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TO: ALL Refuse and Street Cleansing, Streetscene, Transport and Roads and Highways Contacts

Resident Parking Schemes: Heading Towards Best Practice (APSE Query: RSC0091/RH0021)

Key Issues:

- **Streets Suitable for Resident Parking Schemes**
- **The Advantages and Disadvantages of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs)**
- **How to Prioritise New Parking Schemes**
- **Shared User Bays – the challenge of Pay and Display and Voucher Schemes.**
- **Non-Residential Access**

1. Introduction

APSE recently conducted a query through the Roads and Highways Advisory and Refuse and Street Cleansing Group Networks concerning the experience of local authority car parking schemes. This brought an array of insightful responses. The areas addressed by the query are outlined above.

The issue of car parking, particularly nuisance parking, is also at the forefront of Regeneration and Liveability issues found in APSE's manifesto and addressed at several recent conferences. There are three vital areas of *impact* on local government as follows:

- **Parking - on the local environment both physically (in terms of space) but also impacts on the areas people choose to live (a possible attraction or deterrent depending on availability).**

- Urban areas - often have a lack of facilities while local authorities have to strike a balance between the need to provide facilities and prevent their abuse.
- Parking Overspill – a balance is also needed here while also making sure that those who use cars are not overly penalised.

2. Background

Recent research has outlined the growing impact of controlling parking issues. The result of this has been a massive rise in tickets issued from 3.4 million to 7.6 million in the last 10 years earning more than £350 million – from a total take of over £1 billion - for councils in England and Wales (Source RAC Foundation). Whilst there are no cumulative figures for Scotland, one authority alone issues 250,000 tickets. The balance facing local authorities is making citizens see parking control as sensible ways of traffic control and not as a means of raising revenue. A key aspect of this strategy is through turning street parking spaces into residents only parking zones.

3. Responses

Streets Suitable for Resident Parking Schemes (RPS)

The responses make clear that the conflict between Resident Parking demands and those of what a responding authority calls “car borne commuters” is very real. In this situation most responding councils have tried to work out policies that help residents who are, after all, council tax payers. Not all streets are affected by this but, in the words of one council, “those affected by commuter parking” are those “near hospitals, colleges and central shopping areas and are considered for Residents Parking Schemes.”

The conflict here resides in the fact that there can be “an excess of demand over supply for the use of on-road spaces from residents alone.” In a nutshell, when there are not even enough spaces for residents tough choices have to be made. One authority has considered “rationing car parking spaces to those prepared to pay for their use” but has not implemented such a scheme.

Other criteria used when deciding upon implementing Residents Parking Schemes (RPS) include “waiting restrictions” in an area, “a lack of street lighting” and “commercial” pressures on local parking caused by retail outlets. One authority states that the scheme is not applied to “individual streets” but, rather, in areas where “a number of streets are experiencing the same problem.” A different responding authority states, “the “size of the schemes varies from single streets to the whole of a home zone area.” Resident Parking Schemes were implemented “with a priority on the numbers of complaints about difficulties parking/requests” for parking schemes.”

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Controlled Parking Zones

Authorities responding to the query gave a number of reasons as to the benefits and disadvantages of using controlled parking zones (CPZs). These are broader geographic areas that can cover a number of streets and which charge at differential rates depending on the area.

Benefits:

A responding authority states that CPZs have “effectively eliminated the use of roads for all-day commuter parking, in furtherance of the Council’s policy to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes for journeys to work.” Apart from the environmental benefits another authority points to the fact that residents “have greater opportunity to park near their homes.” More widely, in the view of another responding authority, “you can control a full area in the same way” dealing “with the knock on effects of people moving from one area to another as you are controlling the full areas.” In short, the problem of overspill or displacing heavy parking from one area to another is tackled by CPZs rather than RP zones that often operate on a more piecemeal street by street level.

Disadvantages:

Several disadvantages to the CPZs have also been identified. One is the problem of displacing vehicles as discussed above. In the words of one local authority “there are disadvantages in displacing parking elsewhere as it is awkward for traders and businesses as they don’t get permits.” Several authorities identify the authority charge for the scheme as off putting and a key disadvantage overall. As one respondent puts it “the disadvantage is that the authority charge for the scheme to cover enforcement and people do not like to pay.” It should also be emphasised that Resident Parking Schemes are not generally seen as cash cows by authorities. In the words of one authority “Resident Parking Schemes do not generate any surplus cash for the council, but this is not generally understood or accepted.” All of this despite sustained public perceptions of punitive charging.

