

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR RESOURCES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 JUNE 2022	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	DIGITAL PARKING PERMITS PILOT PROJECT		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	CLIMATE STRATEGY AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	PARKING SERVICES	WARDS:	CAVERSHAM
LEAD OFFICER:	STEPH MAXWELL	TEL:	
JOB TITLE:	PROJECT MANAGER	E-MAIL:	steph.maxwell@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report seeks approval for Officers to undertake statutory consultation for an amendment to the Lower Caversham Traffic Regulation Order which will enable the issue of Digital Permits which will not need to be displayed on vehicles.

1.2 This change will be piloted for Residents and Visitor parking permits within the chosen area of Lower Caversham - Zone 02R including the new ward boundaries. It is worth noting that the geographical location of the pilot was considered because it is a well-defined and self-contained, yet is a reasonably sized zone.

1.3 The Traffic Regulation Orders to be amended are The Borough of Reading (Lower Caversham Area) (Residents Parking) Order 2019 and The Borough of Reading (Gosbrook Road) Order 2022 - Schedule 2.

1.4 The recommendations within this report have been shared with Ward Councillors and an opportunity provided for their comment within this report.

1.5 Appendices included:

- Appendix 1 - Notice of Proposal
- Appendix 2 - Draft Order
- Appendix 3 - Scheme Changes

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake a statutory consultation in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, for the proposals contained within Appendix 1 and 2. This will enable us to instruct legal to proceed in drafting the order, arrange for the notice to be published and allow the 21-day consultation to begin on the day the notice is published.

2.2 That any objection(s) received following the statutory advertisement be reported to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee (September 2022).

2.3 That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Order.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The provision of parking restrictions and associated criteria is specified within existing Traffic Management Policies and Standards.

3.2 The Digital Parking Permits Pilot Project also complements the Council's Local Transport Plan, Climate Emergency Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy by addressing local parking issues that can impact on traffic flow, perceived safety and accessibility. The resulting improvements can help us to understand our offer to our residents, act on their feedback and rollout a more efficient service borough wide to further improve customer satisfaction

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Background

4.2 The Digital Parking Permits Pilot Project, which is part of the Customer Excellence Programme, will deliver a pilot in order that a boroughwide rollout of digital permits can be considered by Members.

4.3 This project is in line with our commitment to a self-service digital first approach, reduction in manual and paper processes, improved customer experience and delivering the savings associated with the Customer Experience Programme.

4.4 Digital permits work where the permit allocated to the vehicle is known within the parking management systems specifically the enforcement system. Consequently, no physical permit is required resulting in a more efficient service for residents and reduced service cost through savings from printing and postage. Residents gain where paperless permits are issued instantly without a delay or break in cover due to delivery of a physical permit. It was also found that most local authorities offer greater flexibility in the use of visitor permits where they can be purchased by session rather than defined by a day or part of a day.

4.5 Shared experiences of digital permits suggest resident and visitor satisfaction is far greater when compared to a paper-based permit. From an enforcement perspective paperless permits are not compromised by the physical disc falling off the window of the vehicle or visitor scratch cards being used incorrectly. This, in-turn, reduces complaints and improves the reputational image of the Council by its residents.

4.6 There are 19 residents parking zones including almost 16,000 households and 12,000 parking spaces. In order to park in a permit bay, a permit must be displayed in the windscreen. There are two types of permits produced:

- Annual physical permits - resident, business, carer etc (round discs)
- Scratchcard permits - Visitors, Temporary, Landlord/Tradesperson

4.7 Residents can apply for permits online. They need to create an account and must have an e-mail address to do so. They are required to upload proof of address and vehicle before a permit can be issued. There are no changes to this as part of the pilot.

4.8 A Resident can apply offline by requesting an application form by ringing the Council. The Permit team will create an offline permit account in PermitSmarti on their behalf.

4.9 Offline customers without an e-mail address will not be able to have digital visitor permits, in this instance provision has been made for them to still receive physical permit books. This means that they will not be able to draw down in hours it will remain as half day units, with an AM permit being valid from 8am-2pm and a PM permit valid from 2pm until 10am the following morning.

4.10 During the period October 2021 to April 2022 in the area of Lower Caversham - Zone 02R 451 resident permits were issued and 5 were offline and out of 582 residents visitors permits 14 were offline.

4.11 Current Position and Proposed Changes

4.12 Digital permits work where the permit allocated to the vehicle is known within the parking management systems particularly the enforcement system consequently, no physical permit is required.

