

Report to the Housing Scrutiny Panel

Report reference: C/ /2008

Date of report: 9 October 2008



Portfolio: Housing – Councillor D Stallan

**Author: Roger Wilson extension 4419
Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins**

Subject: Parking Enforcement on Housing Estates

Decision:

The Housing Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider the attached draft policy on the Council's approach to parking enforcement on Housing-owned land and pass on its comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

Background Report:

1. At its last meeting on 3 July 2008, the Housing Scrutiny Panel considered a report on options to resolve the increasing problems with parking and increased congestion on housing estates. In order to ease the parking problems, the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Panel agreed that the following recommendations be made to the Cabinet at its meeting on 1 September 2008;
 - That the maximum amount of grassed verge to be removed in order to construct a vehicular crossover to allow residents to park their vehicle/s in their front garden be increased from 6 metres to 12 metres in length; and
 - That the additional £300,000 budget available in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme from 2009/2010 be made available to fund further off-street parking schemes, match funded from the General Fund.
2. The Cabinet agreed both of the above recommendations. However, it was further agreed that in respect of vehicular crossovers, where any crossover removes between 6 metres and 12 metres of grass verge in length, in addition to neighbours, Ward Members also be consulted.
3. The Panel also considered at its last meeting, the increase in complaints from the public about unauthorised parking; 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.
5. 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.

6 The Panel therefore, asked officers to draft a policy on the approach to be taken on unauthorised parking. A copy of the draft policy is attached to the agenda for the Panel to consider and pass its comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

Consultation

7. The Tenants and Leaseholder's Federation were consulted on the report at their meeting on 23 September 2008. Their comments on the report are as follows:

- Any policy could prove to be inconsistent, and costly should any car owners be taken to Court for continually parking on grassed verges without permission.
- More clarification should be given within the policy on matters relating to safety, including sight lines, etc.
- Parking on grass verges should not be allowed where damage could be caused to underground utilities.
- Consideration could be given to parking permits.

8. Although the above comments on the policy were put forward, the Tenants and Leaseholder's Association (by a majority of 5 in favour and 2 against) concluded that unauthorised parking on housing-owned grass verges, should generally not be permitted across the District.

9. The Housing Portfolio Holder requested that officers contact other authorities to seek information on how they approach the problem. The responses will be reported verbally at the meeting.

10. The two Area Housing Managers responsible for housing management in the north and the south of the District have been consulted on the draft enforcement policy. Although they are generally happy with policy itself they have asked that the Panel consider their concerns which are as follows:

- Any enforcement policy will be difficult to apply, as it is always going to be unclear and difficult to interpret.
- An enforcement policy could be subjective in its application and difficult decisions will need to be made, which as with the current arrangement, some will be in favour of and others against.
- When a decision is made, the Council may have difficulty explaining to residents why it is allowed in one area and not another.
- We could not allow cars to cause an obstruction, or damage grass verges in the winter which would result in high cost re-instatement works. Installing "grasscrete" on areas where enforcement action is not taken may not be the answer, as it will imply that parking is encouraged.