

15 June 2021

Agenda Item:11**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE****PERIPATETIC COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS PERMIT****Purpose of the Report**

1. Following the success of the County Council's NHS/Key Workers parking permit during the Covid pandemic, it is proposed to utilise the technology developed to introduce a longer term permit to assist peripatetic community health workers access patients more efficiently with a 'virtual' parking permit.

Information

2. On 3rd April 2020, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced that there would be a national parking permit for NHS and Key Workers to enable them to access parking concessions during the Covid-19 emergency response period whilst on duty. That permit was available through NHS Trusts, local authorities and the Royal Voluntary Service. The idea behind the scheme was to assist those workers faced with large parking fees whilst they were engaged in Covid-19 response work through the initial lockdown. The pass enabled workers to park in residents' parking areas, on some single yellow lines and in publicly owned car parks for free and would assist those who had to work in the community delivering care or medical assistance, relating to the pandemic to do so more efficiently.
3. A simple widely available printed parking pass issued by the Central Government was identified as presenting significant operational problems, so the County Council quickly launched a local version that created an electronic permit exempting a particular vehicle registration number approved after a simple application process.
4. All NHS workers who presented an ID badge were accepted for the permit regardless of the nature of their role on the presumption that many would be involved in the emergency response. Key workers were principally social services staff and carers. In total over 3,800 permits were issued for use whilst on emergency Covid duty within the community.
5. The system works by logging a vehicle registration number that is then linked instantly with the handheld devices used by the Civil Enforcement Officers. This was new technology for the Council that was quickly developed and rolled out with relatively few operational issues.
6. In May 2021, MHCLG announced that the national permit scheme was to be withdrawn by the 21st June 2021 to coincide with the proposed step four of the lockdown roadmap. The car parks in the County are already seeing a significant rise in patronage since the non-essential shops re-opened on the 12th.

7. There have been requests from people involved in community health work (Carers, Midwives, Health Workers, etc) for a permit to be available that allowed them to undertake routine essential home visits more efficiently in areas where parking is restricted. Typically this would be in residents' parking areas that are in and around all town centres in the county. The feedback we have received is that whilst visitor permits work in principle, when health workers are attending the homes of elderly, frail and often ill patients, the acquisition and subsequent display of a the resident's permit inevitably significantly delays their work.
8. A paper pass for health workers was considered previously but the difficulties in administering such a scheme proved prohibitive. There are a large number of health and social care workers that need to visit people in their homes and a paper pass would be expensive and difficult to administer. Officers have noted, however, that the technology developed for the NHS and Key Workers Covid e-permit does present a much simpler and much cheaper solution and would allow them to simply park and not have to be concerned with displaying and then returning the physical permit thus improving efficiency without compromising parking / traffic management. Health workers would apply electronically supplying appropriately-verified proof of their job and then once approved, their vehicle would be listed as exempt from enforcement within the terms of the scheme. Appropriate terms and conditions would remind the user that the exemption can only be utilised for prescribed work purposes.
9. The costs of this would be minimal;the software supplier has already effectively set up the necessary infrastructure so there would be minimal staff time required to amend this. Approving applications has been streamlined into a relatively simple process;there is no need to mail anything out as the applicant will receive a text message or email informing them when they have been accepted into the scheme. If they change their vehicle at any time, they will be able to do this online. It is not therefore proposed at this time to introduce any charge for this service that should provide wider benefits to health care.
10. We have been contacted by healthcare providers in the County offering their assistance in developing the detail of the new scheme and if the new permit is approved, we will use their expertise to refine the details of the scheme to best effect. One suggestion for example would be that the exemption is time limited to say an hour to comfortably allow for an appointment but dissuade users from all day parking. It is currently anticipated that around 300-500 of these e-permits would be issued across the County and that the scheme may be operational, subject to approval, within the next two to three months. The District and Borough Councils will also be consulted although they have indicated their support in-principle for such a permit, albeit currently for on-street use only. Several of the District and Borough Councils already offer free short-stay parking in their car parks which would be an alternative option.
11. The new permit would be valid within Residents' Parking Zones and on single yellow lines more than 10 metres from a junction across the County (excluding Nottingham City).

Other Options Considered

12. A paper permit has been considered but this would be expensive and difficult to administer. Alternatively, the current system of expecting health care workers to use visitor permits within residents areas can be continued but the development of the virtual permit technology presents a simple opportunity to improve upon this.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Data Protection and Information Governance

14. A Data Impact Assessment will be completed prior to commencement to consider any further implications of storing contact details of applicants. The database will only be used for the purpose of contacting permit holders in the event of an issue with their permit or a change to the terms and conditions.

Financial Implications

15. The introduction of a virtual health permit scheme will require minimal staff time to set up and administer in comparison with a traditional paper-based permit system. Applicants will provide the data online and all approvals are done within the secure database operated by the County Council. There will be no printing or postage costs as all contact is done through text or email.

Human Resources Implications

16. The introduction of a virtual health permit scheme will require no additional resources and can be administered within the Council's Central Processing Unit.

Implications for Service Users

17. The introduction of a virtual health permit scheme is anticipated to significantly improve efficiencies for health workers and in turn those in need of community healthcare.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) That Members approve the introduction of a peripatetic community health workers e-permit scheme and that authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (Place), in consultation with the Head of Legal Services, to finalise the details of the scheme.

Adrian Smith
Corporate Director, Place

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Gareth Johnson, NCC Traffic Manager,
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Constitutional Comments (SJE – 04/06/2021)

18. This decision falls within the Terms of Reference of the Transport & Environment Committee to whom responsibility for the exercise of the Authority's functions relating to parking provision, traffic management and traffic regulation orders has been delegated.

Financial Comments (RWK 02/06/2021)

19. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All