

Place Select Committee

Scrutiny Review of Residents Parking Zones

DRAFT

(DRAFT) Final Report
June 2022

Place Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
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Select Committee - Membership

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Councillor Mohammed Javed (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Louise Baldock
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Acknowledgements

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- Tony Wrigglesworth (Senior Parking Engineer) – Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC)
- Joanne Roberts (Transport Strategy & Road Safety Manager) – SBC
- Andrew Corcoran (Highways, Transport & Design Manager) – SBC
- Marc Stephenson (Community Protection & Resilience Service Manager) – SBC
- Sara Fellows (Assistant Town Centres Development Officer) – SBC
- James Burrell (Consultation Officer) – SBC
- Helen Deehan (Vice-Chair) – Norton Business Forum
- Jason Maxwell (Manager) – Stockton Business Improvement District (BID)
- Paddy Morton (Chair) – Yarm Business Forum
- All SBC Ward Councillors who responded to the survey issued as part of this review

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Foreword

TBC



Cllr Chris Barlow
Chair
Place Select Committee



Cllr Mohammed Javed
Vice-Chair
Place Select Committee

Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

Making the Borough a place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm

- *People are supported and protected from harm*
- *People live healthy lives*

Making the Borough a place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed

- *A growing economy*

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

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.).

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 ongoing administration, maintenance and enforcement of these schemes are also an ongoing burden on Council resources.

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.

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.

A review would tie-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.

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.

The overall aim of the review would be to inform the objectives and components of a revised policy on RPZs to be contained within the revised Car Parking Policy for the Borough.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- What is the legislative framework for RPZs?
- What is the Council's current policy and approach?
- What sorts of areas generate the most requests for RPZs?
- What are the issues for local businesses?
- What are the issues for residents?
- How can we balance the needs of residents and local business?
- What are the pros and cons of an RPZ? How are these communicated to residents?
- What issues are experienced in and around areas where RPZs are introduced?
- What are the costs to the Local Residents? Should this be reviewed?
- What approach do other Tees Valley Local Authorities take?
- What are the objectives of a Residents Parking Scheme?
- What should the components of a new policy be?
- How should Members be involved in the process?
- Could the process be streamlined/ made more efficient?
- How should the Council publicise the policy?

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

The overall aim of the review would be 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 Council of investigating, introducing, enforcing and ongoing administration of RPZs
- Clarification of the role of ward councillors in the process for determining whether a scheme is progressed or not.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the Place Select Committee's scrutiny review of Residents Parking Zones.
- 1.2 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.).
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 A review would tie-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.
- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 The overall aim of the review would be to inform the objectives / components of a revised policy on Resident Parking Zones (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.
- 1.9 The Committee heard that RPZs are introduced and enforced through Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), with permits required to park in the zone (signage and bay markings formalise parking spaces) during specific times. They are enforced by the SBC Civic Enforcement team via issuing of PCNs.
- 1.10 There are multiple pros and cons surrounding the use of RPZs. Positive developments include residents with no off-street parking facility having a reasonable opportunity to park close to (even if not right in front of) their homes, reduced traffic flow on residential streets (improving safety and air quality), and improved access for emergency vehicles. However, RPZs also have a potential downside – a scheme in one area might create or worsen parking problems in adjacent areas, could inhibit activities of commercial and other non-residential activities within the zone (especially retail areas), and parking capacity could still be inadequate (compared to demand). Crucially, having a permit is not a guarantee of a particular parking space at all times.
- 1.11 The Committee was briefed on the existing SBC principles and processes around RPZs, including costs to the applicant (currently £10 for each resident's car, £10 for each visitor permit, and £50 for each business permit (one per business)). Members heard that it costs SBC between £10,000-£20,000 to introduce a RPZ (officer time to produce scheme, legal costs of TRO (including advertising), signing and lining), plus admin (permit applications and production) and enforcement officer costs. Members noted that an RPZ scheme could not be introduced on a single street and questioned whether this policy was appropriate in all cases (e.g. in relation to streets with problems of parking over driveways).
- 1.12 There were currently six RPZs in operation across the Borough – Hardwick Estate, Stockton Town Centre, Trinity Gardens, Eaglescliffe (Station Road), Yarm High Street, and Yarm Town Centre West. Compared to the total number of eligible properties for these six RPZ areas, the rate of resident and visitor permits issued had remained relatively low since 2017-2018 (though was higher in Yarm).
- 1.13 In terms of enforcement, 629 PCNs (imposing a fine of £50.00, reduced to £25.00 if paid within seven days) had been issued in the previous year for parking offences – 9% of these were in relation to RPZs. The SBC Civic Enforcement Team was a multi-disciplinary team with numerous responsibilities (parking contraventions were just one of their priorities) – the team were reactive but also operated on an intelligence-led approach; as RPZs often bordered town centres, they were incorporated into patrol routes. However, it should be stressed that resources are limited which inevitably impacts on SBCs ability to enforce existing RPZs, let alone any potential new ones.
- 1.14 Business groups provided their views on RPZs and the potential impact on trade due to restrictions on parking (particularly when trying to recover from the difficulties posed by COVID). Concerns were also repeated around enforcement and the displacement of parking problems to other areas, and the need to factor-in business views when considering a RPZ application.

- 1.15 An Elected Member survey was undertaken to establish Ward Councillor views on this scrutiny topic. Of the 20 respondents, just over half felt they understood the current eligibility criteria for a RPZ, and only 8 were aware of the current procedure for investigating a RPZ. Just over half felt the current permit prices were about right, and 14 felt the permit allowance per household (two resident permits and one visitor permit / booklet) was appropriate. Respondents also stated that further consideration around additional permits for households with someone with a disability on the enhanced mobility level or blue badge.
- 1.16 Several examples of RPZ use by other Local Authorities were considered (including costs to the applicant), with Members noting that Stockton-on-Tees was the only Borough in the Tees Valley to have a limit on the number of permits permitted per household (officers explained that previously there had been abuse of permits to facilitate parking for local businesses and, as a result, a full consultation exercise had been carried out and visitor passes limited to two per property). The Committee was particularly keen that a revised SBC policy should incorporate a periodic review of any existing RPZ (as per West Sussex County Council), and also highlighted the need to understand the potential impact of a RPZ on nearby amenities such as leisure facilities, parks and schools.
- 1.17 In summary, the Committee is sympathetic to the problems which local residents, businesses and their visitors encounter, and urge the Council to continue to promote the key messages around RPZs, in particular the fact that they may not solve the parking issues being experienced within a specific part of the Borough. Moving forward, it is also acknowledged that the impact of the push for electric vehicles (and the associated ability for owners to charge their vehicles outside / near to their property) may well be a future scrutiny issue.
- 1.18 Scrutiny has embarked on several parking-related reviews in the past, and challenges remain in finding solutions when, ultimately, there are simply more vehicles competing for the same (sometimes less) space. Personal responsibility to park appropriately (regardless of the temptation to use a restricted area for a quick drop-off / pick-up) and observe existing rules and regulations (even if this means parking further away from the intended destination and walking) cannot be overlooked – drivers would not like other vehicle-owners misusing their allocated space, so should be respectful not to do the same to others.

