

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing & Infrastructure
DATE	24 th May 2017
REPORT TITLE	Motion Cllr Stewart - Blue Badge Enforcement Officer/Misuse of Residents and Business Parking Permits
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/17/088
INTERIM DIRECTOR	Bernadette Marjoram
REPORT AUTHOR	Edward Thomas

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT:-

Further to Councillor Jennifer Stewart's motion to Council on 11 May 2016, the purpose of this report is to update members on the new parking systems project and to investigate the possibility of extending the remit of the Blue Badge Enforcement Officer to include enforcement of the misuse of residents and business parking permits.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Instruct officers to continue research into new parking systems and develop a service specification;
- b) Report back to committee on 29 August 2017 for approval to tender according to service specification;
- c) Instruct officers to immediately extend the remit of the Blue Badge Enforcement Officer to include misuse of residents and business parking permits.

3. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1** On 26th April 2016 Audit, Risk and Scrutiny committee gave approval for the Corporate Investigation Team to take over the responsibility for managing the National Fraud Initiative, which includes responsibility for investigations relating to allegations of abuse involving the blue badge scheme. Accordingly the Blue Badge Enforcement Officer currently based within the City Wardens Service is to be managed and funded by the Corporate Investigation Team (CIT), subject to a business case which is in process. The postholder will however remain collocated with the City Warden Service in order to continue to work closely.

Permit Fraud Investigations

- 3.2** Since the initial report to committee in November 2016, the Blue Badge investigator has investigated 2 incidents of alleged permit misuse which have been reported to the Council. It was established there was insufficient evidence to suggest misuse in one of the cases. Investigation into the other one highlighted that there may have been fraudulent activity however the individual concerned could not be traced. There is no specific recording of

permit misuse complaints at present and work is underway to develop a means of recording these.

New Parking Systems

- 3.3** A project team consisting of officers from the City Warden Service and colleagues from within Traffic Management, IT and Customer Services are currently working to define, source and implement a new parking system. This project is looking at all the technology currently used in the parking sector nationally with the aim of making the system more efficient, cost effective and improving customer experience.
- 3.4** Part of this project includes a review of the existing permit system as a range of new technologies can offer improved systems, such as virtual permits. These systems remove the possibility of altered or fraudulently produced permits being used within the city, by removing the need for paper permits to be issued.
- 3.5** Soft market research is underway to identify what options are currently available in the market place, based upon which a technical specification is being developed in order to produce a detailed tender to go out to market pending committee approval later this year.

Phase	Timescale
Completion of Research & Development of Specification	31 July 2017
CH&I Committee Approval to Tender	29 August 2017
Publication of Tender	01 September 2017
Commencement of New Parking System	01 April 2018

Current Blue Badge Enforcement

- 3.6** The Blue Badge Enforcement Officer has been in post since June 2015 and approximately 4 months was 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 is based on similar processes and legislation, therefore a shorter timescale is anticipated to expand the remit of this post.
- 3.7** So far the Blue Badge Enforcement officer has seen the confiscation of 91 Blue badges relating to misuse. The National Fraud Authority estimates 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. £1,300 per year in lost parking revenue. 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.
- 3.8** As of May 2017 there are 13,045 valid permits in the city. Presently where alleged misuse of permits is suspected, a resident will be issued a warning letter by the service. 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 have 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.

Extending the Remit of Blue Badge Enforcement

- 3.9** Given the limited volume of allegations of misuse of resident and business parking permits and the significant similarities with investigation and enforcement, the service is in a position to immediately expand the remit of the current enforcement officer to include these cases. It is envisaged that this work will be required for the approximately 10 months until the new parking system has been adopted and ought not to adversely impact upon the core function of the role, though this will be closely monitored by the service.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report, however any cases of permit fraud identified will result in additional parking revenue for the Council. The report to committee on 29 August 2017 will provide detail of the wider financial impact of new parking systems once the service specification has been defined.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report, however the expanded remit in terms of permit fraud may result in additional prosecutions should sufficient evidence arise following investigation.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

There is a risk that capacity to undertake the core functions of the Blue Badge Enforcement Officer is impacted by expanding the remit. This will be monitored by the service and will be mitigated by prioritisation of casework according to quality of evidence and potential financial impact.

7. IMPACT SECTION

Economy

The report supports the Council's aims to support improvement in the local economy and ensure a high quality of life for all people in Aberdeen, by effectively managing parking within the City and maximising revenue for the Council.

People

The proposals within this report will enhance fairness in terms of investigating and enforcing against permit fraud and protect Council revenue streams for citizens.

Place

Effective management of parking enhances the experience of those requiring parking in local communities.

Technology

This report sets out proposals to introduce transformative technology for the management of parking, which will be significantly more efficient and will improve customer experience.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Misuse of Residents Permits, Bulletin Report
Communities, Housing & Infrastructure Committee
01 November 2016

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