

Permit Review: Benchmarking

Warwickshire County Council

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Warwickshire County Council (WCC) commissioned Project Centre to undertake a benchmarking exercise on their current parking permits for residents, visitors, dispensations and suspensions. The WCC permits were compared to the surrounding boroughs and counties that are of a similar population size.

WCC have been receiving resident complaints about the lack of available parking and misuse of current visitors permits in the county. This misuse has prevented residents the opportunity of available and convenient parking in their local neighbourhood.

The benchmarking exercise against surrounding boroughs and counties was undertaken to determine the charges of for each type of permit and the necessary changes to the WCC parking permit charging structure.

It is recommended that WCC introduce several new types of permit charges to counteract the misuse problems under the current permit charging structure.

- Residents permits should be issued under a tiered pricing structure by means of higher prices for extra vehicles registered for permits from the same address. The 1st vehicle permit will cost £35, 2nd £55 and 3rd £80.
- Visitors permits should be charged at £12.50 for a book of 25 permits, lasting one day, with a maximum of one book every three months per resident address.
- Dispensation charges should be £8 per day, £70 per week or £280 per month to discourage overrunning of works
- Suspension charges should be increased to £10 per day with an additional £60 administration cost. After 2 weeks the charge is increased to £15 per day.
- Business permits are not currently widely used across most surrounding boroughs and counties. However, they are a viable option to consider for better parking controls and to further prevent the misuse of other permit types.

In conclusion, WCC need to make significant changes to their current permit charging structure to prevent the current issues they are encountering across the county from continuing. The recommended changes will not only bring WCC in line with current pricing structures implanted by peers, but most importantly provide a solution to the parking issues currently being faced by residents in the county.





CONT	ENTS PAGE	PAGE NO.
1.	CLIENT REQUIREMENTS	2
1.1	Introduction	2
1.2	Background	2
2.	BENCHMARKING	4
2.1	Introduction	4
2.2	Population Data	5
2.3	Resident Permits	6
2.4	Visitor Permits	8
2.5	Dispensations and Suspensions	10
2.6	Business Permits	11
3.	RECOMMENDATIONS	13
3.1	Resident Permits	13
3.2	Visitor Permits	13
3.3	Dispensations and Suspensions	14
3.4	Business Permits	14
3.5	Permit Charging 2019	15
3.6	3 Year Financial Projection	16
4.	CONCLUSION	17
QUAL	ITY	18





1. CLIENT REQUIREMENTS

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Warwickshire County Council (WCC) commissioned Project Centre to undertake a benchmarking exercise on comparing various permit parking charges with that of other surrounding local authorities to bring their charging structure in line with the local standards.
- 1.1.2 This report contains a benchmarking review of permit charges and the types of permits offered by Warwickshire and neighbouring or similar local authorities. The purpose of the exercise is to gather relevant information from other local authorities to assist in guiding WCC to an informed decision-making process on the future permit charging structure across the county. The benchmarking review will look at how WCC can integrate and adapt the best practices of other local authorities, to perform effectively now and in the future to help meet parking demand.
- 1.1.3 The questions to be investigated are:
 - What is the current parking situation?
 - What are the current parking permit charge in WCC?
 - What is the standard parking permit charge in surrounding areas?
 - What is a reasonable solution to bring WCC's permit charges in line with the standards employed by surrounding local authorities?
- 1.1.4 The three main areas that WCC wish to focus their research on with regards to permit charges are:
 - Residents Parking Permits
 - Visitors Parking Permits
 - Dispensation & Suspension Permits
- 1.1.5 Currently WCC do not use Business Parking Permits, but this could be introduced as a new permit type for local business requiring the use of vehicles. This would also decrease the misuse of visitor permits currently taking place within the county.
- 1.1.6 WCC would like to make any reasonable changes to their parking permit structure with the start of the new calendar year and thus this report will form a vital role in providing key information on the topic to any cabinet decision that needs to be made.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 WCC currently have various parking problems in permit parking areas across the county and prices for permits have remained unchanged for several years. Residents often complain about the lack of local parking within the towns and that it is a consequence of a lack of control and misuse of the visitor parking permit scheme currently employed. WCC would like to find a solution to these issues to allow for the residents to have priority to park within their local neighbourhood without being overrun by "visitors".





1.2.2 This report will highlight the findings of the benchmarking review and outline the recommended next steps for the council to implement to address the parking problems within the county.