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.**

(continued overleaf...)

Recommendations (continued)

The Committee recommend that:

- 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 application (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 application, 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

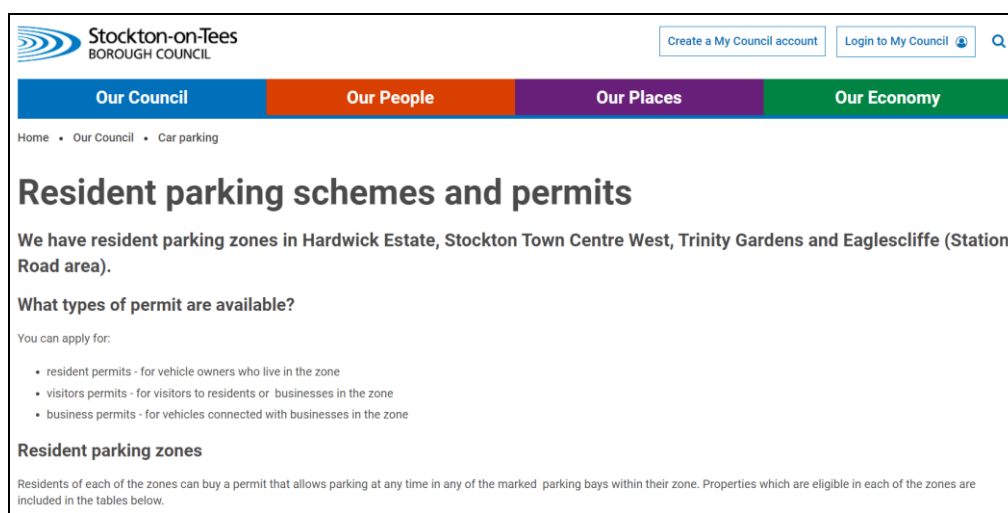
- 7) **Work is undertaken with the SBC Civic Enforcement team to establish an enforcement plan around existing, and potentially future, RPZs, and that any enforcement action be highlighted via SBC communication platforms as a means of deterring abuse of RPZs.**
- 8) **A periodic review of any RPZ is 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.**

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the Place Select Committee's scrutiny review of Residents Parking Zones.
- 2.2 The overall aim of the review would be to inform the objectives / components of a revised policy on Resident Parking Zones (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.
- 2.3 The Committee undertook a number of key lines of enquiry which focused on the following:
- What is the legislative framework for RPZs?
 - What is the Council's current policy and approach?
 - What sorts of areas generate the most requests for RPZs?
 - What are the issues for local businesses?
 - What are the issues for residents?
 - How can we balance the needs of residents and local business?
 - What are the pros and cons of a RPZ? How are these communicated to residents?
 - What issues are experienced in and around areas where RPZs are introduced?
 - What are the costs to the Local Residents? Should this be reviewed?
 - What approach do other Tees Valley Local Authorities take?
 - What are the objectives of a Residents Parking Scheme?
 - What should the components of a new policy be?
 - How should Members be involved in the process?
 - Could the process be streamlined / made more efficient?
 - How should the Council publicise the policy?
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 Recognising the increasing pressure on the Council's finances, it is imperative that in-depth scrutiny reviews promote the Council's policy priorities and, where possible, seek to identify efficiencies and reduce demand for services.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 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.).



- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 A review would tie-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.

- 3.6 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.

4.0 Findings

Legislative Framework

- 4.1 Residents Parking Zones (RPZs), referred to in other parts of the UK as Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) or Resident Parking Schemes (RPSs), provide Local Authorities with a tool which aims to protect the parking needs of residents, businesses and their visitors.
- 4.2 Considered and implemented where there is an over-demand for parking in an area, RPZs are introduced and enforced through Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), legal orders which allows the highway authority to regulate the speed, movement and parking of vehicles. The act governing TROs is the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and is enforceable by law.

The screenshot displays the 'Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984' page, specifically 'Section 1'. It features a 'Changes over time for: Section 1' timeline with the following dates: 01/06/2015, 27/04/2017, 08/05/2017, 27/06/2017, and 30/01/2021. A green box highlights 'Changes to legislation: Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Section 1 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 12 June 2022. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations.' Below the timeline, the text of Section 1 is shown: 'Traffic regulation orders outside Greater London. (1) [F1] The traffic authority for a road outside Greater London may make an order under this section (referred to in this Act as a "traffic regulation order") in respect of the road] where it appears to the authority making the order that it is expedient to make it— (a) for avoiding danger to persons or other traffic using the road or any other road or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising, or (b) for preventing damage to the road or to any building on or near the road, or (c) for facilitating the passage on the road or any other road of any class of traffic (including pedestrians), or (d) for preventing the use of the road by vehicular traffic of a kind which, or its use by vehicular traffic in a manner which, is unsuitable having regard to the existing character of the road or adjoining property, or (e) (without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (d) above) for preserving the character of the road in a case where it is specially suitable for use by persons on horseback or on foot, or (f) for preserving or improving the amenities of the area through which the road runs [F2] or (g) for any of the purposes specified in paragraphs (a) to (c) of subsection (1) of section 87 of the Environment Act 1995 (air quality).]

- 4.3 Permits are required to park in the designated zone during specific times, with signage and bay markings formalising parking spaces, as per the requirements of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD) 2016, the regulations of which prescribe the design and conditions of use of traffic signs on or near roads in England, Scotland and Wales.



- 4.4 Through the Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) powers which were introduced locally in 2004, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's (SBC) RPZs are enforced by the Council's Civic Enforcement Team via the issuing of penalty charge notices (PCNs).