How to Prioritise Areas for New Parking Schemes

It would seem that the main way to prioritise areas for new parking schemes is through consultation with residents. One authority states that there is an “initial consultation showing the boundaries of the scheme and the rules governing parking schemes – asking for indication of for/against schemes.” This authority goes on to state that “given the sufficient majority of those in favour, a second consultation showing possible detailed layout of spaces/restrictions” is carried out. The authority also links the scheme to members stating that “at all times ward members advise the cabinet members with responsibility for transportation on whether to go to the next stage of the process.”

Other factors impacting upon how priorities are decided include consultation with the police in terms of the link between parking and crime. An authority states “benefits are mainly for residents, but recently the police have commented that they help reduce car crime and fear of car crime; and restrict illegal drop offs (of drugs).”

Another authority states that “there is a new moratorium on new schemes currently owing to the resourcing used in consultation and in the setting up of schemes.”

Shared User Bays – the Challenge of Pay and Display and Voucher Schemes

Several authorities elicited schemes in which the allocation of permits was limited in order to control traffic numbers in Resident Parking Scheme areas. In the words of one authority “In early schemes, this was achieved by limiting the number of permits to one per household on a first come first serve basis until all ‘resident only’ bays were occupied.” Current practice is to provide ‘shared bays’ such that the total number of bays available exceeds the demand for permits. Should demand subsequently outstrip supply, it is likely that an increase in the cost of the permit would be proposed with the aim of reducing demand to match supply.” Another authority gives a different example and one tailored to the specific road in question stating “the authority implement two types of Residents Parking Permit schemes – Resident Permit Only Bays and Limited Waiting with exception for resident permit holders.” One authority undergoing a consultation with the public on this matter states “the consultation has included consideration of the numbers of permits that can be issued per household, and whether the numbers of permits should be limited to match the numbers of spaces available within the zone. This has resulted in a limit of one permit per household in some zones but no limits on the numbers of permits issues.” Clearly then some form of resident charging is unavoidable in certain instances for logistical reasons of vehicle control but when applied in line with a consultation this can be made less painful.

Streamlining Non-Resident Access

The vast majority of those councils responding are utilising user bays in line with some kind of permit scheme (as discussed above). This means that those covered by schemes are able to allow friends and family to park within the remit of the Resident Parking Zone. Various methods of streamlining are involved in this process in order to regulate the number of vehicles using the scheme. According to one authority “vouchers were used in an early scheme to regulate the use of shared bays by non-residents but later schemes use pay and display, which has been found to be more acceptable to visitors and more readily enforceable.” Another authority answered as follows: “Residents bays are made available to visitors by the issue of scratch and display visitor permits to any household in the zone (£1 per day, 10 visits per card and 2 cards maximum per household at any one time.)” One authority facilitates “shared use parking” as opposed to user bays for non-residents.” These have the disadvantage of treating family and friends as everyday street users as opposed to “visitors” – again this is against a difficult backdrop of demand.

4. Conclusions

Local Authority car parking is perhaps a ‘sleeping giant’ amongst all the issues impacting upon local government streetscene. Why? It’s a liveability issue for one thing as well as impacting on environmental sustainability. You can’t get a front door issue as close to home as your parking spot! Congestion impacts upon healthy living too in terms of emission build ups in residential streets used by parents and

school children. There are also strong impacts upon transport flow and public transport facilities. Local authorities facilitating these communities through good car parking schemes have much to learn from one another in terms of the really difficult choices they face on charging, limitation of spaces and what types of schemes to apply. Inner city areas especially see an increasing clamour for parking within tight knit areas.

The *whole area* approach of CPZs may be favourable in some cases where RP zones cause “overspill” and “displacement.” Charging is something best reached through a consultative process with residents in the view of most respondents.

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If this is an issue that APSE member authorities think would merit a possible seminar (on the issue of local authorities, regeneration and car parking schemes) then please contact the APSE Office – enquiries@apse.org.uk.