2. **BENCHMARKING**

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Warwickshire County Council is situated in the mid-west of England and is surrounded by similar sized local authorities in terms of population, like the Worcestershire. The benchmarking review was undertaken to compare the permit charges and structure of different types of permits with boroughs and counties similar in population size and near to WCC.
- 2.1.2 The following County Councils, plus one City Council, have been benchmarked against:
 - Derbyshire County Council
 - Gloucestershire County Council
 - Leicestershire County Council
 - Leicester City Council
 - Oxfordshire County Council
 - Northamptonshire County Council
 - Staffordshire County Council
- 2.1.3 Additional benchmarking was done against the following West Midlands councils for further research:
 - Birmingham City Council
 - Coventry City Council
 - Sandwell Borough Council
 - Solihull Borough Council
 - Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council





Figure 1: Map of Counties and Boroughs surrounding Warwickshire

2.2 Population Data

Tables 1 and 2 provide population figures for the various county and West Midlands councils respectively. The benchmarked councils have been picked due to their similar population sizes in comparison to Warwickshire.

Table 1: County council population data

Local Authority	Population
Warwickshire County Council	564,600
Derbyshire County Council	1,049,000
Leicestershire County Council	713,961
Leicester City Council	329,839
Staffordshire County Council	1,126,200
Gloucestershire County Council	907,200
Oxfordshire County Council	682,400
Worcestershire County Council	583,000
Northamptonshire County Council	741,200



Table 2: West Midlands councils population figures:

Local Authority	Population
Warwickshire County Council (proposed)	564,600
Birmingham City Council (outside city centre)	1,137,100
Coventry City Council	360,100
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	325,500
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	213,900
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	281,300

2.3 Resident Permits

2.3.1 Tables 3 and 4 show the various resident permit annual charges currently in use in the county councils surrounding Warwickshire. Several councils employ a tiered charging structure for the 2nd and 3rd resident permits requested from the same address. This is likely to discourage the use of motor vehicles and promote the use of other more sustainable transport.

Local Authority	1st Permit	2nd Permit	3rd Permit
Warwickshire County Council	£25.00	£25.00	£25.00
Derbyshire County Council	£35.00	£50.00	£50.00
Leicestershire County Council	£50.00	£50.00	£50.00
Leicester City Council	£25.00	£25.00	£25.00
Staffordshire County Council	£48.00	£48.00	
Gloucestershire County Council	£50.00	£100.00	
Oxfordshire County Council	£60.00	£60.00	£120.00
Northamptonshire County Council	£35.00	£35.00	

Table 3: 1st, 2nd and 3rd resident permit annual charges by County Council

2.3.2 Leicestershire, Leicester, Staffordshire and Northamptonshire all keep resident permit annual charges the same whether it is the 1st, 2nd or 3rd permit applied for from the same address. Derbyshire increases the charge of the 2nd permit and continues the same charge to the 3rd permit. Similarly, Gloucestershire increases the charge for the 2nd permit but no data was found on 3rd permit charges. Oxfordshire keeps the charge of the 1st and 2nd permit the same at £60 and doubles the charge for the 3rd permit issued.



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Table 4: 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd resident permit annual charges	by West Midlands councils
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Local Authority	1st Permit	2nd Permit	3rd Permit
Warwickshire County Council (existing)	£25.00	£25.00	£25.00
Birmingham City Council (outside city centre)	£17.00	£34.00	£34.00
Coventry City Council	£20.00	£20.00	£20.00
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	£30.90	£36.05	£49.50
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	£103.50	£103.50	£103.50
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	£40.00	£50.00	

- 2.3.3 A tiered charging structure is common across many West Midlands councils. Similarly, to WCC, Coventry, and Solihull do not charge residents an extra fee for the 2nd or 3rd permit registered to the same address. Birmingham and Walsall increase the charge for the 2nd permit but do not further increase the charge for the 3rd permit. The only council in the West Midlands to incrementally increase the charge of each permit was Sandwell.
- 2.3.4 The following pages contain some further graphical representations of the current fees and charges for resident permit prices and the various pricing structures from each council can be found in Figure 2 and 3. It should be noted that some local authorities do not offer a 3rd permit for residents and therefore the table/graph represents this category as a blank.