Pros and Cons

- 4.5 The use of RPZs is associated with a number of established benefits:

Pros

- Residents having no off-street parking facility would have a reasonable opportunity to park close to (even if not right in front of) their homes.
- The amenity of the area would be improved with vehicles being parked in a more orderly fashion.
- A scheme may have benefits from a social, community safety, housing or planning policy aspect.
- Shared use bays provide for short term visitors without the need for complex visitor permit administration systems.
- A scheme can encourage the use of alternative modes of transport.
- They may reduce traffic flows on residential streets.
- The reduction in the number of vehicles driving around an area searching for a parking place can improve local air quality.
- A scheme can improve road safety by reducing the number of vehicles using an area and also the number parked in unsuitable locations.
- Improve traffic flow by preventing dangerous, obstructive or inconsiderate parking.
- Improve access for emergency vehicles.
- Share out the parking amongst different users and for different purposes.
- Increase the opportunities for short-term parking close to shops and businesses by promoting turnover of vehicles.
- Make parking enforcement easier as vehicles need to display a valid permit or Pay and Display ticket.
- All of the money raised from the sale of permits and by the issue of PCNs is used to pay for enforcement.
- Any money left over can be spent on improving transport facilities in the local area.

4.6 However, there are also several known challenges that RPZs also bring:

Cons

- Schemes do not agree with the primary role of the highway which is to ensure passage and re-passage.
- A resident parking scheme in one area might create or worsen parking problems in adjacent areas.
- Parking capacity for residents and visitors could at times be inadequate.
- A scheme could inhibit activities of commercial and other non-residential activities within the zone, especially retail areas.
- During restricted hours, the street may be lightly parked, possibly leading to an accusation that the 'parking stock' is being under-used.
- By formalising the parking layout, a net loss of spaces may result when turning movements and visibility at junctions are protected by new parking prohibitions.
- A scheme may limit the residents' freedom to keep unlimited numbers of taxed vehicles on street.
- Permits to park in the area are charged to the residents / businesses within the zone area (is this affordable?).
- The total amount of space on the road used for parking may be reduced.
- Unless someone is a permit holder, parking in some areas is limited to short-stays only.
- Depending on the demand, the number of permits issued may also be limited.
- A new RPZ may result in more cars parking in roads just outside the zone (displacement).
- Having a permit is not a guarantee of a particular parking space at all times.
- Residents' cars could exceed the road capacity, usually overnight.
- Costs to the Local Authority (admin / invoicing).

Current SBC Policy / Approach

Principles

- 4.7 Generally, a RPZ is only considered where the level of on-street commuter, shopper, student or visitor parking is having a significant impact on local residents. Priority will be given to areas adjacent to town centres and major establishments where parking charging regimes are in place.
- 4.8 RPZ permit fees are currently set at £10.00 for each resident's car, £10.00 for each visitor permit, and £50.00 for each business permit (one per business).
- 4.9 SBCs existing policy was that at least two-thirds of residents responding to a consultation needed to support a scheme. Following this, a formal process would commence as part of the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process.
- 4.10 Streets should not be considered in isolation as the problem can simply transfer to the next. Requests for isolated streets that do not meet the assessment criteria are not currently added to the waiting list – instead, other solutions to the problems are sought.
- 4.11 The objective of any RPZ would be to maximise the number of residents' spaces and to reduce the amount of non-residential parking in residential areas, and to balance the needs of businesses, visitors and schools, etc., with the needs of the residents.

Process

- 4.12 The Committee was provided with a brief overview of the RPZ process in Stockton-on-Tees from request to implementation:
- Request for a RPZ from resident received by officer or Ward Councillor.
 - Officer assesses location against criteria above – single-street, visitor / commuter parking avoiding charging, a significant impact on local residents.
 - If criteria not met, then a response is provided with an explanation.
 - If criteria met, parking surveys are undertaken to assess levels of parking.
 - Ward Councillor views are confirmed.
 - Resident surveys are undertaken to establish wider views (67% support required).
 - Cabinet Member approval.
 - TRO (legal) process followed (statutory advertising undertaken on-site and in local press. If / when approved, bay markings and signage installed to display the times of operation).



Costs to SBC (to introduce a RPZ)

- 4.13 Expenditure incurred by the Council in relation to the consideration and implementation of a RPZ is chiefly comprised of the following:
- Officer time to produce the scheme, legal costs of a TRO (including advertising), and signing and lining adds-up to a financial outlay of between £10,000 and £20,000.
 - Administration costs of permit applications and production.
 - Enforcement Officer costs.
- 4.14 Reflecting on the existing policy and its associated costs, the Committee heard that requests for a RPZ were received mainly around town centres, shops, businesses and local attractions such as parks. Issues in these areas include residents unable to park close to homes, along with obstructive and inconsiderate parking.
- 4.15 The Committee questioned the detail of the current RPZ policy, in particular the scope to consider any issues that might arise from a RPZ once it is in operation. Members were informed that the current policy had not been updated since 2004 and therefore there was a need to review the existing approach to assess its relevance and effectiveness.
- 4.16 Members noted that a RPZ scheme could not be introduced on a single street and questioned whether this policy was appropriate in all cases (e.g. in relation to streets with problems of parking over driveways).
- 4.17 With regards the fees to residents, business and visitors, officers stated that increasing the price of permits could generate more income for enforcement. It was also discussed whether different fees might be introduced for different RPZs rather than a universal fee.
- 4.18 It was suggested that, if an increase in the cost of a RPZ was agreed, it would seem sensible for recently installed zones to be increased last in order to remain fair to residents within them. Depending on the size of any increase, there might need to be further consultation with residents of an existing scheme; this was something which would need to be considered as part of this review.
- 4.19 The Committee highlighted the need to inform residents on all aspects of RPZs, such as the cost, the implications for multi-car households, and, critically, that they would not be guaranteed a parking space directly outside their home. Members also highlighted the importance of explaining why certain areas might need RPZs, such as older areas of the Borough where parking spaces were not part of the design or planning regulations at the time of development.