4.13 Appendix 3 shows a table of the current scheme and the proposed scheme. In summary the changes proposed will mean that:

- Permits are not printed and posted (residents and resident visitor permits).
- Scheme no longer requires a permit to be displayed in the vehicle (residents and resident visitor permits).
- Each household will be entitled to purchase in blocks of hours not books, also known as scratchcards (resident visitor permits).
- Residents are not asked to allow up to 14 days for these permits to be issued.

4.14 Procurement of a new Parking Services contract may lead to a change of supplier within the next 12 months. If Digital Permits were to go live boroughwide prior to this, a transition plan from the existing system would need to be in place and this will form part of any full rollout plan.

4.15 Options Proposed

4.16 This report seeks approval by the Sub-Committee to conduct statutory consultation on the recommended Notice of Proposal in Appendix 1.

4.17 The Order will form part of a single proposed new Traffic Regulation Order and feedback is intended to be reported at the Traffic Management Sub Committee meeting in September 2022.

4.18 Other Options Considered

4.19 It was hoped that a look up facility, similar to how people can look up if a vehicle has tax or an MOT could be developed, however, on seeking advice from our software provider, the software provider used by Bristol City Council and our own GDPR team, this was deemed to be high risk and not advisable. The risks centred around the victims of stalking or

domestic violence because any look up facility, unlike the MOT feature which is specific to a vehicle, a permit is specific to a vehicle and a location.

4.20 In order to mitigate an escalation in complaints about potentially illegally parked vehicles, the process for reporting an illegally parked vehicle will be clearly communicated to residents. We will consider other interventions as we develop the communications plan, such as any changes to on street signage, an increase in enforcement within the pilot zone from the go live date, leaflet drops, a message on the Customer Fulfilment Centre Interactive Voice Response which is an automated phone system technology that allows incoming callers to access information via a voice response system of pre-recorded messages without having to speak to a person) signposting callers to the online reporting process for illegally parked vehicles.

4.21 We will closely monitor the number of complaints received during the pilot period and we are currently creating new parking contact forms that make this procedure much easier. We also intend to have a "chatbot" working on RBC webpages to direct people to report online.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The parking strategy, procurement of civil enforcement services and changes to resident permit parking sits within the wider context of the Reading Transport Strategy 2036. Parking management and civil enforcement activities supports a number of strategic aims within the Reading Transport Strategy and Reading's Corporate Plan.

5.2 **Inclusive Economy** - Parking management of the town centre and local centres support the local economy. As a part of a contract review it was established a number of local authorities have embraced paperless or digital parking permits and many more are considering the advantages a digital permit system offers. As a part of our review into the future parking service the opportunity has been taken to explore what digital permits offers Reading residents. During the pilot any of our offline customers without an e-mail address will not be able to have digital visitor permits, in this instance provision has been made for them to still receive physical permit books. A boroughwide rollout would need to ensure we create an equitable permit provision for offline residents.

5.3 **Healthy Environment** - Parking management has a positive impact on the public realm creating a safe and accessible environment for residents, workers and visitors. Parking management is part of the wider management of the road network which contributes to safety, protecting vulnerable users and encouraging walking and cycling.

5.4 Illegal parking can compromise safety or result in difficulties for residents and businesses. Many parking issues can create delays or accessibility obstructions for users of the network such as pedestrians, cyclists, domestic vehicles, delivery vehicles, emergency services and public transport.

5.5 Our parking permit scheme prioritises parking for residents, businesses and their visitors. Parking is limited to permit holders within these controlled parking zones. This helps to prevent commuter parking and makes it easier to find a parking space close to your address. Any vehicles parked in contravention of the rules of the highway may be issued a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN). The pilot aims to build on our current offer specifically around visitor permits.

5.6 Thriving Communities - Good parking management ensures homes, business and leisure are accessible. Parking schemes such as resident permit parking and specific restrictions such as disabled parking contribute positively to our community.

5.7 Full details of the Council's **Corporate Plan** are available on the website and include information on the projects which will deliver these priorities.

5.8 This proposal contributes to the TEAM Reading Values, as set out below:

5.9 Together - The Digital Parking Permit Pilot Project will seek to improve resident and visitor satisfaction by moving from a paper-based permit scheme for resident permits and resident's visitors permits within Lower Caversham for the period of the pilot. By conducting a pilot will enable us to work together with our residents and gain valuable feedback. In addition, RBC will work together with our suppliers to ensure the visitor permit software is fit for purpose and fully meets the needs of our residents.

5.10 Efficiency - Reduce significantly or stop printed permits supporting our climate change emergency agenda and in addition making financial savings due to the reduction in the cost of postage during the pilot.

