

# Norfolk Parking Partnership Joint Committee

Item No.

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Local Authority Parking Concessions</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>18 February 2016</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Tom McCabe – Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b> A request has been made by MP Norman Lamb that Norfolk County Council trial a scheme in which patients recently discharged from hospital with a temporary but substantial impairment can benefit from a temporary dispensation to park in disabled persons parking bays and on single/double yellow lines.	

## Executive summary

The Managing Director Wendy Thomson has advised Mr Lamb that this suggestion will be considered by the Norfolk Parking Partnership, and so the purpose of this report is to outline the proposal and the implications that this would have for the partnership and to enable discussion amongst the partners regarding the benefits or otherwise that the scheme could have, and to result in a decision about the direction that the County Council will take on this matter. Having prepared this report for members the officer's recommendation is that

- a) the chairman of the NPP writes to primary health care trusts to share the suggestion with them and to ask if they would be able lead on the implementation of and provide funding for a trial scheme**
- b) any trial would focus on the permitted use of off street parking bays ie in private car parks, not on highway parking to reduce the impact on people with permanent and substantial disabilities.**

## 1. Proposal

- 1.1. Mr Lamb suggests that a temporary permit is issued to the patient on discharge from hospital after an operation or similar treatment.
- 1.2. This would require a scheme to be promoted by the primary health care trusts with input from the NPP.
- 1.3. The temporary permit would have a clearly marked expiry date and be of a distinctive design so that it was clearly identifiable by CEOs.
- 1.4. Ideally a permit would also include identification details such as a photograph, or vehicle registration number unless the permit was to be issued for a very short period.

## 2. Evidence

- 2.1. The existing blue badge scheme is administered by Norfolk County Council. Applicants pay £10 for a disabled persons parking badge, which is valid for a period of 3 years.
- 2.2. Eligibility for a blue badge is subject to strict criteria which includes a permanent

and substantial disability which causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking. Applicants may have to undertake a mobility assessment before a badge is provided.

- 2.3. During 14/15 NCC processed 14000 blue badge applications. The number of applications increases by approximately 1000 per year and so the total in 15/16 this figure is expected to be almost 15000. These increases are to be expected as Norfolk has an aging population and disability has an association with the aging process.
- 2.4. The total cost for issuing Blue Badges for this year is expected to be £365,144, with projected income raised from Badge holders of £148,570. The net cost of the service (£216,574) is met by the County Council.
- 2.5. A guidance note issued from the department for Transport entitled 'Advice note to local authorities – people with severe temporary impairments' does not suggest such a scheme and highlights the pressure that additional entitlement to blue badge spaces could put on the limited number of spaces available in any one location. This is an issue raised by disabled residents in Norfolk who have expressed concern about the limited number of blue badge spaces available and the ongoing pressure on these. Instead it suggests alternative considerations, such as specially marked permit holders only bays, free parking at or near hospitals or parking concessions for carers.
- 2.6. Without further input from the primary health care trusts it is difficult to gauge how many people may be eligible for a temporary pass as there are many procedures which may cause significant but temporary mobility difficulties. However, statistics are readily available for hip and knee replacements; during calendar year 2015, the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital undertook 634 hip replacement operations and 472 knee replacement operations; the James Paget Hospital undertook 388 Hip and 359 Knee and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital at Kings Lynn undertook 344 Hip and 311 knee replacements. Just from these operations alone at these three hospitals there could be 2508 additional passes in circulation.
- 2.7. Blue badges have a photograph of the badge holder and are designed to reduce the opportunity to create copies.
- 2.8. In spite of this concerns have been raised about the misuse of disabled persons blue badges in Norfolk and a new post is being funded by the NPP to investigate cases of possible misuse.
- 2.9. Misuse of disabled persons blue badges reduces the availability of parking spaces for disabled people who genuinely need them and can affect access to services and participation in community life.
- 2.10. District Councils do currently have a scheme of providing dispensations to customers who wish to park in restricted areas for building works or other short term requirements. The administering districts of Kings Lynn and Great Yarmouth make an administration charge, South Norfolk currently do not.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1. Setting up a trial scheme will not be without cost. The mechanism of permit issue, design of permit, criteria for permits, information booklets for users, terms and conditions of use etc. would need to be agreed.
- 3.2. If the permits are issued by a Primary Health Care Trust, they may be willing to bear the costs of the time and the purchase of the permits.
- 3.3. If the permits will not be issued by a PCT, then this would fall to the district or county council. Under the terms of the agreement district councils are able to

reclaim their administration costs either from the NPP or by making a charge to the applicant. Resident's parking permits currently have an administrative cost of £15.

- 3.4. The NPP currently is managing a deficit and so have no capacity to fund additional payments to the districts, therefore a charge would have to be made to the applicant to cover these costs.
- 3.5. If the permits were to be issued by the County Council this would place an administrative burden upon the blue badge issuing team that they would find difficult to manage with the resources that they have.

#### **4. Issues, risks and innovation**

- 4.1. Leaving hospital after an operation can have a significant short term impact on mobility, but increasing the number of permitted users may result in the permanently disabled not being able to find a parking space.
- 4.2. It does not appear that any other local authorities are currently offering this service so we cannot benefit from their experiences.

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1. The disabled persons parking badge 'blue badge' scheme operates across nationally (except in London where blue badges are not always valid). There is no option to receive a 'temporary' badge through this scheme.
- 5.2. Local councils have the power to offer dispensations to permit people to park where they would not normally be authorised to do so. Around the county these powers are used by local authorities to enable building works, or to assist care workers and tradespeople to park near to their customers homes.
- 5.3. When considering our response to Norman Lamb, we asked the District Councils in Norfolk and Norwich City Council if they had any plans to issue temporary permits to disabled people to allow parking in off street disabled persons spaces (or in the case of Norwich City Council – off street and on street bays). All authorities who replied said that they had no plans to do so at this time.
- 5.4. No examples could be found of a local authority issuing a temporary disabled persons badge or operating a temporary dispensation scheme for people recently discharged from hospital.
- 5.5. Any such scheme would require significant input from disability action groups in Norfolk to ensure that disabled residents had an opportunity to comment on this proposal and to inform an equality impact assessment.

#### **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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