Existing RPZs in the Borough

4.20 As of January 2022, there were currently six RPZs in operation across the Borough:

<i>Resident Parking Zone</i>	<i>Hours of operation</i>	<i>Days of operation</i>
Hardwick Estate	8am and 6pm	All Week
Stockton Town Centre	8am and 6pm	Monday to Saturday
Trinity Gardens	9am and 5pm	Monday to Friday
Eaglescliffe - Station Road	9am and 5pm	Monday to Saturday
Yarm High Street	9am and 5pm	Monday to Saturday
Yarm Town Centre West	9am and 5pm	Monday to Saturday

- Hardwick Estate (2007): Implemented when the hospital introduced charging in its car parks, which led to workers at the hospital seeking alternative parking locations. No business permit parking is available, and few businesses are in the area (a couple of local shops).
- Stockton Town Centre (2010): There are two RPZs, this one to the west of the High Street covering part of Parkfield & Oxbridge Ward around Dovecot Street and Wellington Street areas, and one to the south covering Bowesfield Lane and Parliament Street areas (also in Parkfield & Oxbridge Ward) – see ‘Trinity Gardens’ below. There is not a RPZ covering Stockton High Street area as there are few residential properties. Business permit parking is available for the two RPZs (priced at £50.00 per permit), however business parking for the High Street area relies on public short-stay and long-stay as necessary that is chargeable at the daily rate.
- Trinity Gardens (2012): Implemented due to commuters avoiding car parking charges in Stockton Town Centre. Business permit parking is not available in this zone.
- Yarm High Street (2014): For residents with access from the High Street. Residents here are not eligible to a full visitor permit but are eligible for a voucher scheme where 20 vouchers for visitor parking per year can be purchased. The RPZ does not allow business permit parking, and parking for the businesses here rely on the short-stay (High Street area) as well as the long-stay car parks (which do have limited capacity) that are chargeable, as well as some small courtyard / private parking areas that are available for some business premises. In addition, to support the business needs of the Guest House and tattoo artist, voucher books can be purchased by these businesses – this informal arrangement is specific to their services as longer than the permitted three-hour maximum stay is necessary for visitors to these trades.

The Council is currently working to deliver a further long-stay car park located off West Street that will bring forward an additional 59 spaces.

Demolition and site clearance is underway, and construction should be complete in summer 2022.

- Yarm Town Centre West (2016): Historically, parking in this area was uncontrolled that attracted daily parking from workers in the town. The Council gave a commitment to the residents of this area that a RPZ would be implemented so that they would not be adversely affected by the long-stay parking that was occurring. This RPZ saw some parking displaced to outer areas such as The Spital and Butts Lane, but not to the detriment of highway safety. As well as the permit parking for residents, the marked bays on the highway are available as 'dual-use' for limited stay (up to an hour) parking to provide some parking for visitors in addition to the voucher scheme. No business permit parking is available in this area.
- Eaglescliffe – Station Road (2016): Following the car park extension at Eaglescliffe Railway Station, the station operator (Northern Rail) implemented car parking charges in 2015. Consequently, a RPZ was introduced in the surrounding roads to prevent train-users from leaving vehicles for extended periods around the area. Business permit parking is not available, however, informally some permits have been issued to the nursery located within the residential road, Albert Road, and the convenience store because of operational difficulties. In addition, 'dual-use' bays are available to the businesses on Station Road that operate the same as West Street in Yarm.

4.21 The Committee was provided with data on the numbers of both residents and visitor permits which had been issued for each of the six RPZ areas since 2017-2018:

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Zone/Permit Type					
<u>Eaglescliffe (150)</u>					
Residents	55	71	71	49	57
Visitors	55	69	65	45	54
<u>Hardwick (203)</u>					
Residents	32	48	45	31	25
Visitors	82	101	108	62	45
<u>Trinity Garden (221)</u>					
Residents	53	42	51	38	31
Visitors	126	116	144	105	64
<u>West Stockton (379)</u>					
Residents	90	90	97	70	58
Visitors	177	171	165	123	109
<u>Yarm High Street (101)</u>					
Residents	107	119	117	109	63
Visitors	40	42	53	37	37
<u>Yarm West (176)</u>					
Residents	93	94	96	83	64
Visitors	37	42	44	39	31
Total Residents	432	467	479	380	298
Total Visitors	527	554	589	412	340

Data as of March 2022 (note: 2021-2022 not quite a completed year)

- 4.22 As evident in the previous chart, the number of permits issued had declined since April 2020, a time which coincided with the emergence of COVID-19. The Council’s phone lines were closed in the initial stages of the pandemic with permits not being renewed, and, during periods of social distancing restrictions, visits to other properties were curtailed, so applications were reduced.
- 4.23 Where visitors permits are higher than residents permits, properties may have off-road parking for residents vehicles.
- 4.24 Members commented on the low number of residents permits issued (when compared to the total number of properties eligible – see number in brackets after each named zone) and questioned whether this suggested that the RPZs were not serving their original purpose.

Enforcement

- 4.25 There were 32 SBC Civic Enforcement Officers (including 12 to take up post from 1 February 2022). The SBC Civic Enforcement Team was a multi-disciplinary team with numerous responsibilities; parking contraventions were just one of their priorities. The team were reactive but also operated on an intelligence-led approach; as RPZs often bordered town centres, they were incorporated into patrol routes.
- 4.26 A penalty charge notice (PCN), issued for parking contraventions, imposed a fine of £50.00 – this was reduced to £25.00 if paid within seven days.
- For 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, 629 PCNs had been issued for parking offences relating to RPZs, 9% of the overall total of PCNs issued for all parking offences.
 - For 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, 264 PCNs had been issued for parking offences relating to RPZs, 8% of the overall total of PCNs issues for all parking offences (3,306).

Further details of PCNs issued during 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 in relation to each zone was provided as follows:

Zone	PCNs Issued	
	2020-2021	2021-2022
Eaglescliffe	5	20
Hardwick	18	7
Stockton Town Centre	40	22
Trinity Gardens	79	3
Yarm West ¹	25	45
Total:	167	97

¹ Yarm is only Yarm West because PCNs tend to be issued on the High Street for not having a pay and display ticket rather than not having a permit, so the High Street does not return any results because of this.

- 4.27 It was difficult to identify enforcement costs due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the team's work.
- 4.28 Members discussed awareness-raising for enforcement of RPZs, with acknowledgement that the current £10.00 charge for a permit was outdated and did not reflect the cost of enforcing all RPZs. Members also noted the sense of realism needed in terms of the ability of enforcing all RPZs within the Borough given the limited enforcement resources available to the Council.

Business Considerations

- 4.29 For locations outside of Yarm, business parking permits can be issued to a business with an address in a RPZ. The vehicle must be moved frequently throughout the day in the course of business – business users who use their vehicle infrequently or solely as a means of travel to / from the workplace will not qualify for a permit. The following evidence must be supplied:
- Vehicle Registration Document (DVLA V5)
 - Current Business Rates Statement
 - Utility Bill dated within the last 3 months
 - A letter from the Company Secretary / Director stating that the vehicle on the V5 is used in conjunction with the above conditions
- 4.30 Further to the above **Existing RPZs in the Borough** section which outlined resident / business parking permit availability across the Borough (already covering Stockton Town Centre and Yarm), the situation in Norton Town Centre was also considered.