5.11 Ambitious - Aligned to the Customer Experience Strategy we aim to be responsive to the fast-changing environment of digital and what our customers expect as their customer experience.

5.12 Make a Difference - Design and implement digital services to ensure that everyone who interacts with the Council has a better day as a result.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A climate impact assessment has been completed which suggests that the Digital Parking Permit Project will have a net low positive impact on the Climate Impact Assessment Carbon Emissions: there will be a minimal amount of energy used in creating the notices in the form of energy used to print and computer usage. Therefore, a provisional rating of Net Low Positive has been awarded for Energy Use. Use of Transport has been awarded Low Negative: where possible Officers will use council owned electric vehicles for the installation of notices, if applicable. It is not believed that this project will have any effect on creating Heatwaves/Drought/Flooding/High winds or storms, so the rating of Nil has been achieved.

6.2 We always try and use local contractors/suppliers hence the reason for giving a Nil rating for Disruption to Supply Chains. Overall, however, the short-lived and minimal negative impact for the implementation of the pilot is expected to be more than mitigated by the long-term benefits of replacing paper permits with a digital process specifically if the pilot is a success and can be rolled out to all zones for all of our parking permit types.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".

7.2 A 21-day consultation on the proposal is being planned. The feedback from the consultation will be brought back to the Traffic Management Sub Committee in September.

7.3 In addition we are working with our Internal Communications and Web teams to

develop a robust communication plan that will inform both the residents of Lower Caversham and residents boroughwide of the aims of the pilot project. To include leaflet drops, a message on the Customer Fulfilment Centre Interactive Voice Response signposting callers to the online reporting process for illegally parked vehicles, FAQ's, a presence on social media and web content changes.

7.4 Councillors have been briefed in February 2022 and we will confirm the commencement dates for statutory consultation, so that there is an opportunity for them to encourage community feedback in this process and again prior to the pilot go live date of October 2022.

7.5 Any Statutory consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, advertised on street, in the local printed newspapers and on the Council's website (the 'Consultation Hub'). Notices will be advertised in the local printed newspaper and will be erected, typically on lamp columns, as close as possible to affected area.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 We have assessed as to whether an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is relevant and whether the pilot could have a differential impact on: racial groups; gender; people with disabilities; people of a particular sexual orientation; people due to their age; people due to their religious belief; and the Armed Forces community. We have concluded that an Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant as the pilot is not deemed to be discriminatory to persons with protected characteristics.

8.3 However, because offline customers without an e-mail address will not be able to have digital visitor permits provision has been made for them to still receive physical permit books. A boroughwide rollout would need to ensure we create an equitable permit provision for offline residents.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Order for the pilot scheme will be made in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as amended and the procedure laid down by Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

9.2 The effects of which is to allow the issue of digital residents parking permits and residents visitors parking permits.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The cost of developing and implementing the pilot will be minimal. We are currently awaiting a quote for the software changes that are required to accommodate the resident's

visitor parking permits, this is expected to be around £10-12k. There will also be costs associated with the statutory consultation and additional communications, not expected to exceed £3k. The budget has been allocated by the service area from existing revenue funding streams. There are no capital implications for the pilot.

10.2 Value for Money (VFM)

10.3 All aspects of the pilot will be delivered using Reading Borough Council's own resources and existing contractors. This includes the drafting of the Traffic Regulation Order

10.4 The project provides value for money, investing in the extra software module for resident's visitors parking permits and implementing a pilot, it will help us to determine whether digital permits boroughwide for all permit types is feasible based on data gathered during the consultation and the pilot. The additional software module would not have to be purchased again in order to rollout the digital option across all zones.

10.5 Risk Assessment

10.6 The primary risk with the digital parking permits pilot project is any deferral of a decision regarding the change to the TRO and the implementation of the pilot would mean that financial savings resulting from a full rollout of digital permits across the borough and including all permit types would take longer to achieve.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None

Appendix 1 - Notice of Proposal

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

THE LOWER CAVERHAM (DIGITAL PERMITS) ORDER 20**

Reading Borough Council under Sections 1(1), 2(1) to (3), 4(2), 32, 35, 45 and 46, 49, 51, 53, and Part IV of Schedule 9 to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as amended intends to make the above Order the effects of which is to allow applications, payments and issue of Resident's Parking Permits and Visitor's Parking Permits via the Council online portal, enabling the issue of Digital Permits which will not need to be displayed on vehicles.

This will allow you to buy or renew and receive instantly a Resident's parking permit or a Visitor's parking permit at any time.

