

## **PARKING ON GRASS VERGES / STREET CLEANSING**

### **SUMMARY**

This report updates Members on the work undertaken to consider in more detail the issues of Parking on Grass Verges, and Street Cleansing, following referral by the Committee in April.

The Directors of Community Services, and Economic Growth and Development, will be in attendance to discuss the report.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Executive Scrutiny Committee consider and note the work undertaken.

### **DETAIL**

#### **Background**

1. At the meeting on 8 March, the Executive Scrutiny Committee considered and agreed the in-depth Select Committee policy review programme for 2016-17.
2. In line with previous years, more topics were received than could be undertaken by the available capacity of Committees, and therefore the Committee needed to prioritise the reviews to be undertaken within the available resources. A tool was used to rank suggestions to help Members priorities topics in line with previous years.
3. Street Cleansing and Parking on Grass Verges were two topics that had been suggested. At the meeting, Members felt that although they had not been prioritised for review, they were issues that were important to constituents and wished to explore if they could be accommodated within the current year's work programme. It was agreed to bring a further report to the next meeting.
4. An update report was taken to April's meeting outlining the agreed work programme and indicative timescales, together with the full range of activity undertaken by Committees (eg. site visits, Joint Committees).
5. This showed that there was an intense workload for the Membership of the Committees and supporting officers from across the Council. The report also

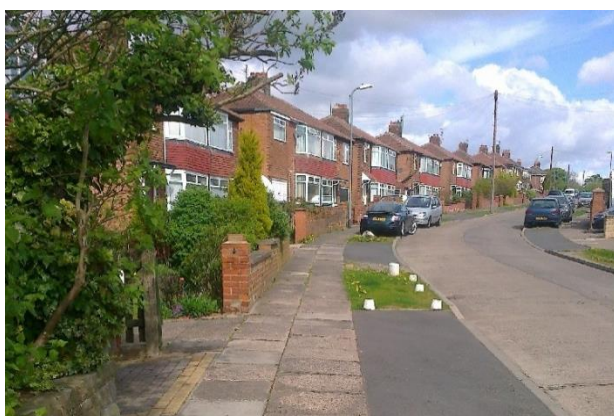
outlined the following update from Community Services in relation to street cleaning/highway verges (the Director was also present at the meeting):

‘Care For Your Area is currently being re-structured as part of their £650K contribution to the budget reduction. A review at this time would be counterproductive due to the fluctuating situation plus imminent staff and Union consultations’.

7. It was therefore recommended that the Committee did not undertake in depth review work of these issues at the time. However, recognising Members concerns it was proposed and agreed that relevant Directors and Cabinet Members meet specifically to discuss grass verges and the improvement and maintenance of the Borough’s public realm, following which a further update would be presented to Executive Scrutiny Committee in due course.
8. This has now taken place and this report summarises the outcomes of that Group’s work.

### **Grass Verge Parking/Vehicular Trespass**

9. Where vehicular trespass on grass verges occurs, unsightly damage is caused that is to the detriment of the local street scene. Damage can also be caused to underground utility apparatus that is often located in the verge.
10. Motorists sometimes feel that they are justified in parking on the grass verges to avoid causing an obstruction to the passage of traffic on the carriageway or to avoid having their vehicles damaged by passing traffic.
11. Across the Borough in some locations residents have realised the damage vehicular trespass causes and have taken steps to either protect the verges from trespass by siting rocks on the verges or replacing the grass by filling in hollows created by vehicles with gravel.



12. The Council receives numerous requests from residents for measures to address the issue of damage to grass verges, with the majority of these being to provide hardstanding to enable parking. Many of these requests are received following an Enforcement visit to an area, where removal notices have been issued on vehicles observed parked on the grass verges. If Enforcement visit a location where there is

evidence of damage without obstruction taking place then a removal notice will still be issued to the vehicle.