Parking in Norton Town Centre for residents, businesses and visitors is unrestricted in the main, with some small areas of limited waiting to encourage turnover of parking in locations where businesses would benefit from short-term parking and waiting restrictions (single and double yellow lines) in areas where indiscriminate parking would cause road safety concerns. Norton High Street and Norton Green are sustainable mixed-use locations with many of the residents not having off-street parking and town centre businesses operating without any parking provision. The majority of parking is on-street with some small off-street car parks available. In addition, a supermarket (formerly the Co-op) has parking associated with it – a recent planning application has been approved for this site to be redeveloped as a Lidl supermarket with associated parking.

- 4.31 Representatives from Norton Business Forum, Stockton Business Improvement District (BID), and Yarm Business Forum were invited to provide their views on RPZs. Specifically, the groups were asked to highlight any issues in relation to RPZs for local businesses and comment on how SBC could balance the needs of residents and business.

Norton

- 4.32 The main issues raised were as follows:
- Not yet formally discussed with the broader Forum, but a lot of unknowns remain around RPZs (including which areas they cover).

- Lot of staff come from outside of the Borough – additional financial strain on workers to pay for a permit.
- Parking behaviour often entrenched – very difficult to change. Some do not care – enforcement is key.
- Arrival of Lidl could cause additional traffic – concern that the current dedicated parking area for visitors could be lost (despite promises to retain).
- Do RPZs discourage visitors to an area due to the creation of parking limitations? When do residents find it difficult to park (Norton has a decreased day-time economy)?
- Too many houses have more cars than they have space for. Clearer line markings may help more uniformed parking.
- Norton is an area which has expanded a lot. No bike racks – what is being done to mitigate car usage?
- More residential areas in Norton than other parts of the Borough, but employees need to park somewhere, and this can cause problems with residents. A RPZ may not solve the problem, instead just dispersing it and causing more anger from both residents and businesses.
- Norton does not have a long-stay parking offer (unlike Yarm).

Stockton

4.33 The main issues raised were as follows:

- No consideration nowadays – people do not care about being courteous to others / mindful of restrictions.
- No issues raised regarding existing RPZs from local businesses (only concerns have been around taxi parking), though forthcoming changes as part of the High Street regeneration may present new challenges.
- People crying-out for free parking but some businesses are using these spaces instead of customers.
- What if someone is visiting a business – what if a carer needs to come to a property?
- Once someone pays for a permit, they feel entitled – this can create problems for neighbours / businesses.

Yarm

4.34 The main issues raised were as follows:

- The West Street RPZ is residential and is therefore usually empty during the day – effectively wasted space.
- In the past, parking decisions were more pro-resident – now it seems the Council is taking a broader view.
- Weekends are an issue for residents who are in and out of their property more often – is there the potential to look at separate Monday to Friday and weekend schemes (this has been flagged-up previously)?
- Need to attract visitors / tourists – not yet back to pre-pandemic shopping patterns (still recovering), and need to ensure parking spaces (including areas for buses).
- Enforcement problems – lack of visibility.
- No issues with RPZs – just need careful thought and to be balanced.

- 4.35 During subsequent Committee discussions with the business group representatives, a general sense that society was becoming lazier and parking was all about convenience was echoed. However, it was also acknowledged that by making it harder to park did potentially damage business. Clearly there was a need to accommodate both residents and business as far as possible, with local enterprises involved in any RPZ consultation.
- 4.36 With regards future parking-related developments, Council officers confirmed plans to re-introduce a RPZ on the new Sycamores development (old Victoria Estate) in Stockton. Members were also reminded about the new 55-space pay-and-display long-stay car park in Yarm which would support the local economy and visitors to the area. To assess its impact, it was suggested that this new facility be reviewed at a determined point in time to establish if further parking provision is required in the town (e.g. consideration of a separate Monday-Friday and weekend scheme; potential use of alternative car park facilities).
- 4.37 Both business groups and the Committee recognised that issues around enforcement were undermining the legitimacy of such parking schemes. It was important to understand that the Council's enforcement capacity was finite, and that the creation of additional RPZs would further stretch existing resources and, potentially, further frustrate permit-holder expectations around the response to the infringement of parking restrictions.
- 4.38 Weighing-up the observations from business groups, as well as the previously reported pros and cons associated with RPZs, the Committee questioned if such schemes actually cause rather than solve problems. When considering the future of RPZs, it was fair to ask whether the Council should even have a policy.

Elected Member Views

- 4.39 In order to understand the views and experiences of SBC Elected Members around current RPZs, and if any aspects in relation to these schemes could be improved, the Committee conducted a survey for Ward Councillors in early-2022. A summary of the responses is included at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.40 Of note, of the 20 Ward Councillors who completed the survey:
- just over half (11) felt they understood the current eligibility criteria for a RPZ;
 - only eight were aware of the current procedure for investigating a RPZ;
 - just over half (11) felt the current permit prices were about right;
 - 14 felt the permit allowance per household (two resident permits and one visitor permit / booklet) was appropriate.

It was also stated that further consideration was required around additional permits for households with someone with a disability on the enhanced mobility level or blue badge.

- 4.41 Reflecting on the survey results, the Committee highlighted potential anomalies around the definition of a 'resident' (e.g. care homes – are these

residential premises or businesses?). On the issue of business permits, officers reiterated that these were for drop-off purposes, not all-day parking – as such, Members felt the name of the permit should therefore reflect this fact to avoid confusion.

- 4.42 The Committee urged careful consideration of the existing business permit offer as there were several questions around the current provision – what if more than one employee is using a space for operational purposes; is the cost too much; should there be a different charge depending on the company size?

Other Local Authority Approaches

- 4.43 To understand how the SBC offer compared with other RPZ schemes elsewhere, the Committee was presented with information from several other Local Authority areas, both regionally and on a wider national level.

Tees Valley

- 4.44 The following table outlines permit charges levied by neighbouring Councils across the Tees Valley footprint (as of January 2022):

Authority	Middlesbrough	Hartlepool	Redcar & Cleveland	Darlington	SBC
Permit Type					
1 st Permit	Free	£5	Free	£40 (12 months) £24 (6 months) £12 (3 months)	£10
2 nd Permit	Free	£10	Free	As above	£10
3 rd Permit	Free	£20	Free	As above	N/A
4 th Permit	Free	£30	Free	As above	N/A
Additional	Free	£30	Free	As above	N/A
Visitor	Free (max 2)	As above	Free (max 2)	As above	£10

Similarities:

- No public policies on RPZs but Councils have internal policies and criteria that they work from.
- All Tees Valley Local Authority enforcement teams cover environmental and anti-social behaviour issues as well as parking.

