

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**HIGHWAYS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS
CABINET MEMBER**

STREET WORKS MANAGEMENT PERMIT SCHEME

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To propose a prioritised approach towards introducing a permit scheme for street works by October 2015.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In July 2014 the Cabinet Member approved in principle the introduction of a permit scheme for street works. Officers undertook to bring forward a further report to suggest in more detail how we might take this matter forward.
- 2.2 The previous report highlighted the following reasons for considering putting a permit scheme in place:
- The highway network is essential to the success of the local economy. However, the network is occasionally subject to disruption for the purposes of repairing and renewing essential services (water, gas, electricity, telecommunications etc). These disruptions can affect the travelling public and businesses. They make predicting journey times difficult for time-critical logistics and public transport. They can adversely impact on the attractiveness of the area to visitors.
 - The Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) contains an aspiration to improve the co-ordination of street works. The objective is to “*co-ordinate and reduce the time taken to undertake road works and street works efficiently and safely*”. Introducing a ‘permit’ scheme for street works would help towards achieving these aims. Such a scheme would also apply to works carried out by the council (and its contractors).
 - The Highways Network Management team are currently responsible for coordinating street works. The Traffic Management Act, 2004 allows for the introduction of permit

schemes. These can help the highway authority to better manage and influence disruption to the highway network.

- A permit scheme also allows via penalties for contraventions, a direct financial incentive to minimise disruption. Under such a scheme, it is unlawful for anybody to undertake work in the highway without a permit.
- There is evidence from monitoring of permit schemes introduced by other local authorities that a successful scheme can secure improved carbon emissions and local air quality.
- The Department for Transport (DfT) plans to deregulate the permit system in April 2015. This will allow local authorities the discretion to sign off local permit schemes rather than applying for permission from government.

2.3 Officers have investigated how we might progress with a permit scheme. Three main routes are potentially available to these ends:

- An Individually negotiated local Permit Scheme
- Introducing a new Permit Scheme in conjunction with similar minded council's
- Applying an existing Permit Scheme that is already operating elsewhere, such as for example the "Yorkshire Common Permit Scheme" that operates across a number of local authorities within the Yorkshire area.

Some of the dimensions for consideration in developing any scheme would include the levels of charges and which roads the charges would apply to. Adopting a common scheme would mean that these decisions would have already been negotiated. All of the above would require negotiation and consultation with the relevant utility companies. As a result it is anticipated that the earliest practicable date for introducing a permit scheme would be October 2015.

2.4 One of the main factors is that the costs of implementing the permit scheme need to be open and transparent and accepted by the utilities, hence the timescale and consultation. This means that in essence the introduction of any permit scheme arrangements are likely to be cost neutral.

2.5 Additional benefits are likely to arise from the introduction of a permit scheme. These include in relation to section 74 breaches, inspection fees, defects and other notices. Although this is difficult to quantify provisional estimates indicate that this could yield income to the council of around £150,000 for 2015/16.

3. **OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

3.1 **Option one** – All of the three options to progress as identified in 2.3 above will deliver a permit scheme and its associated benefits.

3.2 **Option two** – Continue with existing arrangements.

4. **ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

4.1 **Option one** – Establishing a new permit system individually as a council or as a shared project with other council's comes with some risks. These include potential time delays relating to implementation and possible challenge by utilities to any conclusions progressed to the Secretary of State for Transport. Participating in an established common scheme would mitigate these apparent risks.

4.2 Adopting a common scheme will also allow for a better understanding of how the process works by utility companies working within a region, due to the consistency of approach.

4.3 An existing permit scheme as that operated by the various local authorities within the Yorkshire area could prove suitable for adoption within North Lincolnshire.

4.4 **Option two** – The current system of noticing works would continue as the rest of the country works towards introducing permit schemes. We would have reduced capacity to control road works and traffic disruption.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

5.1 Financial – The introduction of fees and charges for permits would have to be cost neutral. However additional income from section 74 breaches, inspection fees, defects and notices is anticipated.

5.2 There may be some cost for some professional advice to help support the service to introduce the permit scheme. These will increase if new permit arrangements are progressed above existing common schemes.

5.3 Introducing a permit scheme by October 2015 would yield significant benefits in terms of finance and working arrangements to assist the successful implementation of the Highways and Neighbourhood services review that is the subject of a separate paper for consideration by the Cabinet Member.

6. **OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

6.1 Not applicable.

7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

7.1 Consultation would have to take place with relevant parties prior to adopting a permit scheme.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Cabinet Member authorises officers to investigate adoption of a Common Permit Scheme for North Lincolnshire with a view to such a scheme becoming effective from 1 October 2015.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

- Guidance and background information on permit schemes can be found on the Department for Transport's website at this address:
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/street-works-permits/>
- Minute 127 (5) of the Highways and Neighbourhoods Cabinet Member, dated 30 July 2014 – Permit Scheme for Street Works Etc
- Yorkshire Common Permit Scheme for Road Works and Street Works