

# Agenda Item 7



**Author/Lead Officer of Report:** Ben Brailsford,  
Parking Services Manager

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**Report of:** Executive Director of Place  
**Report to:** Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport  
**Date of Decision:** 9 March 2017  
**Subject:** **Changes to prices for paperless visitor parking vouchers**

Is this a Key Decision? If Yes, reason Key Decision:-	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- Expenditure and/or savings over £500,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	
- Affects 2 or more Wards	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Which Cabinet Member Portfolio does this relate to Infrastructure and Transport		
Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? <b>Safer and Stronger Communities</b>		
Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 1228		
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-		
<i>"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."</i>		

## Purpose of Report:

To seek approval to offer electronic paperless visitor parking vouchers at a lower rate than the current paper visitor parking vouchers.

**Recommendations:**

To introduce paperless parking visitor vouchers at £10 per batch of 25, 25% less than the current cost of paper booklets.

To maintain a contingency of paper parking visitor booklets to support customers with additional needs.

Lead Officer to complete:-	
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.
	Finance: <i>Paul Foster</i>
	Legal: <i>Louise Bate</i>
	Equalities: <i>Annemarie Johnson</i>
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	<b>EMT member who approved submission:</b> <i>Laraine Manley</i>
3	<b>Cabinet Member consulted:</b> <i>Mazher Iqbal</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Decision Maker by the EMT member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.
	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b> <i>Ben Brailsford</i>
	<b>Job Title:</b> <i>Parking Services Manager</i>
	<b>Date:</b> <i>17 February 2017</i>

## 1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 As part of the Council's Customer Experience Strategy, Parking Services are changing some parking permit types from physical paper permits, to electronic paperless parking permits. The project is designed to improve customer experience of applying for parking permits in Sheffield by speeding the process up and putting the customer in control of simple changes.
- 1.2 Customers already apply for permits online. These online applications are manually transferred to a separate computer system, and evidence checked. Once evidence has been checked, customers are then contacted to be requested to pay. Once payment has been received a physical paper permit is issued using post. This process can take between five and thirty three days. On occasion this can leave a customer without a permit which can lead to PCN's being issued and then overturned. This is a poor customer experience and an unnecessary use of council staffing resource.
- 1.3 The new paperless system will still allow customers to apply online, but it will be directly into the parking system to remove the need for re-keying data. Payment will be taken as part of the process and the authorised paperless permit will be issued by email within 24 hours of the approved application. Evidence will be checked retrospectively and permits can be electronically "switched off" if they don't meet the correct criteria. Customers will be contacted prior to any permits being revoked to allow them to provide the correct evidence or amend their permit application. If the customer doesn't respond they will be notified that a permit has been "switched off". The parking appeals process will allow discretion for first offences where customers may not have been aware the permit was not live.
- 1.4 For most of the permit types it's a simple swap from a paper permit to a paperless one. However, it will involve a change in how visitor vouchers are to be used. There are 5,256 visitor booklets issued per year in the Peripheral Parking Zones making them the single greatest designation of permit issued to customers.
- 1.5 Currently paper visitor vouchers are sold in booklets of 25 which cost £12.50 per book, equivalent to £0.50 per voucher. The books are limited to 6 per household, so the annual cost is £75. Each voucher is valid for its day of use and up to 10am the following morning. Their design currently allows customers to transfer vouchers between vehicles as there is no space for vehicle registration. Therefore one daily voucher could be used by different consecutive visitors without the need to use a second voucher.

- 1.6 The paperless visitor voucher requires a vehicle registration to be entered which means it can only be used once. They will still be sold in batches of 25 vouchers. However, to reduce the likelihood of customers being adversely affected, they will be set up so they can be called off in half day periods. This means that each batch of 25 vouchers could be used for up to 50 half day visits.
- 1.7 To further reduce the potential impact on customers a reduction in the pricing is proposed. There may be some people who are currently using their paper visitor vouchers more than twice in one day. There is no way currently to measure the quantity of customers this might affect. These customers could be adversely affected with the introduction of paperless vouchers, so to mitigate the potential effect; the proposal is to reduce the cost of the batch of 25 vouchers from £12.50 to £10. With a maximum of 6 batches in a year this reduces the cost from £75 per year for paper visitor vouchers to £60 per year for paperless visitor vouchers. This represents a 25% reduction in the charge.
- 1.8 The use of paperless visitor vouchers will also give a true statistical understanding of customer use of vouchers which will allow future reviews of charging to be more precise in relation to the impact on the customer.
- 1.9 To mitigate any issues experienced by individuals in the change from paper booklets to paperless vouchers, Customer Services will continue to support case resolution.

## **2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?**

- 2.1 It contributes towards “an in touch organisation” as it supports customers to be self sufficient in their parking needs, allowing access to visitor vouchers much more quickly than the current process allows. It is in response to customer requests to improve on service fulfilment times in processing parking permits. It takes advantage of existing technology to provide a service the customer is in control of.