Differences:

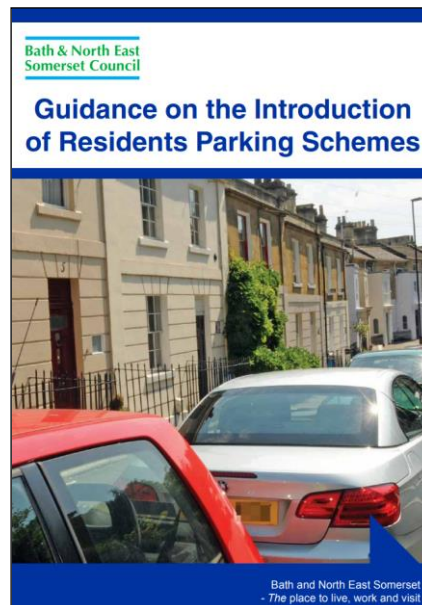
- Middlesbrough schemes will be considered where, during the day, 85% of the kerbside parking capacity is being used, where the proportion of non-residents' car parking is greater than 40%, and where there is alternative parking for displaced vehicles.
- Hartlepool is working on a Parking Strategy which will include policies on residents parking.
- Redcar and Cleveland and Darlington are using online virtual permits.

- 4.45 Members noted that Stockton-on-Tees was the only Borough in the Tees Valley to have a limit on the number of permits permitted per household. Officers explained that previously there had been abuse of permits to facilitate parking for local businesses and, as a result, a full consultation exercise had been carried out and visitor passes limited to two per property.

Bath & North East Somerset Council

- 4.46 Public guidance and policies for the introduction of RPZs (outline how decisions will be made on RPZs), identify reasons for an RPZ (appropriate priority for residents over commuter parking), explain the pros and cons (remove commuter parking, permit costs, etc.), and detail the criteria for schemes to be considered: Locations, introduction of charging displaces parking.

- https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Parking-and-Travel/Parking-Permits/dp_5558_-_guidance_on_the_introduction_of_residents_parking_scheme.pdf
- https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Parking-and-Travel/Parking-Permits/dp_5584_-_purpose_of_residents_parking_scheme_booklet.pdf



Vale of Glamorgan Council

- 4.47 As per Bath & North East Somerset Council above.
- <https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Our%20Council/Legal%20Notices/2021/Resident-Parking-Control-Policy.pdf>

Newcastle City Council

- 4.48 The first resident's permit costs £25.00 per annum and the second permit costs £75.00 per annum. Residents are entitled to a discount on the price of their permit if they have a light passenger vehicle which has a low CO2 emission figure that qualifies the vehicle for a reduced rate of annual vehicle excise duty. If successful, a £12.50 discount will be applied; a second vehicle will get a £37.50 discount. Full electric vehicles (not hybrids) will be entitled to a free permit.
- <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/parking-and-permits/parking-permits/resident-parking-permits>
- 4.49 Permit schemes have been successful and well received by local residents to help address longstanding parking problems.

City of York Council

4.50 Charges for first household permit at an address:

Number of months	Discounted rate	Standard rate	Premium rate
Temporary permit (1 month)	£10.50	£10.50	£10.50
3 months	£15.25	£30.50	£42.00
12 months	£49.98	£99.95	£139.00

4.51 Charges for second household permit at an address (first additional permit):

Number of months	Discounted rate	Standard rate	Premium rate
Temporary permit (1 month)	£20.00	£20.00	£20.00
3 months	£29.40	£58.75	£80.90
12 months	£96.25	£192.50	£267.70

4.52 Charges for third household permit at an address (second additional permit):

Number of months	Discounted rate	Standard rate	Premium rate
Temporary permit (1 month)	£34.00	£34.00	£34.00
3 months	£51.00	£102.00	£140.50
12 months	£195.00	£390.00	£542.40

4.53 From September 2021, York were moving towards digital parking permits, with paper permits being phased-out as they expire and then replaced with digital ones.

- <https://www.york.gov.uk/HouseholdParkingPermits>

4.54 Frustration had been reported among residents applying for residents' parking provision over the length of time that could be taken to implement schemes. From a Local Authority angle, the cost of running some Resident Parking Schemes in York is disproportionately expensive because of the piecemeal implementation of zones within the city. York currently has 61 zones, often single-street zones, with more waiting to be reviewed.

Leeds City Council

4.55 There is no charge for a resident permit, but there is a charge for replacement permits of £10.00. Proof of address and ownership of the vehicle are needed to obtain a permit and this needs to be renewed every three years.

4.56 Business parking permits cost £80.00 per year and to apply, a business needs to provide a copy of a tenancy, leasehold or mortgage agreement issued within three months and a business rate account which includes the name and address of the business.

- <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel/parking/parking-schemes-and-permits>

Sheffield City Council

4.57 The costs to apply for a permit per year are:

- Standard first permit: £46.80
- Standard second permit: £93.60
- City Centre inner residents permit: £260.00
- City Centre outer residents permit: £130.00

4.58 Paperless permits can be issued on the same day they were applied for but, if needed, the application may be reviewed, and a response will be given within five working days. Some applications may require further investigation. If a permit requires this, then contact will be made within 28 working days.

- <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/parking/apply-parking-permit/resident-parking-permits>

Others

4.59 Feedback on other schemes across the UK was also highlighted to the Committee as follows:

- **Leicestershire County Council:** Constraints on budgets affect implementation of schemes and require a commitment from a third-party to fully fund the scheme.
- **South Gloucestershire Council:** Enforcement of parking in permit scheme areas can be made more successful if people tell the Council about any ongoing concerns they may have. The more specific the information regarding times of breaches and if they are repeat offenders will help the Council to target enforcement.
- **Bury St Edmunds:** Too many permits are being given out so even when residents have permits there are not enough spaces. There are three times as many permits than available spaces in one zone (<https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/local-council/bury-st-edmunds-residents-parking-zones-consultation-8648584>).
- **West Sussex County Council:** Each Residents' Parking Scheme (RPS) in West Sussex is reviewed on an annual periodic basis. Residents are able to submit requests for amendments to the scheme and are taken into account as part of the Council's annual review process (https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/7465/residents_parking_schemes_fags.pdf).

