

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has been included in the relevant Forward Plan

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PLACE TO CABINET ON APRIL 17th 2019

HIGHWAYS & ENGINEERING: TRANSITION TO ALL ROAD PERMITS SCHEME

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out the rationale for expanding the existing permit scheme to include all adopted highways.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That elected members approve the expansion of the current permit scheme from 320 of Barnsley's busiest streets to every street in the Borough's adopted road network as detailed in section 4 of this report.**
- 2.2 **By agreement to recommendation 2.1 above, that members acknowledge the need for additional resources to be employed to effectively administer the new scheme. These positions will be financed by the additional income generated by the scheme.**

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Street works and road works are a major cause of delay and disruption for road users, resulting in significant costs to the economy and society. Previous studies have estimated that the national cost of congestion resulting from street works is around £4.3 billion a year, successive governments have taken steps to support the effective management and coordination of works.
- 3.2 These steps have included the ability for local highway authorities to introduce permit schemes. Such schemes provide the Authority with the ability to proactively manage all works as a way to reduce and control the associated disruption. This increased control is achieved by requiring all works promoters (i.e. anyone who wishes to work in the highway) to seek permission before undertaking works and for those works to comply with conditions which the local highway authority applies.
- 3.3 In 2012 Barnsley, along with 5 other Yorkshire Authorities, implemented a permit scheme authorised by the DfT for operation on type 1, 2 & Traffic Sensitive (T/S) streets. The decision to operate a permit scheme only on our busiest streets came under direction from the DfT as two major all-street schemes had previously gone live 6 months before in Kent and London. The DfT were keen to measure the performance and impact of different types of schemes and encouraged the Yorkshire region to implement a common permit scheme targeting type 1, 2 and T/S streets.

- 3.4 In 2015, the government deregulated permit schemes, taking away the DfT control and regulation, which has resulted in the majority of new schemes being all streets schemes.
- 3.4 Permit schemes provide the facility to improve the coordination of all works, as the scheme generated funds cover the cost of additional staffing, allowing the authority to check 100% of the permit applications for the whole network, compared to approximately 23% of current notices received on minor roads that are highlighted only when geographical conflict with other works occurs.

4. PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION

- 4.1 The Council has successfully operated a permit scheme on its 320 busiest roads since June 2012. It is proposed to extend the scheme to every street across the Council's adopted highway network to ensure the benefits are realised on all streets.
- 4.2 The key deliverable benefits of the permit scheme are;
- Reduces disruption and minimises congestion caused by works on our network;
 - Increases levels of control over all works;
 - Provides leverage, which can influence the way that works are undertaken; and
 - Generates a positive return for society. i.e. reduced congestion results in improved local air quality.
- 4.3 The existing scheme is estimated to have reduced highway occupation in Barnsley by approximately 14,450 days over its 6 years of operation, with the extended scheme estimated to further reduce occupation by 5,000 days per year.
- 4.4 The expanded scheme proposed by this report has been modelled through a detailed, robust cost benefit analysis (CBA) exercise which considers the cost of road and street works to road users (travel time costs, fuel and other vehicle operating costs), accident and fuel carbon emission costs.
- 4.5 To effectively manage the additional tasks of a permit scheme the DfT permit matrix has estimated that an additional 4 staff will be required. These posts will be funded by the additional permit fee income with the key duties of approving and assisting permit applications, including traffic management layouts, works durations, reinstatement provision and encouraging multi agency coordination. This will be covered by a separate delegated report.
- 4.6 It should be noted that the prevailing legislation which sets the financial framework for all network permit schemes (the Streetworks (Recovery of Costs) Regulations 2002) makes it clear that an Authority may only recover the costs associated with administering a scheme from works promoters. Any surplus revenue generated by a scheme must be invested back into the scheme and cannot be used to offset wider service pressures.

4.7 Key project milestones include;

| Milestone | Target Date |
|---|--------------------|
| Approval to commence | April 2019 |
| Restructure Service | May – July 2019 |
| Pre-commencement communications with key stakeholders | June – July 2019 |
| Go Live Date | August 2019 |

5. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

5.1 Option 1 Revoke the permit scheme and return to a standard noticing regime:

Not operating a scheme could result in works promoters resources being used on the authorities that are running a permit scheme, which would mean works in Barnsley would not get the same attention as works in other permit authority areas. The permit scheme also funds 2 FTE members of staff which, if no longer in place, would leave the council under resourced and under legislated to mitigate the impact the lack of control over works taking place on our strategic road network would have. The overall benefits to the travelling public would not be achieved in terms of reduced travel time, vehicle operating costs accident and fuel carbon emission costs.

