call off' consultant to undertake this work. It will generally take 6-12 months to complete such a consultation for a large CPZ scheme and the work will need to be funded from a local committee budget.

Options for improvement

Should we have more frequent parking reviews ?

7. Reducing the time between them would mean that we would need to carry out three or four reviews per committee cycle. This would bunch up the work causing resourcing problems in preparing for committee. Advertising and implementation would similarly be overloaded, more costly and many of the benefits gained from economies of scale would be lost by having more frequent but smaller reviews.
8. Although timely implementation is important it is often better to prepare thoroughly, particularly for sometimes controversial schemes and this can take a little longer as it will involve discussions with councillors and other stake holders. The consequence of even small errors in the TROs can also mean enforcement has to stop or fines paid back, generally resulting in negative publicity for the council. These need to be prepared with great care.
9. Resources are better used spreading the reviews as evenly as possible through the year i.e. two per committee cycle. In addition, under the present system, if the reviews run to programme there is time for the new parking controls and restrictions to bed in before the next review starts even if there are slight unavoidable delays.
10. In extreme cases, urgent parking restrictions needed for road safety purposes can still be progressed using temporary TROs outside the parking review process. Parking bays can also be suspended by the district and borough council when needed.

How big should a parking review be?

11. In order to make sure the Council can implement reviews in a timely manner the Council should try to limit their maximum size. Each district and borough in the county is different and has varying needs in terms of parking management and some tend to have more sites in their typical review. Parking restrictions used to be an urban phenomenon but they are increasingly requested in more remote rural locations and villages.
12. Reviews that exceed about 50 sites often take more than 6 months to implement, particularly when residents' parking is included.
13. The Council also needs to ensure that residents and businesses are aware of what it is doing and that the consultation process is as effective as possible. Reviews that are larger than 50 sites inevitably take longer and the service the Council can provide to residents in terms of timeliness and communication is reduced.
14. In order to progress parking reviews in a timely manner the Council therefore needs to make sure reviews are a manageable size and are well communicated to residents and councillors.
15. If each review were limited to 50 sites or to a certain number of sites per division, the total of which did not exceed 50, it would be easier for them to be completed on time.

Evaluating public opinion

16. The Council receives many complaints each year from residents in suburban streets about 'nuisance' parking. These complaints include:

- difficulty in getting out of driveways
 - difficulty finding a parking space
 - damage to verges caused by parking
 - parking on footways
 - residents unhappy about cars parking in their street or outside their house. Many do not like excessive parking in their street particularly by 'non residents'
 - neighbourly disputes
17. Often, requests to implement a parking scheme to control these problems are put forward by one or two residents without any real support from the rest of the road. I.e. most residents are content with the situation and only a few see a problem. In some cases, however, the few who see a problem push hard for a scheme to be implemented.
18. In order to reduce the time and cost of dealing with these situations, the Council should only accept these requests into a review if there is demonstrated support from residents who are likely to be affected, in a similar way to a petition. So a resident who is very keen on parking restrictions will need to discuss it with their neighbours/councillor and be able to send in evidence of wider support with their request. Their County Councillor can help guide them if necessary and a template/further information provided on our parking web pages to explain what is needed.
19. It is proposed a threshold of 70% support by affected frontages and the local County Councillor should be reached before we take these types of schemes into a review. Proposals that do not meet the 'entry criteria', (there are always exceptions) will need the approval of the Chairman, Local Member and Parking Team Manager to progress.
20. To facilitate this, our parking review web pages will be updated to explain the process and a sample template provided to help the relevant information be gathered, such as:
- Name/address of everyone who supports proposal
 - Description of problem
 - What solution is sought
21. When requests are received, the Council would expect evidence of support which should be assessed in consultation with the County Councillor and included in the review if it was possible to achieve a solution.
22. It would however be very important to make it clear that no matter what level of support was demonstrated, it would not necessarily mean that a scheme would be introduced. It would only happen if there was an appropriate solution to a recognisable problem and a wide range of factors would be considered including displacement and the likely cost.

23. The Council may still decide to carry out a full letter drop consultation but overall the need for these would be reduced if there was more demonstrated support with an application in the first place. There would, as part of the statutory consultation be further consultation and this would give the opportunity for the wider community to have their say on the proposals.

Widening publicity

24. When a review is being implemented it can be frustrating and time consuming dealing with residents who claim to not have known anything about the new restrictions being implemented.
25. By law the Council is required to place a notice in a locally circulating newspaper when advertising a traffic regulation order and take other steps as might be appropriate to bring the proposals to the attention of people who might be affected by them. In practice, as very few people read the public notices section of their local paper so street notices are also put up and, in some cases, local residents are letter dropped. The Parking Team has adapted these to be much more eye-catching and easy to understand/user friendly in recent years including the addition of QR codes (Quick Response codes can be scanned by a smartphone and provide a direct link to the relevant web page) and web links.
26. In some recent reviews all properties that could be directly affected by the proposals have been sent a letter in the post. (up to 1000 properties). Even with advances in online communication at present this is probably still the best way of raising awareness. The letter includes details of how to find out more on our website (again QR code) or via the contact centre/local library.
27. In future the Council will start to letter drop all effected frontages of parking restrictions as part of the statutory consultation process and this would be more practical and less costly if the reviews were kept to a manageable size.
28. As part of a statutory consultation our parking web pages are kept up to date with plans and information as well documents deposited in local libraries and civic centres.
29. The Council will continue to seek objections when we advertise a TRO in accordance with the regulations however for parking schemes we will also seek other comments including support. This could make it easier to assess the outcome of a statutory consultation where often people do not engage because they do not 'object' to the proposal.
30. We will also continue to explore new digital opportunities to publicise the reviews, such as using social media.

