

SUBJECT:	PARKING ON GRASS VERGES – A POSITION STATEMENT
DIRECTORATE:	DIRECTORATE OF COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT
REPORT AUTHOR:	SIMON WALTERS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Further to the impromptu discussion at a previous policy scrutiny committee meeting, this report seeks to outline the position in relation to the council's current approach to tackling verge parking and goes on to suggest a pilot intervention on selected major bus routes where the impact is most acute.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The issue of verge parking has been a concern of some Members for a long time, and the City Council's approach to tackling the issue has been reviewed on a number of occasions in the past.
- 2.2 It has become more prominent once again following recent reports from Stagecoach that they are experiencing difficulties navigating a few selected areas on public bus routes due to the presence of parked vehicles.
- 2.3 This report therefore re-visits initial work completed in late September 2018, which provided an overview of verge parking, and seeks to focus the limited resources available on two or three identified hotspots on bus routes to the north of the city. This will enable the council to trial a tailored approach to each location to ascertain costs and success to then enable a more accurate picture of resource requirements to be developed for any wider scheme in the future.

3. Current situation

- 3.1 **Appendix A**, attached to this report, provides an extract of work completed in September 2018 to review the then current situation. This extract provides a useful overview of the issue but stops short of providing a range of possible interventions primarily because the costs are prohibitive and such remedial works are so generic they will not provide the more bespoke solution to each location that Members of Policy Scrutiny Committee were keen on pursuing at the 20th August 2019 meeting.
- 3.2 Since the above report has been completed two important influencing factors have emerged:
- a. Stagecoach, though their regular liaison meetings with the City Council have confirmed that they have had to alter their route/ operating methodology in three locations –Roman Pavement, Trelawney Crescent and Broxholme Gardens due to the prevalence of parked cars preventing

the safe passage of buses.

- b. The County Council are in the process of developing a Transport strategy for Lincoln. Whilst the results of this have not been released, it is envisaged that over time the aspiration will be to reduce the reliance on cars and move to more sustainable modes of transport.

- 3.3 The first issue above would suggest that a focus of any intervention work should be on ensuring vital services such as bus routes, are maintained within local communities. Therefore, this leads the city council towards a more targeted approach.

The second issue above would suggest that any large-scale investment over a period years to tackle verge parking may not be the right solution in the long term. Streets that have grass verges positively break up the look and feel of the street scene and add much needed greenery to the area. Covering over the verges with hard standing to accommodate resident parking (where the streets are wide enough) would have a significant cost and visual negative impact. If the reliance on the motorcar will reduce over the years ahead then this solution is not sustainable long term and risks irreversible damage to the street scene.

4. Way Forward

- 4.1 In order to respond to the concerns of Policy Scrutiny Committee, and to trial bespoke solutions in areas where buses are unable to navigate due to parking, the proposal for consideration here is to focus effort on the three sites above
- 4.2 The Assistant Director of Housing, Matthew Hillman, has commenced an engagement process with both Stagecoach and County Council Highways to explore options for removing the problematic parking at these locations and open them up for bus travel once again. If achievable, this will give an insight into the relative responsibilities (and capacity) of partner agencies, cost and actual success of such bespoke interventions. These should in turn enable us to plan for any possible wider intervention based on the most urgent cases.
- 4.3 Of course, whilst this work is ongoing, officers will continue to use the techniques employed to date whereby in problem areas residents are encouraged voluntarily not to park on verges through various means of communication including direct letter. This has proved effective in many cases for a period, before old habits (and hence the cars) return. The proposed "Good Neighbour" agreement being developed by Housing colleagues also provides the following aspect "Ensure that you park considerately and do not block drives or carports and wherever possible, use designated parking spaces" which will further assist once implemented.
- 4.4 The Assistant Director will provide a verbal update at the meeting in terms of his initial conversations to address the above three locations.
- 4.5 The above approach also enables the city council to assess the support that can be achieved from other agencies who have a greater responsibility for the public highway. In particular the County Council as Highway authority have a significant role but have similar budgetary constraints as the City Council and hence have to prioritise. They continue to be resistant to any intervention beyond ensuring buses

can gain access to areas.

- 4.6 As the project moves forward, noting the pressures on the General Fund as below, then this issue could be considered further by Housing Sub Committee to enable the importance of this issue to be assessed against other estate improvement demands within the Housing Revenue Account. If considered a priority by that committee, then further conversations could take place to determine if an appropriate intervention could occur within those housing areas where there is a significant parking issue and the majority of properties are retained within council ownership.

5. Organisational Impacts

5.1 Finance

To tackle verge parking across the city would be prohibitively expensive and beyond the resources of the council. In fact, with the challenges on the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy present within the General Fund, it would require significant resource re-allocation by Members to tackle this issue on any wider scale than suggested in this report.

With regard to the Council's own estates, currently no (or limited) provision exists in the Capital elements of the 30 year business plan. That plan is currently under review and as such resources could be reallocated but this would be at the detriment of other investment priorities.

Therefore, at this stage a more nuanced approach that focusses on the most significant issues relating to access for public transport would potentially be more appropriate.

Legal

The City Council could introduce measures which would prohibit parking in problem areas, using for example, Community Protection Notices or even a Public Space Protection Orders. Where fixed penalty notices have been issued for similar offences in the past it is our experience that the majority of these have been paid without the need to take court action. Where court action is necessary the majority of these cases would be heard on their papers without the need for a trial unless the Defendant requests one. Where appropriate (for persistent offenders) cases a Criminal Behaviour Order could be applied from the Magistrate's Court. Any enforcement action would have to be led by the PPASB team, and supported by legal services. This itself generates two issues:

- i) The capacity of the PPASB - the team, within current resources could not resource this. To tackle this on any scale will require significant time throughout the process and would be a never-ending draw on enforcement activity (including legal services). Whilst legally feasible, operationally its impractical in all but a few very targeted streets.
- ii) Where would the cars move to? Residents who need their cars will simply move them to adjacent streets if such Notices do not cover large areas – which takes us back to point (i) above

So whilst legally feasible, and so should be brought to Members attention, this is not a practical solution.

6. Recommendation

6.1 Policy Scrutiny Committee are requested to:

- i) note the proposed approach to tackling problem verge parking in areas that affect major bus routes as identified and
- ii) refer this issue to Housing Sub Committee to consider the impact after these trial interventions have been undertaken to assess its further application, subject to funding with the 30 year business plan

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? 1

List of Background Papers: None

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