

Meeting	Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	14 November 2022
Present	Councillors K Taylor (Chair), Daubeney (Vice-Chair), Cuthbertson, Hook, Kilbane, Pearson and D Taylor
In Attendance	Dave Atkinson (Head of Highways and Transport) James Gilchrist (Director of Transport, Environment and Planning) Graham Titchener (Head of Parking)

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## **1. Declarations of Interest [17.34]**

Members were asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interest that they might have in respect of the business on the agenda. In respect of agenda item 3 Digital Respark Report, Cllrs Kilbane, D Taylor and D'Agorne noted that they lived in repark areas. Cllr Daubeney noted that he had a minster card but did not live in a respark area.

## **2. Public Participation [17.36]**

It was reported that there were two registrations to speak on agenda item 3 Digital Respark Report and one registration to speak under the general remit of the committee under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Jo Coles, a resident in a new digital residents parking zone raised a number of concerns about the scheme causing stress, anxiety and pressure for a number of reasons. This was because it was hard for residents to deal with permits for visitors when they were not at home. She expressed concern regarding the system for elderly and disabled residents and the additional pressure it could put on carers through it not being possible buy permits. She added that there was a lack of communication about the system and asked what the rationale and costs were for the introduction of it.

Andrew Mortimer explained that he lived in the Badger Hill repark zone, He expressed concern with the permits in relation to visitors and the ability for

residents to check permits in other vehicles on their streets. He welcomed the proposals for the resident permit checker.

[Cllr Cuthbertson joined the meeting at 17.41]

Andrew Mortimer noted that the guidance online needed to work for people with access online and offline. He noted concern regarding elderly people accessing the system especially when arranging permits for visitors. He suggested that this could be forcing isolation on them. He was asked and he explained how this was different to other zones as it was all one parking zone.

Under the general remit of the committee Flick Williams spoke on the city centre action plan mitigation measures as discussed at the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee meeting the previous week. She felt that the outdoor café licences were adding a further exclusion for disabled people. She questioned why the participants in the consultation for the report were not local. She concluded that a disadvantaged group was being further disadvantaged and that the situation needed proper scrutiny and oversight. In response to a question from a Member she noted that there needed to be proper scrutiny of the report from consultation in light of government guidance. The Director of Transport, Environment and Planning advised that the report to be presented to Executive on Tuesday 22 November 2022.

### **3. Digital Respark Report [17.52]**

Members considered a report that updated Members on Digital Respark (resident parking zone permit management). The Head of Highways and Transport advised that he could cover further information and questions from Members at a future meeting. The Chair added that this should include a review on how parking enforcement was operated and further questions on the financials for it.

The Head of Highways and Transport explained the background and reasons for the introduction of respark, detailing the timeline for the implementation of it. He apologised to residents experiencing with the system and he explained the issues experienced by customers as summarised in the table at paragraph 27 of the report. He reported that recently there had been some issues around web browsers and operating systems on Macbooks. These issues were being worked through and it was hoped they would be resolved too. He advised that the resident permit checker would be rolled out with the next version of the technology. A Member queried why the resident permit checker was not rolled out with

the implementation of PSN compliance in March 2022. The Head of Parking Services gave an update on the residents parking hotline noting that the resident permit checker would be rolled out with the 2.31 update. It was noted that the customer password updated had been resolved with the supplier. The Head of Highways and Transport explained that there had been some compliments about respark and it was his understanding that call volumes were back at normal levels. A Member thanked the Head of Parking Services for his work.

Members then asked a number of questions to which officers and the Executive Member for Transport responded that:

- Regarding procurement, they did engage with other LAs, and the system used by York was used in other London Boroughs. They had used specific case studies as well as the user group forum. It was noted that the scale of transition to the system was fast and in hindsight they could have looked at how residents could have been better supported.
- They were aware of some problems with the system in other authorities.
- For professional carers visiting residents homes, a paper permit was issued. It was noted that there was a need to review the permit system regarding family member carers parking at their relatives houses.
- Regarding businesses being unable to select the customer type as business on the online form, Officers were not aware of this as a trend and a potential reason for the problem was that the business was marked as a residential business on the database.

