

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

14 JULY 2022

**REPORT OF PLACE
SELECT COMMITTEE**

CABINET DECISION

Lead Cabinet Member – Environment and Transport – Cllr Michael Smith

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF RESIDENTS PARKING ZONES

SUMMARY

The attached report presents the outcomes of the Place Select Committee's review of Residents Parking Zones.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) / DECISION(S)

This topic was included on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2021-2022. The review is now complete, and the recommendations have been endorsed by the Place Select Committee for submission to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommend that:

Process

- 1) To increase understanding around Residents Parking Zones (RPZs), Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) produces and publishes a flowchart outlining the key aspects involved in the process, determination and, if approved, implementation of this scheme.
- 2) SBC revises its existing 'high-level' RPZ policy (making this available on the SBC website and via any other relevant publicly-accessible mechanism) to:
 - a) Clearly define the different types of permits available and what these allow / prohibit.
 - b) Provide clear guidance on the eligibility requirements for a RPZ and define what is appropriate (giving any relevant examples).
 - c) Clearly define where a RPZ would not be appropriate (e.g. around schools and not deterring people visiting high-use areas like parks).
 - d) Outline who should be consulted regarding the determination of an RPZ request (i.e. affected residents, business forums, SBC Ward Councillors, Parish / Town Councils).

- 3) SBC reviews the current RPZ charging policy, particularly around the cost of business permits, and the maximum quantity of permits per household / business.
- 4) Ward Councillor briefings are scheduled to raise awareness of a revised RPZ policy, reinforcing eligibility / exclusion criteria and opportunities for Elected Member input during the process (including ways Councillors can feed back on the any issues regarding RPZs in their Ward).

Determination

- 5) When responding to a RPZ request, SBC ensures that clearly defined criteria is used to identify the appropriate extents of a RPZ, taking account of the impact this would have on residents, nearby businesses, and visitors to that particular part of the Borough.
- 6) The revised RPZ policy allows for consideration of permits to be approved for single streets (where appropriate) in addition to the existing 'zonal' approach.

Implementation

- 7) Work is undertaken with the SBC Civic Enforcement team to establish an enforcement plan around existing, and potentially future, RPZs, and that any enforcement action be highlighted via SBC communication platforms as a means of deterring abuse of RPZs.
- 8) A periodic review of any RPZ is included as part of a revised RPZ policy (akin to West Sussex County Council).
- 9) An audit of existing RPZs be undertaken to ensure line markings are clear and signage is appropriate.

DETAIL

1. The Council has only a 'high-level' policy regarding Residents Parking Zones (RPZs) which has not been fully reviewed since 2004. There are regular requests for them from residents living near town and local shopping centres, as well as near traffic generating facilities such as hospitals and schools. Many residents think that RPZs are a panacea with no downsides – the reality is that there are a range of issues that could arise out of them (e.g. costs to residents and visitors, no guarantee of a parking space for residents or visitors, issues with enforcement, potential loss of parking spaces, moving the problem to areas immediately outside any residents parking zone, etc.).
2. To fully investigate the need for a RPZ requires a reasonable amount of staff resources and has a financial impact on the Council, but ultimately leads to the majority of requests being turned down either because there are no justifiable reasons to implement a scheme or because they are not supported by the majority of residents. An updated and more detailed policy and procedure might result in fewer resident requests and a more efficient way of dealing with these, thereby saving both money and officer time. The administration, maintenance and enforcement of these schemes are also an ongoing burden on Council resources.
3. There is limited publicly-available information on how the Council assesses a request, and further clarity as to the role of Ward Councillors would be useful. Councillors can find themselves in an invidious position if they are asked whether they support a request without having the results of the investigation arising from the request itself.

4. Residents have an understandable desire to be able to park near their homes, however, the full consequences of implementing a RPZ to residents are not always clear when initially requesting a scheme.
5. This review ties-in with the Council's town centre regeneration proposals. There is an important interface between encouraging businesses and customers, and impact on residents living nearby, requiring a balance to be struck. Areas where demand on parking is oversubscribed can lead to road safety and accessibility issues, especially to those who are mobility-impaired.
6. RPZs can help keep people safe and healthy by managing parking in areas where it is oversubscribed to ensure roads and pavements are safe to use by all. Correctly balancing the needs of residential and business-related parking can also help support jobs and the economy.
7. The overall aim of the review was to inform the objectives / components of a revised policy on RPZs to be contained within the revised Car Parking Policy for the Borough, and provide:
 - Updated clear and transparent policy and procedures for assessing the need and implementing RPZs.
 - Full information available to residents on the pros and cons of a RPZ so that they can make informed decisions about whether to request one in the first place.
 - Minimise the cost to the Council of investigating, introducing, enforcing and ongoing administration of RPZs.
 - Clarification of the Ward Councillor role in the process for determining whether a scheme is progressed or not.
8. The Committee took evidence from relevant Council departments, engaged with local business groups, and considered information on similar schemes from other Local Authorities across the UK. An Elected Members survey was also conducted to elicit the views of Ward Councillors on RPZs.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

9. This is the latest scrutiny review regarding parking-related issues which has aimed to clarify the benefits and challenges presented by RPZs. The Committee's recommendations intend to help the production of a revised Council policy on RPZs so the public (including Elected Members) are better informed about the eligibility criteria and the key aspects involved in the process, determination and, if approved, implementation of this scheme. Consideration has also been given to balancing the needs of residents and businesses (as well as their visitors).

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

10. There are no direct implications in the report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. Greater public awareness of the limitations of RPZs may reduce the number of requests requiring officer time and resources to investigate. Strengthened enforcement of existing RPZs may help deter abuse of these areas, thereby decreasing the administrative costs associated with the issuing of penalty charge notices (PCNs). Reviewing the current costs for RPZ permits may impact upon take-up and therefore income.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12. There are no legal implications identified at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

13. The review is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

14. Locations of existing RPZs within the Borough are outlined within the Committee's final report, though future requests for other areas may arise. As part of the Committee's evidence-gathering, all SBC Ward Councillors were invited to respond to a survey seeking their views and awareness of RPZs.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

15. None.

Name of Contact Officer: Gary Woods

Post Title: Scrutiny Officer

Telephone No. 01642 526187

Email Address: gary.woods@stockton.gov.uk