

ENVIRONMENT CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
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Report of the Executive Director of Operations

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO ADDRESS VERGE PARKING

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report outlines the work undertaken to assess and tackle verge parking concerns across the city.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 For the Scrutiny Committee to endorse the approach outlined within the report
- 2.2 For the Scrutiny Committee to identify any additional measure that they feel should be employed or explored to tackle verge parking.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The practice of cars parking on grass verges is commonly known as verge parking. It frequently leads to damaged verges and an unsightly mess, especially during the winter months due to wet weather.
- 3.2 In many streets the front gardens of properties have been turned into parking spaces. A dropped kerb and hard surfaced access should be provided in these circumstances, these require the consent of the Council and planning permission may also be required.
- 3.3 Causing an obstruction by parking across a pavement is a matter that in the majority of cases is only actionable by the Police due to legislative restrictions. The exception to this is where there is also a `Traffic Regulation Order` (TRO) prohibiting parking i.e. double yellow lines. In this case the order covers the road side and the adjacent pavement up to the boundary of the public land, and as a result the Council can take action for breach of the TRO, and/or the Police for an obstruction offence. It should be noted that for the Police to take action, there must be a significant obstruction not a partial overhang over the pavement.
- 3.4 Verge parking is not unique to Peterborough; many cities have areas where verge parking is a problem due to the lack of parking provision. Contributory factors are the age of the housing stock, population density, and the high rate of vehicle ownership.
- 3.5 Many of the houses in Peterborough were built at times when there were no or few vehicles on the roads. Consequently, many houses do not have off street parking yet the householders frequently own one and in many cases more than one vehicle. As an issue the Council has received complaints regarding verge parking for many years, yet despite various interventions, some more successful than others, it remains a problem. It has been the subject of discussion at Neighbourhood Committee meetings, Full Council, and now Scrutiny Committee.

It should be stated at the outset that it will not be possible to eradicate verge parking across the city. Improvements can however be made to address some of the worst areas across the city by looking afresh at the problem.

- 3.6 Despite what is often a common perception, verge parking is rarely a breach of parking restrictions. Enforcement action can be taken in the form of a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) in circumstances like that described above where existing double yellow lines and TRO's are in force but this only covers a small proportion of the city.
- 3.7 The Council was one of the first authorities outside of Westminster to implement a major scheme in 2006 covering Old Dogsthorpe which made significant changes to the area including building in new parking provision and introducing a unique at that time TRO to make parking on verges and footways illegal. This all came at a substantial cost of approximately £650,000. Current budgets preclude rolling out this approach but lessons can be learned from it. As a whole the scheme has improved parking within the area, though has not totally eradicated verge parking which is more problematic in evenings and at weekends. During these times enforcement resources face conflicting pressures and often other areas such as the city centre, and near the football ground on match days are a priority.
- 3.8 A number of measures have been implemented during the last 12 months in order to increase enforcement capacity. Working closely together the Highways and Neighbourhoods Enforcement teams have been able to increase the number of lines and signs that require replacement by targeting specific locations requiring replacement/renewal across parts of the city in order to reduce unenforceable areas, due to faint lines, missing sign plates etc. Enforcement rotas and enforcement zones have been updated, and will continue to be reviewed regularly to ensure they meet service needs. Civil Enforcement Officers have significantly increased their output, and vacancies have been filled. Members will be aware that the Council now has a car fitted with a CCTV camera to support enforcement. The camera car is a valuable asset but can only be used to enforce certain parking contraventions, the provisions in Dogsthorpe not being one of them.
- 3.9 In order to look afresh at verge parking Simon Machen Head of Planning, Transport and Engineering and Adrian Chapman Head of Neighbourhoods requested that Andy Tatt from a highways perspective and Peter Gell from an enforcement perspective reviewed verge parking problems and identified measures to remedy the problem.
- 3.10 In order to get a feel for the size of the problem across the city, an exercise of capturing data regarding verge parking 'hotspots' was initiated. As part of this process data was taken from complaints made via Peterborough Direct, from residents and Members following feedback at various forums, from Highways Inspectors, Neighbourhood Managers and Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers. This data was then collated in order to identify what we are calling 'hotspot' areas, the worst areas within the city. This exercise highlighted that if you look hard enough you can find problems almost everywhere, it did though also highlight those areas which generate most community concern.
- 3.11 At the outset the view taken was that an holistic approach was required to look at the problem and that any interventions had to be tailored to the location where the problem existed, this view was reinforced following a number of site visits. Solutions which sought to design out the problem by creating new parking provision thereby utilising highway improvements supported by enforcement where appropriate are felt most likely to be effective. However when this is not possible due to physical layout or funding restrictions then a suite of measures have been drawn up that can be considered on a site specific basis.