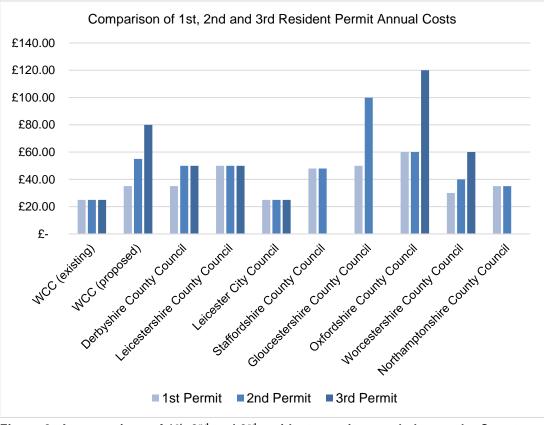


Figure 2: A comparison of 1st, 2nd and 3rd resident permit annual charges by County Council.





The graphs indicate that Warwickshire has some of the lowest permit charges from counties and districts in the area. Coventry is the only council to offer lower permit charges across all three tiers of parking while Leicester City appears equal to Warwickshire.

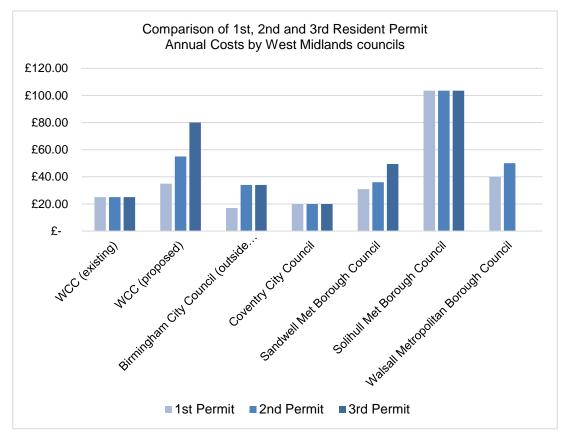


Figure 3: A comparison of 1st, 2nd and 3rd resident permit annual charges by West Midlands councils

2.4 Visitor Permits

- 2.4.1 Visitor permit charges in surrounding counties and West Midlands councils are highlighted in Table 5 and 6. Warwickshire currently does not implement fixed criteria for purchasing a visitor permit; this could be the main cause for the parking problems expressed by residents within the county.
- 2.4.2 Table 5 shows a comparison of the various visitor permit charges and duration of validity offered by each respective West Midlands council. It is common practice for most councils to quantify their visitor permits by means of a time limit or a limit on quantity, in order to prevent "unlimited" use of the permit to park in resident parking bays by visitors. Like WCC, Solihull Borough offer visitor permits for a whole year with no restrictions on the quantity of use but Solihull's charge of £103.50 exceeds WCC's. Sandwell Borough Council provides two options to visitors, either a permit valid for 2 hours or 6 hours, with a cost of £6.15 and £4.40 per book of 20 permits respectively. Birmingham City Council offers the lowest charge for visitor permits of the West Midland councils reviewed.



Table 5: Visitor permit charges and durations by West Midlands councils

Local Authority	Visitor	Time	Notes
Warwickshire County Council (existing)	£5.00	1 year	
Birmingham City Council (outside city centre)	£0.65	24 hours	
Coventry City Council	-	-	
Sandwell Borough Council	£6.15	40 hours	Available as a book of 20 permits (each valid for 2 hours)
Sandwell Borough Council	£4.40	120 hours	Available as a book of 20 permits (each valid for 6 hours)
Solihull Borough Council	£103.50	1 year	

2.4.3 The majority of councils listed in Table 6 below indicated some measure of restriction on their visitor permits. Derbyshire, Leicester City, Staffordshire and Northamptonshire all allow visitor permits to be valid for a year, similar to WCC. Only Leicestershire and Oxfordshire limit the time period of visitors.

Table 6: Visitor permit charges and durations by County Council

Local Authority	Visitor	Validity	Notes
Warwickshire County Council	£25.00	1 Year	
Derbyshire County Council	£13.00	1 Year	
Leicestershire County Council	£10.00	10 Days	£10 for book of 10 single use (1 day) permits
Leicester City Council	£30.00	1 Year	Extra visitor parking permits can be bought for £2 per permit, max 30 a month
Staffordshire County Council	£48.00	1 Year	
Gloucestershire County Council	£10.00		£10 for book of 10 single use (1 day) permits
Oxfordshire County Council	£-	25 Days	They are issued in sets of 25 single use (1 day) passes. One free set of visitor permits can be applied for every 12 months. If more are required an application can be made after 6 months, costing £20.
Northamptonshire County Council	£35.00	1 Year	

2.4.4 An interesting comparison can be examined if we compare the four highest resident permit sale areas with their corresponding visitor permits issued over the same time period. The visitor permits are exceptionally high as noted from the graph in Figure 4.