This Order will come into operation on [xxxxx]

A copy the order, statement of reasons and relevant documents can be viewed online at <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/> or inspected by prior appointment during the hours of 10.00am and 4.00pm, Monday to Friday at the Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading.

Objections to the proposals, together with the grounds on which they are made, should be sent in writing to; [xxxx] by no later than [xxxx]. If anyone requires any further information, please contact [xxx]

Dated: [xxxx]

Legal and Democratic Services Reading Borough Council Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU

Appendix 2 - Draft Order

THE BOROUGH OF READING

THE LOWER CAVERHAM (DIGITAL PERMITS) ORDER 20**

The Reading Borough Council (hereinafter referred to as "the Council") in exercise of its powers under Sections 1(1), 2(1) to (3), 4(2), 32, 35, 45 and 46, 49, 51, 53, the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (hereinafter referred to as "the Act of 1984") as amended and the Traffic Management Act 2004 as amended and of all other enabling powers and after consultation with the Chief Officer of Police in accordance with Part III of Schedule 9 to the Act of 1984 hereby makes the following Order:-

CITATION AND INTERPRETATION

1. This Order may be cited as The Lower Caversham (Digital Permits) Order 20** and shall come into operation on [xxxx].
2. In this Order, except where the context otherwise requires, the following expressions have the meanings hereby respectively assigned to them:-

"Parking Order" means any of the Orders set out in Schedule 2 to this Order or any Order varying or amending any such Order.

"Digital Parking Permit" means an electronic record of parking ticket, permit or waiver issued and confirmed by the Council to exempt a vehicle from a restriction under the terms and charges applicable at the time of issue.

3. Where in any of the Parking Orders there is a requirement or option to obtain and display a Residents Parking Permit or a Visitor Parking Permit, this requirement or option may be discharged by the obtaining of a Digital Parking Permit, as an alternative to any method set out in the relevant Parking Order.
4. The provisions of Schedule 1 to this Order shall apply to the obtaining and operation of a Digital Parking Permit.

THE COMMON SEAL of the READING)
BOROUGH COUNCIL was hereunto)
affixed this day of)
in the presence of:-)

Minute	Min Cab
Originat or	PT
Seal No.	/22
Checked	

Authorised Signatory

DRAFT

SCHEDULE 1

PROVISIONS RELATING TO DIGITAL PARKING PERMITS

(1) A Digital Parking Permit may be obtained by any of the methods provided from time to time by the Council and to be valid must be registered on an account in an electronic database approved by the Council and an indication that payment has been made and the parking period for which payment has been made shall either:

- a) appear on a hand-held device; or
- b) be obtained by a Civil Enforcement Officer contacting the service provider.

(2) Without prejudice to the provisions of the relevant Parking Order, if at any time while a vehicle is left in a parking place referred to in the Parking Order there is no indication as set out in paragraph (1) to this Schedule that payment of the charge for a Parking Ticket has been made using the Digital Parking Permit system, or there is an indication that the parking period for which payment was made has expired, it shall be presumed, unless the contrary is proved, that either:

- a) the charge for the Parking Ticket has not been duly paid in respect of that vehicle;
or
- b) the parking period for which payment was made had already expired.

(3) Where a Digital Parking Permit has been obtained as an alternative to a Parking Ticket and remains valid, any requirement in the relevant Parking Order for the Parking Ticket to be displayed on the vehicle to which it relates shall not apply.

(4) Any other provisions in a Parking Order relating to the validity of a Parking Ticket shall except where the context otherwise provides apply to a Digital Parking Permit.