### Current position

13. Following receipt of a request for measures to address parking issues in an area, as well as the request being logged for future reference, the local Ward Councillors are advised. A possible scheme may be something that they wish to consider for their ward allocation of the Community Participation Budget.
14. Since the inception of this budget in 2007/08 measures to address this issue have accounted for on average a quarter of the annual allocation, with between 10 and 15 projects being delivered each year. There are 2 options available to address this issue, i.e. to either protect the verges from trespass with the installation of bollards or the creation of hardstanding to formalise the parking. These are outlined as follows:

### Bollards

15. Whilst the introduction of bollards on a grass verge prevents vehicles from driving on the area it can have the effect of displacing the issue to the nearby verges which are not protected. The installation of bollards in a large number of verges in an area could have a detrimental effect on the street scene as the vehicular damage to the grass; this is especially so if not all of the verges in the area were being driven on. An over proliferation of bollards in an area could be considered to be street clutter.
16. The installation of bollards would also not address the issue of a lack of parking provision in an area.
17. Typically bollards are only recommended at locations where the grass verge trespass is not associated with residential parking issues. The examples below are where there were school time parking issues close to a junction and vehicles undertaking vehicles waiting to turn at a junction.





### **Block Paving/Macadam Hardstanding**

18. Several years ago, following the planning changes regarding the permitted development rights for the creation of driveways, the decision was taken to create parking hardstanding areas in place of grass verges using permeable materials to avoid any localised flooding issues.
19. Whilst the cost of block paving and macadam hardstanding is similar, this is a costly option given the limited budget of the Community Participation Budget, with a typical verge the width and length of a car costing approximately £2,000 to alter to hardstanding. Although in some cases the grass verges are treated to allow a vehicle to park half on the hardstanding and half on the carriageway and leaving some grass in place.
20. In many residential streets the number of grass verges often means that it is not possible for the available ward budget to fund a scheme for the whole street. This can lead to conflict from those residents living where verge hardstanding is not created, not only in a street where some areas have been created but also from neighbouring streets where there is also a parking issue.





## Reinforced Grass Grid Hardstanding

21. Reinforced grass grids are a method of providing parking hardstanding whilst maintaining the grass finish to the verge. This method has been tried at various locations across the Borough with varying degrees of success. Following which, it has been assessed that this is not an appropriate method for use in residential areas where the hardstanding is parked on for long periods. As can be seen in the first image below the effect of long periods of parking affects the grass growth. This method of hardstanding is to be reserved for areas of periodic parking i.e. overflow car parks or verges to the front of utility cabinets, where parking is only by maintenance vehicles.





## The Future

22. Given the Council's budget pressures it may prove difficult to continue to respond to requests from residents to provide measures to address parking issues and vehicular trespass on grass verges.
23. Although removal notices can be issued to the owners of any vehicles parking on grass verges, this enforcement action is sometimes only effective for a short period after which vehicles are again parking on the grass verge.
24. It should also be noted that in some locations where residents have requested hardstanding areas in place of the grass verges there is sufficient space within the curtilage of the properties for the owners to create additional private parking provision. Residents may only be inclined to consider providing additional parking provision within their own curtilage if there were stronger enforcement of vehicular trespass on the grass verges, to deter them from parking there. This would be a resource pressure and would be considered low priority for enforcement. The use of Community Protection Notices (CPN) has also been considered, however there is an initial cost to the Council to make a civil application to a Court with the onus on the Council to prove how the damage has been caused. This action would be unlikely to result in the success of cases and to receive appropriate award of costs against individuals to cover the cost incurred of fees and repair of the damage caused.

## **Conclusion**

25. The Enforcement Service is undergoing review as part of the Big Picture savings programme, and there will be less resources to respond to all the issues the Services currently deals with.
26. Following the service review, hotspots of chronic parking on verges could still be targeted in a planned manner following receipt of intelligence, from Ward Members for example. The Enforcement Team may also identify and respond to parking issues as part of ongoing operational delivery.
27. However such actions would be taken in the overall context of reduced resources and would need to be balanced against the priorities for the service at that point in time.
28. The only source of funding to provide formalised parking is via Ward Member Community Participation Budgets (CPBs). Ward Members are therefore able to respond to localised issues if they decide to do so. However it is recognised that the use of this limited funding is subject to competing priorities, and does not enable a strategic response across significant parts of the Borough.
29. Members should be aware that the future availability of CPBs as a funding stream is subject to discussions as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2017/18 onwards, and therefore may not be available in future years.
30. In 2009, the former Regeneration and Transport Select Committee undertook a review of Pavement Parking. As one of the recommendations, guidance on Parking on Pavements was developed for residents and this outlined what was/was not acceptable. This is available on the Council website and will be recirculated to all Members, and an article considered for Stockton News.