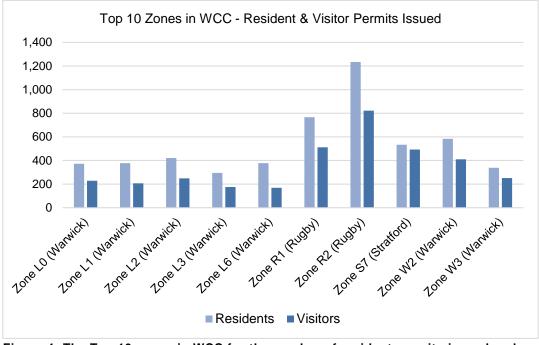


Figure 4: The Top 10 zones in WCC for the number of resident permits issued and their corresponding number of visitor permits.

- 2.4.5 Figure 4 displays the top 10 zones in WCC where the highest number of resident permits are issued and compares these figures with the corresponding visitor permits used in those same zones. It clearly indicates the extremely high usage of visitor permits in the period from 01/04/2017 to 31/03/2018.
- 2.4.6 In most cases, the number of visitor permits are well over half the number of resident permits issued which causes a high percentage of parking spaces to be occupied that should otherwise be allocated to residents in these areas.
- 2.4.7 Visitor permits are the biggest problem in Warwickshire as these permits are unlimited in their quantity throughout the year. Most other councils implement limits to their visitor permits by providing a maximum number of vouchers issued per household or a 'scratch card' format to prevent the use of a visitor permit more than once. Warwickshire will need to implement a means of limiting their visitor permits to counteract current misuse.

2.5 Dispensations and Suspensions

- 2.5.1 Dispensations and suspensions are another cause for concern in WCC as there are currently very minimal charges associated with these permits. A closer examination of surrounding councils indicates an overall higher fee with restricted maximum time limits. Dispensation and suspension charges should compensate for revenue that is lost when a parking bay is unavailable to residents or visitors due to ongoing works. The dispensation and suspension charges should discourage works from extending over long periods of time on public highway and prevent the long suspension of otherwise valuable parking areas.
- 2.5.2 Table 7 shows the current charges of dispensations/waivers across other nearby councils in comparison with Warwickshire's current charges. The charges are generally higher than Warwickshire's with Birmingham City Council, Coventry City Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Staffordshire County Council all exceeding the charge structure in Warwickshire. Solihull MBC and Northamptonshire





County Council are the only councils to not charge for a limited amount of days and are therefore lower charges than Warwickshire.

Local Authority	Charge	Notes
Warwickshire County Council	£5	1 day (£5/day thereafter up to 5 days)
Warwickshire County Council	£15	1 week
Warwickshire County Council	£30	1 month
Birmingham City Council	£16.00	Cost per vehicle, per day. 48 hours' notice required
Coventry City Council	£20.00	1 day (£5 for every day thereafter)
Coventry City Council	£45.00	7 days
Coventry City Council	£150.00	1 month
Coventry City Council	£1,100.00	1 year
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	£-	Free up to 5 days
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	£10.00	Dispensations >5 days will cost £10 per week. Maximum of 15 days allowed.
Gloucestershire County Council	£10.00	First day costs £10, then £5 for every consecutive day per vehicle.
Staffordshire County Council	£22.00	Up to 2 days, per vehicle, to park on restrictions/longer than permitted in a free limited time waiting bay
Staffordshire County Council	£53.00	Up to one week, per vehicle, to park on restrictions/longer than permitted in a free limited time waiting bay. Maximum of 3 weeks
Staffordshire County Council	£56.00	Up to two days, per vehicle, to park longer than permitted in a charged for limited time waiting bay
Staffordshire County Council	£122.00	Up to one week, per vehicle, to park longer than permitted in a charged for limited time waiting bay. Maximum of 3 weeks
Northamptonshire County Council	£-	Valid for minimum of 2 days, maximum of 2 weeks

Table 7: Current charges of dispensations by councils.