Site specific measures that can be considered and used in the highway include:

- Installation of Grass-crete (porous concrete sections which facilitates grass to grow through) which allows parking on verges without the resultant damage.
- Hardening of verge area by tarmacing.
- Planting of suitable trees to act as a physical obstruction.
- Planting of suitable low growth shrubs to act as a physical obstruction.
- Introduction of Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO`s) whereby no waiting at any time (double yellow lines) can be installed which not only cover the road but to the highway boundary which includes adjacent verges and footways.
- Installation of suitable bollards or other street furniture which when positioned sensitively can act as a physical obstruction.

Note: Boulders cannot be used legally on the highway as a means of preventing parking. However, where land is not highway, for instance if in the ownership of the Council through strategic property, or is privately owned (e.g. a housing association), then with consent the use of sufficiently large sized ornamental type boulders can also be another considered option to act as a physical obstruction.

4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 Proposed schemes must be affordable in the current economic climate, it is not therefore possible to provide wholesale infrastructure improvements. It is envisaged that each year areas within the city will be identified for improvements, and that those planned schemes for any one year will reflect the resources available to deliver them.

Funding is key to any scheme proposal. Existing highway funds are limited and will need to be supplemented by Neighbourhood Committee funds if considered to be a neighbourhood priority and with Member Community Leadership funding where ward Councillors wish to support a scheme in their ward. Where advantageous to do so and funds are available, schemes to address verge parking problems will be aligned with planned highway improvements in order to reduce scheme costs.

4.2 It is proposed that we will work more closely with Cross Key Homes and other housing associations/private landlords to assist enforcement through their own respective tenancy agreements. These may help for example where property boundary dwarf walls/fences are removed without authorisation to facilitate access for parking within the curtilage of their property without an authorised vehicle crossing being constructed to highway specifications. This will assist with encouragement to have a properly constructed vehicle crossing installed to alleviate the need to both park and cross the highway verge causing damage.

4.3 It is proposed that localities selected for schemes are hotspot areas in communal locations, these being where more than one resident will benefit from the improvements in order to maximise the impact of improvements.

4.4 Schemes will be discussed with the Councillors for the areas the schemes are proposed in order to consult on proposed interventions. An overview of schemes planned for a Neighbourhood Committee area will be taken to the relevant committees to seek feedback and support from those living and working in the community.

4.5 Where solutions require the introduction of TRO's the Council will be subject to statutory consultation periods, the results of the consultation will determine whether the public within that locality at large want the implementation of the scheme proposed.

- 4.6 New legislation in relation to surface water drainage and specifically flooding has recently been introduced in the form of the `Floods and Water Management Act 2010`. This legislation leads us to further consider the consequences of additional hard surfaces installed and with verges the need to consider use where appropriate of more permeable solutions e.g. Grass-crete products which allows water to percolate through the surface into the sub-soil and reduce surface run off to positive drainage systems during heavy rainfall and flood conditions.
- 4.7 Though proposals to tackle verge parking can and will in some cases impose new enforcement obligations on the Council, effective enforcement can only be maintained if enforcement resources are increased in proportion with the demand for Service, or if other areas of enforcement activity are reduced.

