

BULLETIN REPORT

Name of Committee:

Communities, Housing and
Infrastructure Committee

Date of Meeting:

Tuesday 1st November 2016

Title of Report:

Misuse of Residents Permits

Lead Officer:

Robin Donald – City Warden
Officer

Author of Report:

Mark Wilson – Development
Officer

Summary of Purpose of Report

To instruct officers to investigate the possibility of extending the remit of the Blue Badge Enforcement Officer to include Enforcement of misuse of residents and business parking permits and report back to the appropriate committee.

Presently where alleged misuse of permits is suspected, a resident will be issued a warning letter by the service responsible for administration of the parking permit scheme. Some examples of a permit misuse would be a permit displayed on the wrong vehicle or residential permits being used by businesses. Permit fraud would be considered where false details have been submitted as part of the application process or where permits have been copied or altered to look like a valid permit. For 2012-2016 there has been a total of 16 documented cases of misuse of a permit and 6 cases of fraudulent permits either being copied or altered to appear valid. As of October 2016 there are 12,936 valid permits in the city.

The Blue Badge Enforcement Officer has been in post for 15 months with approximately 4 months invested in the development of the enforcement procedures, legislative requirements and actual training of the officer to carry out the required level of investigation work. Investigating permit fraud would require similar process although the applied charges and legislation would be slightly different and would require some time investment to allow for training. This would have an impact on the number of Blue Badge misuse/fraud cases that could be taken forward by the officer in post.

So far the Blue Badge Enforcement officer has seen the confiscation of 69 Blue badges relating to misuse with the National Fraud Authority (NFI) estimating that 20 per cent of blue badges are abused across Britain. It is estimated that the average cost to the council per misused badge is approx. £1300 per year in lost parking revenue. This figure is based on a sample of cases parking within controlled parking zones and misusing a blue badge to avoid payment of the parking charge calculated over 5 days a week over 48 weeks using the nearest off street tariff pricing. Misuse of parking permits has a similar impact however the majority of permits issued are restricted to a single controlled parking zone which limits its use around the city. Permits can also only be utilised in the designated marked out bays within the zone where Blue Badges can be used across all zones, designated bays and yellow lines.

The City Warden service are working on a project with various officers from within Traffic Management, IT and Customer services to define, source and implement new parking systems. This project will be looking at all the technology currently used in the parking sector with a view of making the system more efficient, cost effective and improving customer experience. Part of this project will include a review of the existing permit system as a range of new technologies can offer improved systems such as virtual permits. Virtual permits would function in the same way our cashless parking works and would require not paper permit to be sent out or displayed. Instead the permit would be issued to the vehicle digitally and be available on the City Warden handheld computer so that they can identify vehicles that are parked legally. These systems remove the possibility of altered or fraudulent produced permits being used within the city.

The Blue Badge officer has had a consistently full work load although adding permits to his remit is possible it may be a short term requirement and would have impact on existing work with Blue Badges, the social impact this type of fraud has on genuine user of the Blue Badge scheme when spaces are being used fraudulently and an on-going cost to the council if there was a reduction in investigations of Blue Badge fraud. The existing post was originally approved for a 1 year period and was extended by a further year with 7 months remaining on the fixed term.