Future Policy Considerations / Developments

4.60 Summarising the information received as part of this review, the Committee identified several key elements that the Council should consider when revising its existing 'high-level' policy. There was a clear need to:

- Correctly balance the needs of residential, visitor and business-related parking, particularly involving areas near to leisure facilities, parks and schools.
- Provide clear, publicly available, information on RPZs.
- Produce clear criteria for eligible locations.
- Ensure any future schemes are self-financing, with administration and enforcement costs at least met by permit fees and estimated penalty charge income.

The Committee also urged the incorporation of a periodic review in a revised SBC policy (as per the West Sussex County Council example above) and highlighted the potential requirement for Equality Impact Assessments as part of a future process.

- 4.61 Following the completion of the formal evidence-gathering for this review, officers drew attention to a subsequent development around the future provision of digital parking permits in Stockton-on-Tees. Whilst not directly relating to the main aims of the Committee's work, a briefing note was prepared outlining the key aspects:
- 4.62 Background: In 2019, a procurement exercise was undertaken to replace the software that manages penalty charge notices (PCNs) within the SBC Car Parking Team. The existing system was outdated and worked on a licence basis, and there was a need to move to a cloud-based system for data management. Chipside Ltd were awarded this contract, and as part of the contract they were also able to offer a further system (MiPermit) that enables car park operators to accept electronic payments for pay and display car parking, permit management and season tickets. Permit management involves the introduction of digital (virtual) permits that are electronic, and permit-holders do not need to display anything in their vehicle as they work off the vehicle registration number. This system has now been introduced for staff parking permits for use in Council car parks from April 2022.
- 4.63 Current Position: Digital waivers and season ticket processes were being tested and it was anticipated that this will go live by the end of May 2022. This will allow car parking customers to apply and pay online, reducing the number of calls to SBC Customer Services.

The Customer Services data recording system, Lagan, is being replaced in June 2022. This is currently the system used to register a residents permit application and then send to SBC Design and Print to issue a paper permit. As a consequence, there is a need to move to the new MiPermit system sooner than anticipated – however, there will be no change for the customer as in the first instance the process will remain the same with contact still maintained through the Customer Services team who will log data on the system, thus ensuring that there is no disruption to customers applying for their permits.

- 4.64 Discussion: In the short-term, SBC intend to use the MiPermit system in place of Lagan to register residents permit applications and continue to issue paper permits as it does now. Once the Committee's review is completed and the process and Action Plan is adopted where Members have given their insight into where parking should be made available, it is possible to consider a trial implementing the digital management system for the next residents parking scheme being implemented. This trial could give insight into potential issues

which the Council can resolve with residents who are not familiar with the current application process, and this could then be introduced across all schemes as annual renewals of permits take place.

The digitisation of services has already been considered by Members in the Scrutiny Review of Digital Optimisation (undertaken by the People Select Committee in 2018), and the recommendations for managing customer contact as the Council digitises services are applicable here. Customers will continue to be able to apply for a permit over the phone, but allowing renewals and purchases to be carried out online in the future brings the below benefits:

- People can buy their permits online at any time of day, 24-hours a day, and use them straight away.
- No costly permits to display in vehicles which can be lost.
- Update which vehicle permits cover online, at any time.
- Renew permits online and avoid waiting for a new one to arrive in the post.
- Reduce the number of calls to SBC Customer Services.

Upgrading the data management system in-line with the digitisation of services programme will provide efficiencies whilst maintaining the customer focus of the service.

5.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

- 5.1 The Council has only a 'high-level' policy regarding Residents Parking Zones (RPZs) which has not been fully reviewed since 2004. This review also 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.
- 5.2 The administration, maintenance and enforcement of RPZs is an ongoing burden on Council resources. The majority of requests are 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.
- 5.3 RPZs are introduced and enforced through Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), with permits required to park in the zone (signage and bay markings formalise parking spaces) during specific times. They are enforced by the SBC Civic Enforcement team via issuing of PCNs.
- 5.4 There are multiple pros and cons surrounding the use of RPZs. Positive developments include residents with no off-street parking facility having a reasonable opportunity to park close to (even if not right in front of) their homes, reduced traffic flow on residential streets (improving safety and air quality), and improved access for emergency vehicles. However, RPZs also have a potential downside – a scheme in one area might create or worsen parking problems in adjacent areas, could inhibit activities of commercial and other non-residential activities within the zone (especially retail areas), and parking capacity could still be inadequate (compared to demand). Crucially, having a permit is not a guarantee of a particular parking space at all times.
- 5.5 The Committee was briefed on the existing SBC principles and processes around RPZs, including costs to the applicant (currently £10 for each resident's car, £10 for each visitor permit, and £50 for each business permit (one per business)). Members heard that it costs SBC between £10,000-£20,000 to introduce a RPZ (officer time to produce scheme, legal costs of TRO (including advertising), signing and lining), plus admin (permit applications and production) and enforcement officer costs. Members noted that an RPZ scheme could not be introduced on a single street and questioned whether this policy was appropriate in all cases (e.g. in relation to streets with problems of parking over driveways).
- 5.6 There were currently six RPZs in operation across the Borough – Hardwick Estate, Stockton Town Centre, Trinity Gardens, Eaglescliffe (Station Road), Yarm High Street, and Yarm Town Centre West. Compared to the total number of eligible properties for these six RPZ areas, the rate of resident and visitor permits issued had remained relatively low since 2017-2018 (though was higher in Yarm).
- 5.7 In terms of enforcement, 629 PCNs (imposing a fine of £50.00, reduced to £25.00 if paid within seven days) had been issued in the previous year for parking offences – 9% of these were in relation to RPZs. The SBC Civic Enforcement Team was a multi-disciplinary team with numerous responsibilities (parking contraventions were just one of their priorities) – the

team were reactive but also operated on an intelligence-led approach; as RPZs often bordered town centres, they were incorporated into patrol routes. However, it should be stressed that resources are limited which inevitably impacts on SBCs ability to enforce existing RPZs, let alone any potential new ones.