## **3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?**

- 3.1 Consultation is not required; however feedback from customers in 2012 has been taken account of in the recommendation in this paper. Feedback was in response to a change in the design of the paper visitor voucher to require a vehicle registration to be entered. This meant it could only be used once. This change prompted complaints from residents in the Sharrowvale area. Some of these complaints were from individuals running a business from home (piano lessons or renting rooms), who were complaining that this made it more financially difficult for them. The previous design was then re-instated. Visitor vouchers shouldn't be used for business purposes, people visiting the area for business need should pay and display.

**3.2** However, the recommendation in this report does provide for residents who currently transfer paper visitor vouchers between their visitors, by providing paperless visitor vouchers to be accessed in half day segments, and by reducing the cost of the vouchers.

#### **4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

##### **4.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications**

Overall there are no significant differential, positive or negative, equality impacts. There is a potential low level negative impact on financial inclusion, older people and people with disabilities due to being less likely to have access to the internet or being able to use online services easily. To mitigate this, customers with additional needs will be supported, as they currently are, by Customer Services contact centre to access the paperless visitor vouchers, and paper vouchers will still be offered to those customers who could not access the services online. A paper booklet can still be supplied at the same value as a paperless permit.

##### **4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications**

The reduction in price from paper booklet to virtual visitor voucher of 25% means £13,140 income is at risk per year. This is likely to be the maximum cost as there is a possibility that some customers may need to purchase more vouchers than they currently do, and reduce the overall loss.

##### **4.3 Legal Implications**

A decision in relation to a discretionary pricing policy is reserved in the Leader's Scheme of Delegation to an Individual Cabinet Member.

Section 45 of the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 ("the Act") gives the Local Authority discretion to designate parking places on a highway; to charge for the use of them and to issue parking permits for a charge.

Section 46 of the Act imposes a duty on the Local Authority to prescribe any charges to be paid for vehicles left in a parking place designated by a Designation Order. Any such charge can be prescribed as an amount payable regardless of the period for which a vehicle is left.

Section 51(1) of the Act gives the Local Authority a power to require charges to be paid by the means of the hire or purchase in advance, or the use, of parking devices and to prescribe how those devices are to be used.

Section 51(4) of the Act defines a 'parking device' as either a card, disc, token, meter, permit, stamp or other similar device.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for persons with a protected characteristic to be discriminated against either directly (at section 13) or indirectly (at section 19).

Section 4 of the Act lists the protected characteristics as age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

Section 20 of the Act places a duty on the Local Authority to make reasonable adjustments for persons with a protected characteristic.

The Local Authority has a duty to prescribe charges be paid for vehicles left in a parking place designated by a Designation Order. In meeting this duty, it cannot discriminate against persons with protected characteristics by charging a higher price for the provision of paper permits where they are unable, for reasons of financial inclusion, age or disability, to access or make use of the paperless permit system.

#### **4.4 Other Implications**

This decision has implications for Customer Services in the Resources portfolio. The amount of staff needed to fulfil permit processing is affected by the volume of work required. Currently, due to the volume of work having increased since the fulfilment of permits transferred to customer services, the amount of staff employed to process permits is having to be supplemented by customer services staff from other delivery areas. This has a negative impact on other areas of customer services delivery. If visitor vouchers remain as a physical booklet then a greater number of staff will be needed to meet the demand coming in to allow the supplementary staff to return to their substantive areas. This means additional costs to customer service to allocate more staff to the process.

### **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

#### **5.1 Do nothing** – continue to implement paperless permits, but leave visitor vouchers as paper books.

**Implications** of this are increased cost to Parking Services and Sheffield City Council of continuing to have a paper system. This is an indicative cost of £10k per year based on needing additional staff to process paper permit application checks.

## **5.2 Change to paperless visitor vouchers but maintain current cost**

**Implications** – Paperless permits require the vehicle registration to be entered into the database. This will mean that vouchers cannot be transferred between vehicles in the way they currently can be. Introducing a half day voucher at half the cost, for example 5hrs parking for £0.25 would provide greater flexibility for shorter stay visitors and reduce the risk of it costing the resident more than it currently does. However there is some risk of dissatisfaction at the perceived “extra cost” if customers currently transfer the voucher more than once.

## **6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1** As part of the Customer Experience programme, introducing paperless permits improves customer ability to access vouchers quickly rather than be reliant on manual processing of an online request, which is subject to loss or delay in the post.
- 6.2** Paperless visitor vouchers will offset future costs increases for staff required for manual processing.
- 6.3** Allowing paperless vouchers to be issued in half day segments reduces risk of customers being adversely disadvantaged from the current transferable paper method.
- 6.4** Reducing costs of paperless virtual visitor vouchers means that the risk of customers being adversely affected if they do need to purchase more vouchers is reduced.
- 6.5** The maximum potential loss by introducing paperless permits at less than the current costs is £13,140. The actual loss is likely to be less than this as some customers may have to purchase more books than they currently do.
- 6.6** Support for people with additional needs or lack of internet access is still available via customer services, and a contingency of maintaining paper permits can be considered.
- 6.7** The council will gain a better understanding of visitor vouchers use, which can support any future review of parking permit policy.

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