

**REPORT TO:** Environment and Urban Renewal Policy Performance Board (PPB)

**DATE:** 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources.

**PORTFOLIO:** Transportation

**SUBJECT:** Highway Works Permit Scheme – Year 3 Update

**WARDS:** Borough Wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The Permit Scheme went live on 14 March 2016 and this report presents the Board with the performance of the Permit Scheme in its third year of operation.
- 1.2 The aim of the Permit Scheme is to allow the Council, as a local highway authority, to coordinate both utility and local authority highways works on local roads. The purpose is to reduce the duration of these works on the local highway network to ensure the free flow of traffic and minimise disruption. Equally it is important to recognise the fundamental necessity of maintaining roads and utility infrastructure (sewers, water supply, drainage, communications, gas and electricity supply) to homes and businesses. A balance needs to be struck between the inconvenience of road works and the maintenance of critical infrastructure for the whole community.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That**

- 2.1 The board notes the third year performance for the Permit Scheme.

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Scheme is an exercise of powers conferred by Section 33A (2) of the Traffic Management Act 2004 and complies with all aspects of the Traffic Management Regulations (2007) (as amended). The Scheme applies to all streets under the control of the Highway Authority (the Mersey Gateway and M56 Motorway are not under the control of the Highway Authority).
- 3.2 Permit schemes provide an alternative to the notification system of the New Roads and Street Works Act (NRSWA) 1991. Instead of informing a street authority about its intention to carry out works in its area, a statutory undertaker has to book time on the highway by obtaining a permit for the permit authority. Under a permit scheme, the highway authority's activities undertaken by itself are also treated in exactly the same way as a statutory undertaker.
- 3.3 The specific objectives of the permit scheme include:

- Reduce occupation of the highway to benefit all users
- Obtain greater control of all activities on the public highway
- Minimise / avoid / manage delays to all road users
- Enhance co-ordination of all activities on the highway
- Achieve an improvement in air quality
- Enhance reliability of journey times
- Reduce long term damage to the highway asset

- 3.4 It is a criminal offence for a statutory undertaker, or person contracted by them to act on its behalf, to undertake specified activities in a specified street in the absence of a permit, with few exceptions.
- 3.5 If the permit authority considers that an activity promotor is failing to comply with the conditions of a permit, then it may revoke the permit. Before revocation, the permit authority will contact the activity promotor to inform them of its intention.
- 3.6 Where a statutory undertaker executes an activity without a permit, or breaches conditions on a permit, then the authority may issue a fixed penalty notice (FPN) against the statutory undertaker or prosecute (depending on the seriousness and persistence of the offence(s)).
- 3.7 The Permit Scheme requires each permit authority to maintain a register of each street covered by their permit scheme. The register should contain information about all registerable activities on those streets and forward planning information about activities and other events, which could potentially affect users of the streets.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The third year audit of the Permit Scheme has been undertaken independently by All About Holes Ltd and GK-TC to review of the operation of the scheme and to determine whether benefits achieved in previous years have been maintained.
- 4.2 The purpose of the external audit is;
1. Demonstrate a reduction in the duration of works.
  2. Demonstrate a reduction in the number of permit applications (through an increase in collaborative working)
  3. Re-evaluate the Cost Benefit Assessment (CBA) to show an economic return on the investment.
  4. Report the annual scheme benefit to all road users.

#### **4.3 Scheme Benefits**

##### **4.4 Permit Numbers**

There has been very little change in the number of permits from the previous year, as show in Table 1. Highway works have increased slightly compared with the previous year, but are still lower than the number recorded in year 1. Utility works have been more consistent over the 3 year period to date.

**Table 1 Number of Permit applications**

PROMOTER TYPE	Permits Yr 1 2016-17	Permits Yr 2 2017-18	Permits Yr 3 2018-19	Diff Yr 3 - Yr 2
Highway Authority Works	2,730	1,760	2,122	362
Utility Works	2,604	2,760	2,653	-107
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,334</b>	<b>4,520</b>	<b>4,775</b>	<b>255</b>

**4.5 Duration of Works**

The table below shows the duration of the permitted street work in number of days (the table is titled 'Table 6' as it is extracted from the longer audit report). The following conclusions can be drawn:

- Average works duration shows a downward trend over the first 3 years, with a 19% reduction from 3.1 days in year 1 to 2.5 days in year 3;
- The average duration of Highways works has reduced by 29% and Utility works by 18% over the same period.
- The number of days worked overall has reduced steadily year on year with a 28% reduction since the scheme was implemented.

**Table 6 Average works duration**

DURATION	Permits Yr 1 2016-17	Permits Yr 2 2017-18	Permits Yr 3 2018-19	Diff Yr 3 - Yr 2
Average duration (days)	3.1	2.9	2.5	-0.4
<b>Total number of days worked</b>	<b>16,691</b>	<b>13,038</b>	<b>12,028</b>	<b>-1,010</b>

4.6 The audit concludes that the permit scheme has reduced the number of days worked on Halton's street network by 4,663 days in the 3-year period. In addition, collaborative works phases saved a further 113 days of highway occupation.

**4.7 Year 3 - Financial Benefits and Income**

The financial benefit to the road user in year 3 is calculated as:

- Average monetary costs of works per day: £192.00
- Number of days saved under permit scheme: 1,765
- Monetary benefit to road users: £0.34m per annum

4.8 The cost benefit analysis (CBA) business case calculated the cost per day for each traffic management type on each street type. The financial benefit to road users of the Permit Scheme in year 3 is calculated at £0.34M per annum, a slight increase compared with year 2. This saving equates to over 6% of the overall cost of works calculated in the CBA (£5.5M per annum overall cost to road users).

4.9 This saving shows a slight increase from the previous year and equates to just under £1m benefit to the road user for the 3-year period.

4.10 Since the implementation of the permit scheme, the income generated, via the Permit & Enforcement Team, has risen steadily from £93k in 2015/16 to £413k in 2018/19 Total income generated during the permit scheme is approx. £1.2m. This income covers the costs of the permit and enforcement team and the administration of the system.

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 Well maintained and free-flowing roads contribute both directly and indirectly to all of the five Council priorities. Good transport networks are fundamental to economic growth, employment, and sustainable communities.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 N/A

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

9.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising as a result of the proposed.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Year 3 Permit Scheme Audit Report	Municipal Building	Ste Rimmer