- 5.8 Business groups provided their views on RPZs and the potential impact on trade due to restrictions on parking (particularly when trying to recover from the difficulties posed by COVID). Concerns were also repeated around enforcement and the displacement of parking problems to other areas, and the need to factor-in business views when considering a RPZ application.
- 5.9 An Elected Member survey was undertaken to establish Ward Councillor views on this scrutiny topic. Of the 20 respondents, just over half felt they understood the current eligibility criteria for a RPZ, and only 8 were aware of the current procedure for investigating a RPZ. Just over half felt the current permit prices were about right, and 14 felt the permit allowance per household (two resident permits and one visitor permit / booklet) was appropriate. Respondents also stated that further consideration around additional permits for households with someone with a disability on the enhanced mobility level or blue badge.
- 5.10 Several examples of RPZ use by other Local Authorities were considered (including costs to the applicant), with Members noting that Stockton-on-Tees was the only Borough in the Tees Valley to have a limit on the number of permits permitted per household (officers explained that previously there had been abuse of permits to facilitate parking for local businesses and, as a result, a full consultation exercise had been carried out and visitor passes limited to two per property). The Committee was particularly keen that a revised SBC policy should incorporate a periodic review of any existing RPZ (as per West Sussex County Council), and also highlighted the need to understand the potential impact of a RPZ on nearby amenities such as leisure facilities, parks and schools.
- 5.11 In summary, the Committee is sympathetic to the problems which local residents, businesses and their visitors encounter, and urge the Council to continue to promote the key messages around RPZs, in particular the fact that they may not solve the parking issues being experienced within a specific part of the Borough. Moving forward, it is also acknowledged that the impact of the push for electric vehicles (and the associated ability for owners to charge their vehicles outside / near to their property) may well be a future scrutiny issue.
- 5.12 Scrutiny has embarked on several parking-related reviews in the past, and challenges remain in finding solutions when, ultimately, there are simply more vehicles competing for the same (sometimes less) space. Personal responsibility to park appropriately (regardless of the temptation to use a restricted area for a quick drop-off / pick-up) and observe existing rules and regulations (even if this means parking further away from the intended destination and walking) cannot be overlooked – drivers would not like other vehicle-owners misusing their allocated space, so should be respectful not to do the same to others.

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 application (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 application, 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.**

(continued overleaf...)

Recommendations (continued)

The Committee recommend that:

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.**

APPENDIX 1: Elected Member Survey – Summary of Responses (March 2022)

Scrutiny Review of Residents Parking Zones

Summary of Elected Members Survey (20 responses)

1. I have a good understanding of how Residents Parking Zones operate

- 70% (14) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of how Resident Parking Zones (RPZs) operate, with 20% (4) disagreeing and 10% (2) neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

I understand the current eligibility criteria for a Residents Parking Zone

- 55% (11) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the current eligibility criteria for a RPZ, with 20% (4) disagreeing, and 25% (5) neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

I am aware of the current procedure for investigating a Residents Parking Zone

- 40% (8) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of the current procedure for investigating a RPZ, with 30% (6) either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, and 30% (6) neither agreeing nor disagreeing.
-

2. Are you aware of any Residents Parking Zones in your ward?

- 90% (18) of the respondents said they were not aware of any RPZs in their ward, with the other 10% (2) saying they were aware.

2a Were you involved in the process to introduce a Residents Parking Zones in your ward?

- 90% (18) of the respondents gave no response to the question, with 10% (2) saying 'no'.

2b How would you rate the process on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good)?

- There were no responses to this question.
-

3. Thinking of all the current Residents Parking Zones in the Borough, is there a particular scheme you are aware of / more familiar with?

- 45% (9) of the respondents replied 'yes', with the other 55% (11) saying 'no'.

APPENDIX 1: Elected Member Survey – Summary of Responses (March 2022)

3a Please give details of this scheme, including the location and any other relevant information:

- 55% (11) provided no response to this question.
- 45% (9) gave details of the scheme they were aware of – the responses were Dovecot St Area (2), Yarm High St (1), Eaglescliffe Station Road (1), Stockton Town Centre (1), Hardwick north tees hospital (1), Hardwick and Stockton Town Centre (1), and the K's area of Hardwick (2).

3b Thinking of this scheme, how successful do you think it has been? Please indicate the number that best represents your opinion on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (very successful):

- 55% (11) provided no response to this question.
- Of the 45% (9) who did respond, 20% (4) answered '5' (very successful), 5% (1) answered '4' (successful), and 20% (4) did not know if the scheme had been successful.

3c Please explain your answer:

- 45% (9) of respondents (those who responded to questions 3a and 3b) stated:
 - They were aware of the scheme, but not how successful it has been.
 - The only information they know is through a resident.
 - The Station Road scheme was working.
 - There was no scheme in their ward.
 - They do not have enough information to know if the scheme works.
 - The scheme had enabled residents to park in their zones without commuters taking up spaces.
 - The only parking problem in their ward is during school pick-up / drop-off times.
-

4. Do you feel that the current pricing of £10 per resident permit and £50 per business permit is:

- 55% (11) of the respondents felt that the current pricing was 'about right', 15% (3) felt the price 'should be higher', with 25% (5) feeling the price 'should be reduced'. The remaining 5% (1) provided no response to the question.

Do you feel that two resident permits and one visitor permit / booklet per household is:

- 70% (14) of the respondents felt that the resident and visitor permit / booklet level per household was 'about right', with 20% (4) believing it 'should be higher'. The remaining 10% (2) provided no response.
-

APPENDIX 1: Elected Member Survey – Summary of Responses (March 2022)

5. Please use this space to suggest any other criteria that you feel should be considered for implementing a Residents Parking Zone?

- 50% (10) provided no response to this question.
 - 50% (10) of the respondents suggested the consideration of the following criteria:
 - The impact on nearby roads who were not in a Resident Parking Zone.
 - The Committee to consider the possibility for households with someone with a disability on the enhanced mobility level to be able to have an additional permit above the maximum.
 - The design of the road.
 - The amount of parking permits designated to each household is quite low and some people will be more affected by the change for example taxi drivers or people with more than two cars.
 - Think that the resident rate might be a little bit high. However, the business one is about right.
 - There should be clear evidence regarding the extent of the problem being addressed. There should also be evidence of any likely displacement if introduced.
 - Are there any additional criteria for residents with a disability both those with and without a blue badge?
 - It should be dependent on the number of cars per household.
-

6. And finally, is there anything else you'd like to tell us? Please use the box below to share any residents feedback you'd like to be considered:

- 60% (12) provided no response to this question.
- 40% (8) of the respondents added the following:
 - More requests are being received from residents for residential parking, but they are not sure if Resident Parking Zones will resolve the issue.
 - After speaking to other residents, they feel it would be more effective than other measures.
 - It should be a maximum of 3 vehicles registered per household and £50 for business permits should be the same fee as private residents at £10.
 - Parking enforcement around these areas and in general seems to be a little sparse mainly causing irresponsible parking across drives and garages.
 - Many residents seem to think it is the easy solution to their parking problems when in reality, it might not be as effective as they think.
 - The above question doesn't indicate timescales. Is it £10 per year? Per month? £10 for a permanent permit for the entire time a resident resides there? £10 per year I feel is too low but £10 per month would be too high.