The Chair asked the Executive Member for Transport for his reflections on the implementation of the scheme. The Executive Member explained that there were some things that the council didn't get right, and in the first month there were problems with the level of support needed, particularly in relation to the interface and renewals. He added that officers had tried to work through systems to support customers to try and resolve outstanding issues so that the service was user friendly as possible by being cost effective. The Executive Member explained that the system was now more efficient, and the proof would be in the upgrade next year. He noted that the council had asked for the permit checker in 2021 and it was hoped that the functionality for direct debits would be available after further upgrades. The Executive Member was asked and confirmed that he was happy to make an apology to residents experiencing problems with the system.

Members then asked further questions to the Executive Member and Officers to which they explained that:

- The launch date for digital respark was pushed back.
- They could find out the cost of digital respark and regarding revenue collection, there was not a direct correlation between the old and new systems.

- There was a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for digital respark. The data received back was on how to manage the service as a resource and a correlation could be created between PCNs and the number of PCNs issued, the information for which could be shared with the committee.
- Regarding the issuing of PCNs, the system was now more efficient through the use of next generation mobile devices and it was confirmed that a new system had been needed to be PSN compliant. There was no requirement to be go to virtual permits and it was linked to data protection compliant.
- A Member expressed concern regarding elderly people getting lonely as they were not able to access the system. Officers noted that as the majority of residents moved online, this would free up resource to help other residents. It was noted that the ICT team was undertaking work on digital inclusion. This was being out in place to ensure that people got the support they need when they came through customer services.

[Cllr Hook left the meeting at 18.52]

In response to a point raised by a Member, the Chair noted that digital inclusion may fall under the remit of the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee.

- Officers and the Executive Member were asked and confirmed that:
- Calls to the customer centre had returned to levels since before the system went live.
- The number of permits issues had doubled over a 12 month period.
- Customer reporting wasn't currently implemented and there was a parking hotline for it.
- There had been some system issues with how data was matched, including the address databases. The system linked to the DVLA database which the council did not have access to.
- Regarding the issuing of batches of 20 permits, there was the ability to do separate transactions of 20 permits.

[Cllr Cuthbertson left the meeting at 19.07]

- Concerning residents comments, it was understood that the system was working on safari.
- The Director of Transport, Environment and Planning undertook to check the cost saving for the system.
- Patrols were undertaken in the respark areas.

- The Director of Transport, Environment and Planning undertook to check why the system could have one account per household and why it did not save registration numbers.
- The next variation of the system would have better functionality on mobile phones.
- Regarding access to business permits, the flexibility of paper permits needed to be looked at.
- The cost for permits was determined by Full Council. There was no legal requirement preventing the possibility of charging for different types of permit.
- The respark zones radiated out from the city centre and were based on a ballot, with residents knowing what price they would pay for permits.
- Staff in the contact centre would need to support residents and it was not believed there would be significant savings.

Following consideration of the report and responses from officers and the Executive Member for Transport, the Committee then;

Resolved:

1. That the financial information on the full cost of the digital residents parking scheme be circulated to all Members
2. That it be recommended that a corporate apology be made via a press release for the problems with the digital residents parking scheme and information improvements being made, delegated to the Executive Member for Transport in conjunction with Communications Officers.
3. That it be recommended that that a User Forum of different groups (groups representing elderly, disabled and non-digital residents) be set up, delegated to the Executive Member for Transport in conjunction with Officers.
4. That it be recommended that savings on support staff not be made until the digital residents parking scheme was up and running.
5. That it be recommended that the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee examine digital inclusion and how support can be given to non-digital residents on the implementation of new systems.
6. That it be recommended that the Executive Member for Transport promote the use of paper permits (for which it was known that paper permits were still being given out to a small number of people).

Reason: To contribute to improvements to Digital Respark.

#### **4. Work Plan [19.49]**

Members considered the work plan for the remainder of the municipal year. It was clarified that updates on café licensing would be presented to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

Resolved:

- i. That the Democracy Officer check whether there was a scrutiny commissioned slot free during January/February 2023 to examine weed control and electric vehicle charging, with the attendance of the Climate Emergency Policy and Scrutiny Committee.
- ii. That city centre café licences be added to the work plan for the March 2023 meeting.

Reason: In order to keep the work plan updated.

Cllr K Taylor, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 8.00 pm].