4.8 **OUTLINE OF PROPOSED WORKS BY NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL AREA/ TIMESCALES**

The survey work carried out as indicated in section 3.10 above has identified the worst areas of verge damage which we are calling `hot spot` areas. Proposals for the worst site in each neighbourhood area are set out below: :

South Neighbourhood Management Area

Location: Coneygree Road

Coneygree Road is a distributor road running through the heart of Stanground. The highway verge is regularly being churned up by inconsiderate parking resulting in mud being dragged onto the road when vehicles enter and exit the verge area.

This particular location lends its self to a combination of grass-crete (as used as a trial further down some 15 to 20 years ago) and tree planting together with extending existing TRO`s at junctions to deter parking which would obstruct forward visibility. Enforcement could then be undertaken which would cover not only the road but verge and footway to the highway boundary as identified in 3.2. The provision of on street parking at controlled intervals in a staggered layout is also being considered to move vehicles off the verge onto the road, and to assist with slowing down vehicle speeds on the straighter parts of the road.

Example of Damage Coneygree Road



Example of Grass-crete



Costs:

Grass-crete - approximately £75 per square metre

Tree planting - supply of suitable variety tree and install/maintain = £350 per tree.

TRO – dependant on whether this can be amalgamated with other TRO's in the area to reduce costs.

Timescales:

First phase being implemented in conjunction with highway slab replacement works to be completed by the end of March 2012. Further phases would follow after a major electricity utility main is installed through this area which is planned for 2012. Further verge works dependant on funding and priorities for Neighbourhood Committees in the coming financial years.

Central and East Neighbourhood Management Area

Location: Garton End Road

Garton End Road is a distributor road linking Central with the East of Old Dogsthorpe. The highway verge is frequently churned up by inconsiderate parking and also when entering and exiting their properties due to the location on an S-bend. This site lends itself to a combination of grass-crete, low growth shrubs and tarmacing.

Example of Damage Garton End Road



Costs:

Shrubs cost dependant on total area covered (economies in scale) Supply, plant and maintain in the region of £18 per square metre.

Tarmac, harden off verge area (economies in scale) in the region of £35 per square metre.

Timescales:

First phase of grass-crete installation and tarmaced hard surfaced to be completed by end of March 2012 with low growth shrubs in 2012/13 financial year, funding permitted.

North and West Neighbourhood Management Area

Location: Hartwell Way

Hartwell Way is a distributor road circulating a densely populated area of Westwood which includes schools and a local centre. The highway verge is regularly being churned up by inconsiderate parking resulting in mud being dragged onto the road when vehicles enter and exit the verge areas.

This site lends its self to a mix of grass-crete , trees, shrubs and installation of TRO.

Displacement of parking from the existing verges on this route is a big consideration to any final proposal given the restricted amount of available legal parking within the inner residential core area.

In addition, this area also has issues with isolated cases of increased traffic speeds and within the final scheme consideration to assist control with staggered on road parking where appropriate is also being looked at in this joint scheme proposal. This would require change of the existing TRO and the introduction of new TRO's to ensure enforcement could be carried out. This would include appropriate double yellow lines at the junctions where parking would hamper forward visibility.

Example of Damage Hartwell Way



Costs:

As per previously illustrated for other schemes.

Timescale:

Given the scale of this project and the combination of objectives this would realistically need to be phased over several financial years. Funding would need to be available through the processes identified in 4.1.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Head of Service scrutiny on proposals regarding verge parking is undertaken by Simon Machen and Adrian Chapman. Verge parking has been discussed at a number of Neighbourhood Committee meetings, Full Council, and is being reviewed by the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Proposals regarding the strategy to address verge parking will be amended as necessary following feedback from the Committee. Officers will develop verge parking improvement schemes further, engage with ward Councillors, and present to Neighbourhood Committees in line with timescales identified in 4.4.

7. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 7.1 None

8. APPENDICES

- 8.1 None