

Report to the Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date of Report: 18 March 2008

Portfolio: Housing – Councillor D Stallan

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Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry

Subject: Unauthorised Parking on Housing Estates



Decision:

The Housing Scrutiny Panel is asked by the Cabinet to consider the Council's approach to unauthorised parking on Housing estates and the level of budgetary provision for off-street parking and make recommendations to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

Background Report:

1. The Housing Portfolio Holder has identified problems with parking and increased congestion on Housing estates and recommended to the Cabinet that the Housing Scrutiny Panel consider the options for resolving the matter. The Cabinet is due to consider this recommendation at its meeting on 10 March 2008. This report has been prepared on the basis that the Cabinet will ask the Panel to consider issues on parking enforcement and the option of increasing the budget for the off-street parking programme.
2. Many of the Council's estates were built during the late 1940s and 1950s and were designed along garden village principles with cul-de-sacs, greens and grass verges. With the subsequent growth in car ownership, residents are experiencing severe parking problems on estates where parking both on and off road is at a premium. In addition, due to the introduction of permit parking, many side roads are becoming further congested (possibly by commuters) particularly in the Debden and Epping areas with vehicles being forced onto grassed verges.
3. Complaints received by Housing from the public are very much on the increase; these include increased telephone calls, letters and occasionally petitions.
4. The complaints are about two main issues. Firstly, residents are unhappy that more vehicles are being parked on grass verges causing damage to the open green spaces, which are costly to repair and can be dangerous to pedestrians and children playing. When, in response, enforcement action is taken by the Council, in the form of installing bollards, jockey rails or shrub planting, other residents complain about having nowhere to park with cars being displaced into already heavily congested side streets. Secondly, residents complain about the lack of off-street parking and put forward suggestions for schemes that could be constructed where they live.

Off-Street Parking Schemes

5. The Council is currently undertaking consultation exercises on a number of off-street parking schemes, which have been given priority under the agreed scoring system. A report will be submitted to the Cabinet during 2008 setting out the outcome of the consultations with costs and designs of each of the schemes. A copy of the off-street parking Ratings Schedule is attached as an appendix to the report. It should be noted that when the list was drawn up permit parking was not in force and therefore not taken into account within the scoring, although this is now being

assessed.

6. The budget for off-street parking for 2008/2009 is £288,000 which includes amounts carried forward from previous years. Of this amount £161,000 is Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funding with £127,000 general fund. There is currently budget provision of £80,000 per annum in future years, £43,000 funded from the HRA and £37,000 from the general fund. As off-street parking schemes are very costly, it is anticipated that this year's budget will only fund around three schemes depending upon the costs of designs and re-locating any utilities.

7. It is suggested that the Scrutiny Panel may want to consider recommending to the Cabinet increased budgetary provision for off-street parking. At its meeting on 10 March 2008, the Cabinet was due to consider a report on the HRA five-year forecast and agreed that HRA balances be reduced and maintained within the range of £3m to £4m. This results in an additional £300,000 each year being available in the Capital Programme which could be made available to fund further off-street parking schemes. However, if additional funding were to be made available it would only result in a small number of additional schemes and therefore would not solve the problem on the vast majority of congested estates.

Vehicular Crossovers – 6 metre Rule

8. Under the Council's current policy, the maximum permitted amount of grass verge to be removed in order to construct a vehicular crossover to allow residents to park their vehicles/s in their front garden is 6 metres. The 6 metre rule was agreed by the former Housing Committee on 23 March 1999 and re-affirmed by the Cabinet on 25 November 2002 and 10 April 2006.

9. If the 6 metre rule was extended this would enable, generally, for up to two vehicles to be parked off-road, although this would remove one available space on the street for the public to use on a first come first served basis.

Authorisation and Enforcement

10. In addition to receiving complaints from the public, Officers receive enquiries from Members. Some Members ask that enforcement action be taken to prevent vehicles from parking on the grassed verges with other Members asking officers not to take action as it will displace vehicles and cause problems in side streets.

11. In addition, residents often cross over large areas of grassed verge (in excess of 6 metres) illegally, parking vehicles in their front garden. Housing Management undertake the necessary enforcement action in as many cases as they are able within existing staffing resources.

12. The Housing Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider the Council's future policy to enquiries about unauthorised parking, and future expenditure on off-street parking and make recommendations to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

Consultation

13. The Tenants and Leaseholder's Federation will be consulted at their meeting on 13 March 2008 and their comments will be reported verbally.