## **Street Cleansing**

31. Care for Your Area Services (CFYA) provide Street Cleansing services across the Borough using a combination of manual and mechanical cleansing arrangements.
32. Cleansing is delivered via both manual and mechanical arrangements which include barrow men, patch based mobile cleansing staff, fast response teams as well as a fleet of various mechanical sweepers to deal with channel sweeping and back alley cleansing.
33. The deployment of resources is aligned to both statutory requirements, in relation to a range of environmental legislation, as well as to ensure that we are able to provide both a programmed and responsive service to all areas within the Borough.
34. Some locations require a higher intensity of resources which include main town centres which the Authority is responsible for, including Stockton, Yarm and Norton High Streets; these areas have a permanent resource on a daily basis. Other areas which also require more intensive resources include secondary retail areas, highly trafficked locations and main thoroughfares within the Borough, which are regarded as 'Zone 1' areas.

35. The core resource of the service centres around the mobile cleansing team of 12 staff who cover all areas of the Borough to provide a weekly visit to all residential locations. This is supplemented in many locations with overlap working with the barrow staff as well as our mechanical sweeping regime.
36. Finally, the Council do have responsive resources which are deployed to deal with larger incidences of fly-tipped waste, the removal of dead animals on the highway and sharps removal.

### **Levels of Service**

37. Despite the significant financial challenges that the Council has faced in recent years, Stockton continues to deliver an excellent standard of street cleansing which is demonstrated in our high level of customer satisfaction ratings (92% in 2015-2016). Similarly, SBC compares favourably in relation to national street cleansing standards with unacceptable levels of litter reported at 7.6% and detritus was 5.2% - (900 individual surveys carried out with rating identified showing levels of litter and detritus)
38. Reductions in street cleansing resources have been significant in recent years as a direct result of revenue budget reductions. In the past three years, numbers of staff across the Street Cleansing service has been reduced by 8 FTE with a further 6 FTE to be reduced as part of the current Care for Your Area Review, which will also see reductions in staff across the Grounds Maintenance service.
39. Despite these challenges, the Council is still delivering a high standard of responsive and programmed cleansing services and SBC is still one of a handful of Councils that are still able to make the commitment for a weekly visit to all areas.

### **The Future**

40. The scale of the financial challenges that the Council face cannot be underestimated and this has clearly impacted on the resilience across the range of Care for Your Area Services.
41. There is currently a total of 46 staff within the Street Cleansing service although this number will reduce to 40 following the current management review. This will require us to refocus resources across areas where litter levels are greater and reduce back on some programmed service in areas of the Borough where litter is not as prevalent.
42. As previously stated, we will still continue to provide a weekly service for inspection and, if required, cleansing activities across all areas as well as the more intensive service across our main retail areas and main thoroughfares. However, the reduction in staff will mean that areas which are perhaps covered by both a mobile and barrow service will be reduced back and existing barrow rounds will need to be revised to match available resource and a refocused service.

### **Conclusion**

43. As part of the Council-wide savings programme, it has been previously agreed that the CFYA would be required to identify savings of £650k. This service review is ongoing and is in the staff consultation phase.



44. As noted above, this will lead to a reduction in staffing and the focussing of resources on the areas where litter is more prevalent.
45. A Members Seminar is planned for December 2016 where specific impacts on the Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance Service will be communicated.

**Director of Economic Growth and Development**

**Director of Community Services**

**Contact Officer:** Peter Mennear

**Title:** Scrutiny Officer

**Tel.** 01642 528957

**Email:** peter.mennear@stockton.gov.uk