5.2 Option 2 Remain with the current split regime:

We are currently do not have as much control over the works taking place on the quieter residential streets as we do over the works on the busier roads This is due to the lack of resource available to monitor the duration of works or monitor working methods on the quieter roads which mean that average highway occupation and disruption is higher.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE/SERVICE USERS

6.1 Permit schemes provide a way to reduce the disruption caused by works, the current scheme is estimated to have reduced highway occupation in Barnsley by approximately 14,450 days over its 6 years of operation.

6.2 The extra staffing resource required to operate an all street permit scheme will allow the authority to coordinate works on all streets and increase the levels of joined up working between all works promoters. This is achieved by encouraging collaboration between works promoters working within the same street or area and greater controls over the timings of work through advance coordination.

6.3 Being in a position to challenge how long works will take will reduce the amount of time works promoters spend working on the highway. This will help improve the public's perception of works promoters and shorten journey times.

6.4 Reducing the disruption caused by street works by shortening the duration of works will make it easier for road users to access sites of employment and provide businesses with a more efficient highway network. Keeping connectivity of the network free from superfluous road works.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Consultations on the financial implications have taken place with the representatives of the Service Director – Finance (S151 Officer).
- 7.2 Based on information collected by the service over the last few years, the service has estimated that extending the scheme will mean issuing 5,125 additional permits and 311 permit variations per year taking the total to 7,165 permits and 433 permit variations. The rates proposed for the category 3-4 roads are on average 23% lower than the category 0-2 roads because the checks involved in assessing the requirements are less onerous. All rates have been built up using the All Yorkshire Permit Scheme template of activities and the BMBC pay and overhead rates. The rates were consulted on in 2018 (see section 12). The additional permits will generate income of £262,218 per year.
- 7.3 Using the All Yorkshire Permit Scheme matrix to assess the levels of resources, the service has estimated that 4 additional staff and a mini restructure will be required to administer the whole scheme. The cost of this is £146,000 per year. When overheads are included, the total additional cost will be in the region of £262,000 and so the scheme meets the requirement of only recovering costs. Any surplus generated must be ring-fenced for use in this scheme in future years. Implementing this proposal will also allow full cost recovery of the permit scheme reducing the impact on the Council's base budget allowing a contribution towards delivery of the Council's efficiency agenda.
- 7.4 Income and costs will need to be kept under review to ensure that the £262,000 additional income is achieved and that staffing and non-staffing costs are in line with actual workload and demands for permits.
- 7.5 The financial implications are shown on the attached appendix A.

8. EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 As part of the proposal the existing Streetworks structure will be revised in accordance with the Managing Change and supporting HR policies.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Traffic Management Permit Scheme Regulations (England) 2007 gives the Council power to amend existing Permit Schemes provided that the appropriate consultation has taken place. In this case consultation has been carried out in accordance with the regulations. In addition following the Deregulation Act 2015 the approval of the Secretary of State is no longer required for changes to the Permit Scheme and the Council has authority to approve the revised Scheme.

10. CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 As a direct result of reducing disruption and delay to highways users there will be an associated benefit in terms of noise and air pollution.

11. COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS

11.1 A proactive Communication plan will be developed to ensure the changes are effectively communicated to all promoters.

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 Formal consultation has taken place with the major affected stakeholders, the results of which are detailed in Appendix C.

12.2 In summary;

- Responses were received from 18 of the 67 identified consultees.
- 18 comments/questions were received, of which;
 - 2 responses were positive;
 - 14 responses were neutral; and
 - 2 responses were negative.
- The 2 negative responses were received from utility companies regarding the additional costs they will incur as a result of an expanded permit scheme.

12.3 Prior to the anticipated August 2019 “go live” date, pre-commencement communications will be released to the all key stakeholders detailing the changes to the current scheme.

13. THE CORPORATE PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

13.1 The proposal to move to an all streets permit system supports the strategic objective of developing a “thriving and vibrant economy” by;

- Providing a way to reduce the disruption caused by works;
- Providing increased levels of control over all works;
- Generating a positive return for society i.e. reduced congestion results in improved local air quality.

14. LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Financial Implications

Appendix B: Barnsley Permit Scheme – Consultation Report

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