Reducing Displacement

31. It is often the case that new parking restrictions cause some displacement. It is however self defeating to solve the problems in one road only to move them to the next street.
32. It is not always possible to accurately predict parking displacement because so many factors govern an individual's choice to park in a certain location. However in some cases displacement is more predictable and so for all new parking schemes we should thoroughly consider the potential effects of this.

33. Although each parking scheme will have its own specific circumstances ways of doing this include:
- Retaining parking where it is safe i.e. leaving more spaces in new restrictions. Well planned parking bays can also act as a traffic calming influence and help reduce traffic speeds.
 - Reducing the operational time of restrictions to the minimum required.
 - Creating gaps in existing restrictions.
 - Anticipating displacement and taking steps to minimise its impact.

Implementation

34. The Parking Team will continue to work with contractors to speed up the introduction of new lines and signs once the work has been ordered. To help this, we have put in place weekly meetings, instead of fortnightly, and are looking at implementing a system of tighter deadlines as part of this work.
35. It can, however, be very frustrating that prolonged wet weather often delays implementation of road marking schemes, a problem which is particularly acute during the winter months.

Charges for Residents Parking Schemes

36. The current level of charges for residents parking permits was standardised across the county in 2011. The (minimum) charges are set at:
- £50 for the first permit
 - £75 for subsequent permits
 - £2 per day for visitor permits
 - £500 for a business permit
37. The charges are intended to recover the cost of implementing, administering and enforcing residents parking schemes. In the 4 years since the charges were set there has been an economic downturn and generally low inflation.
38. The higher charge for a business permit is intended to reflect the relative benefit of convenient parking to businesses within a permit scheme. However, many permit schemes are situated in residential areas where small businesses tend to exist. The £500 charge per permit is seen as excessive in these cases and it is therefore proposed to allow local committees greater flexibility to set lower business permit charges to cater for smaller businesses if necessary, however the minimum charge should be £150.
39. The current charge for a parking bay suspension is £65 per 6m length for a three day period and then £10 for each subsequent day. A waiver (permission to park on a yellow line) is charged at £15 for three days and then £5 per day. Feedback from enforcement teams across the county show there is no justification or support for an increase in these charges at the present time.

40. Parking fees and charges will be considered again next year (2016) in the run up to the review of the parking agency agreements in 2018. Local committees can also increase the charges in their area to suit particular circumstances if necessary.
41. Charges for permit parking schemes should not be set with the aim of generating a surplus but for transportation reasons and to recover implementation and administrative costs.

CONSULTATION:

42. The Local Committee Chairmen's group has been consulted about the proposed changes to the way we carry out parking reviews.
43. District and borough council parking enforcement teams who carry out parking enforcement for the County Council have been consulted about parking charges.
44. Local committees will be updated on the changes to the review process over the next 6 months.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

45. The recommendations in this report are aimed at reducing the risk that we are changing parking restrictions without the knowledge or understanding of the public.
46. Improved communication with the public should improve the perception of the council.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

47. There are no direct financial implications in the updated parking review process. It is hoped that better communication with the public will lead to greater efficiency and reduce non productive time.
48. It is the view of enforcement teams in Surrey that the current minimum level of charges for resident and visitor permits are appropriate (i.e. they allow the relevant costs to be recovered) and do not need to be changed at the moment.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

49. The Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) confirms that there are no direct financial implications for the existing Medium Term Financial Plan. If this were to alter, then the implications will be reflected in future budget planning. The proposed charges will continue to be periodically reviewed to ensure adequate recovery of costs.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

50. The Council has powers in Part 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 ('the Act') to create parking restrictions and prohibitions and in Part IV thereof to provide on-street parking places. Under section 122 of the Act, it is the duty of every local authority upon whom functions are conferred by or under the Act, so to exercise those functions as (so far as practicable having regard to the matters specified 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. The matters referred to above as being specified 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 area through which the roads run;
- (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.

Equalities and Diversity

Information and engagement underpinning equalities analysis	An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out to consider how we communicate and receive objections when we carry out statutory consultations for parking reviews.
Key impacts (positive and/or negative) on people with protected characteristics	Overall the changes proposed should raise awareness of parking proposals during the consultation process. It is a requirement that responses to a statutory consultation must be made in writing, but where this is not possible (and this means there is no-one to act on the respondents behalf) we will accept and objection on the phone.
Changes you have made to the proposal as a result of the EIA	None
Key mitigating actions planned to address any outstanding negative impacts	None
Potential negative impacts that cannot be mitigated	None

<u>WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:</u>

51. Parking reviews will continue on their current timetable and the new process will be incorporated from July 2015. It will take some months to fully incorporate depending how the review cycle falls in each area.
52. Our web pages will be changed to reflect the updated process.
53. Local Committees will be updated about the new process over the next 2 committee cycles.

Contact Officer:

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Consulted:

Local Committee Chairmen's Group

Annexes:

EIA attached as Annex 1.

Sources/background papers:

None

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