

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting: 4 June 2013

Subject: Background to Unauthorised Parking on Housing Owned Grassed Verges

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Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry

To note the background to the issue of unauthorised parking on Housing owned Grassed Verges.

Report:

1. The Housing Scrutiny Panel have considered the approach to unauthorised parking on housing estates on a number of occasions as follows:
2. On 18 March 2008, a report was submitted to the Panel, explaining that the Housing Portfolio Holder identified problems with parking and increased congestion on Housing estates. The Panel were asked to consider the options for resolving the matter and to consider issues on parking enforcement.
3. The Panel noted that 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.
4. Complaints received by Housing from the public were very much on the increase; these include increased telephone calls, letters and occasionally petitions.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. The Panel asked for a consultation exercise to be undertaken with all Members and an item was placed in the Members Bulletin.
8. On 3 July 2008, the Housing Scrutiny Panel considered a further report and noted that

6 responses to the consultation were received from Members. The majority agreed that more should be spent on off-street parking schemes and that the 6 metre rule for vehicular crossovers should be extended to 12 metres. Furthermore, the Panel asked officers to draft a policy on the approach to be taken on unauthorised parking.

9. On 9 October 2009, the Panel considered a further report and agreed that the draft policy be recommended for Cabinet approval, subject to the Panel's amendments.

10. The Panel recommended to Cabinet at its meeting on 1 September 2008, that further budget provision for off-street parking should be made and that the amount of grass verge permitted to be removed in order for residents to install a vehicular crossover be increased from 6 metres to 12 metres which was agreed.

11. On 23 March 2009, the Panel considered a further report. It was noted that the (officer) Corporate Executive Forum had concerns that the proposed unauthorised parking policy may be difficult to enforce, but as the report had been considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel and the Housing Portfolio Holder it was agreed it should be submitted to the Cabinet on 15 December 2008 for consideration. However, prior to the Cabinet meeting, the Housing Portfolio Holder decided that the report should be deferred and the matter be referred again to the Panel.

12. On 23 March 2009, the Panel considered a further report and agreed that parking enforcement measures are undertaken on an ad hoc basis where problems are particularly bad, following consultation with local residents and Ward Members and that the position be reviewed at a future date.

13. On 27 January 2011, the Panel considered a further report and agreed that the policy of carrying out parking enforcement measures on an ad hoc basis on housing-owned land continued indefinitely.

14. The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation were consulted throughout the process their view was (by a majority of 5 in favour and 2 against) that unauthorised parking on housing-owned grass verges, should generally not be permitted across the District.