SCHEDULE 2

PARKING ORDERS

The Borough of Reading (Lower Caversham Area) (Residents Parking) Order 2019

Borough of Reading (Gosbrook Road) Order 2022 - Schedule 2

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

BOROUGH OF READING

THE LOWER CAVERHAM (DIGITAL PERMITS) ORDER 20**

M. Graham
Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

PT/Legal/ 019364

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Appendix 3 - Scheme Changes

Current	Proposed	Change
Resident Permit		
<p>As long as the property is within the scheme, each household is eligible for 2 permits within a permit zone. The 1st permits have a charge of £44 and 2nd permits have a charge of £165. Permits will only be issued to domestic vehicles not commercial vehicles. The Vehicle Registrations on permits can be changed unlimited upon proof of ownership. A Resident applies online by creating a permit account in PermitSmarti. There is a process whereby a Resident can apply offline by requesting an application form. The Permit team create an offline permit account in PermitSmarti.</p>	<p>As long as the property is within the scheme, each household will be eligible for 2 permits within a permit zone. The 1st permit will have a charge of £44 and the 2nd permit will have a charge of £165. These permits will only be issued to domestic vehicles not commercial vehicles. Vehicle Registrations on permits can be changed unlimited upon proof of ownership. A Resident applies online by creating a permit account in PermitSmarti. There is a process whereby a Resident can apply offline by requesting an application form. The Permit team create an offline permit account in PermitSmarti.</p> <p>Residents will still be able to appeal any refused decisions to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.</p>	<p>Resident is issued a digital permit which will not need to be displayed on vehicles.</p> <p>For offline residents we will send a written letter of confirmation that their digital permit is active.</p> <p>Reminders for renewal prior to the expiry date will be emailed to residents.</p> <p>For offline residents we will send a written reminder for renewal prior to the expiry date.</p>
Resident Visitor Permit		
<p>As long as the property is within the scheme, every household is entitled to 40 visitor permits (1 book = 20 half-days) free of charge. All permits are in half day units, an AM permit is valid from 8am-2pm and a PM permit is valid from 2pm until 10am the following morning. Each household is entitled to 100 visitor permits (5 books = 100 half-days) at a charge of £25 per book (20 permits per book). Further books are available on request. A Resident applies online by creating a permit account in PermitSmarti. There is a process whereby a Resident can apply offline by requesting an application form. The Permit team create an offline permit account in PermitSmarti.</p>	<p>As long as the property is within the scheme, every household will be entitled to 240 hours visitor permits free of charge. One book = 20 half days 20 x 6 hours = 120 hours x 2 free books = 240 hours. Each household will be entitled to purchase in blocks of 120 hours up to 600 hours at £25 per block of 120 hours. One day will be a maximum of 12 hours. Time purchased before 2pm will deduct the number of hours selected, up to 12 hours. Note 6 hours will be the maximum session if starting after 2pm. The system will then amend the expiry time to 10am the next day. Further</p>	<p>Each household will be able to download free of charge up to 240 hours of visitor parking. Thereafter, each household will be entitled to purchase in blocks of hours.</p> <p>Reminders for renewal prior to the expiry date will be emailed to residents.</p> <p>For offline residents address we will send a written reminder for renewal prior to the expiry date.</p>

	<p>blocks of 120 hours are available on request. A Resident applies online by creating a permit account in PermitSmarti. There is a process whereby a Resident can apply offline by requesting an application form. The Permit team create an offline permit account in PermitSmarti.</p> <p>If an offline customer does not have e-mail - they will not be able to have digital visitor permits, in this instance they will still receive a physical permit books.</p>	<p>Offline customers without an e-mail address will not be able to have digital visitor permits, in this instance they will still receive physical permit books.</p>
<p>Application Process</p>		
<p>Residents can apply for permits online. They need to create an account and must have an e-mail address to do so. They are required to upload proof of address and vehicle before a permit can be issued. There are no changes to this as part of the pilot.</p> <p>A Resident can apply offline by requesting an application form by ringing the Council. The Permit team will create an offline permit account in PermitSmarti on their behalf.</p>	<p>Residents can apply for permits online. They need to create an account and must have an e-mail address to do so. They are required to upload proof of address and vehicle before a permit can be issued.</p> <p>A Resident can apply offline by requesting an application form by ringing the Council. The Permit team will create an offline permit account in PermitSmarti on their behalf.</p>	<p>There are no changes to this as part of the pilot.</p>
<p>Permits are printed and posted, as the current scheme requires a permit to be displayed in the vehicle to be able to park in the permit zones and Residents are asked to allow up to 14 days for a residents permit to be issued. Permits last for 12 months and residents can apply for two residents permits per household. A file of all new permits is sent to the printers daily by our contractor. Permits are then posted second class to the applicant. The system has been configured for the current permit offer.</p>	<p>Permits are not printed and posted, as the proposed scheme no longer requires a permit to be displayed in the vehicle to be able to park in the permit zones. and Residents are not asked to allow up to 14 days for a residents permit to be issued. Permits last for 12 months and residents can apply for two residents permits per household. The system will be configured for the proposed permit offer. Civil Enforcement Officers are provided with handheld devices which use ANPR and the live</p>	<p>Permits are not printed and posted.</p> <p>Scheme no longer requires a permit to be displayed in the vehicle.</p> <p>Residents are not asked to allow up to 14 days for a residents permit to be issued.</p>

Civil Enforcement Officers are provided with handheld devices which use ANPR and the live feed from the software system to check vehicles and record any PCNs issued.

feed from the software system to check vehicles and record any PCNs issued.