- 2.5.3 Suspension cost in most councils usually match that of dispensation fees with the addition of an administration charge for the cost of preparing DfT approved suspension signage and other associated costs.
- 2.5.4 Fees are generally affordable, but necessary. Increasing dispensation and suspension charges will prevent parking bays being suspended for longer time periods than realistically needed.

2.6 Business Permits

2.6.1 Business permits are another form of parking control used by local authorities to restrict the use of parking bays by non-residents. Figure 5 indicates the annual charge of business permits from a selection of county councils. Warwickshire and Worcestershire are blank as they do not currently supply business permits.





2.6.2 Currently WCC does not offer business permit options, but this should be considered to discourage the further misuse of visitor permits for this purpose. Business permits can also be charged at a higher price than regular resident permits as they are being used for commercial purposes.

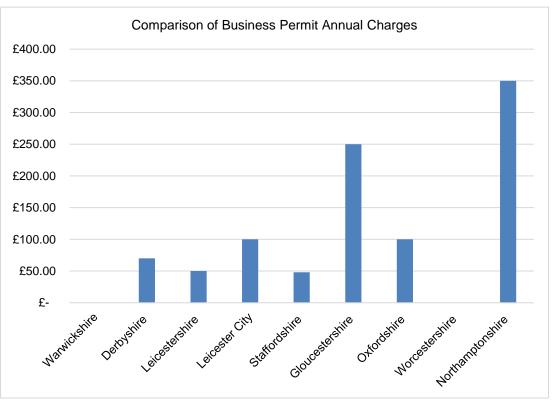


Figure 5: A comparison of business permit annual charges.

2.6.3 The majority of the county councils have an annual charge of £50 to £100 for a business permit whilst Gloucestershire and Northamptonshire other councils with charges of £250 and £350 respectively.





3. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 Resident Permits

- 3.1.1 The benchmarking review has been undertaken to provide information of permit charges across other surrounding councils to WCC. Based on the review, Project Centre recommends the following actions be taken to WCC's permit types:
- 3.1.2 The current resident permit charges in WCC are £25 regardless of the number of vehicles registered at the same address. It is therefore recommended that WCC make use of the 'tiered permit system' whereby each extra vehicle is charged a premium. This could encourage the use of fewer vehicles by residents which in turn could reduce congestion and promote a cleaner environment.
- 3.1.3 The tiered permit system will incrementally increase the price of a parking permit per number of registered vehicles at a particular residential address. The first permit would cost £35, but if a resident applies for a second and third vehicle permit at the same address, the charge would increase as follows:
 - First permit: £35
 - Second permit: £55
 - Third permit: £80
- 3.1.4 The table below shows the comparison with current WCC parking charges and the recommended proposed charges:

Table 8: Existing and Proposed permit charges based on 1st, 2nd and 3rd vehicle registered to each address.

Local Authority	1st Permit	2nd Permit	3rd Permit
Warwickshire County Council (existing)	£25.00	£25.00	£25.00
Warwickshire County Council (proposed)	£35.00	£55.00	£80.00

3.2 Visitor Permits

- 3.2.1 Research indicates that the main concern with parking in Warwickshire is the lack of available parking for residents due to "visitors" taking up most of the spaces. To counteract this problem, it is recommended that WCC consider following a similar approach used by other local authorities by introducing a higher price and/or time limit on visitor permits.
- 3.2.2 The following options should be considered by WCC to allow for better controlled visitor permits and avoid the misuse of their current unlimited supply:
 - Limit the number of visitor permits to a maximum of circa 25 per 3 months; if exceeded, a higher tariff should apply.
 - Introduce a visitor permit book system (virtual or paper, but with a maximum of 25 permits per book). The council will be able to track usage and monitor the number of visitor permits being used. Residents would need to reapply for a second book.





- Make the visitor permits valid for a maximum of 1 day (24 hours) only, so that permits cannot be reused and issued to several people during the same period, further preventing misuse.
- Increase the current charge from £25/year to a charge that is more in line with other councils. Project Centre feels that a charge of at least £0.50 per day would be appropriate. i.e. a permit book of 25 permits should cost £12.50.
- 3.2.3 Placing these reasonable limits on visitor permits will deter misuse of the current system and increasing visitor permit prices will prevent residents from using visitor permits as a cheaper option to the higher recommended prices for 2nd and 3rd vehicle resident permits.

3.3 Dispensations and Suspensions

- 3.3.1 Current dispensation and suspension charges for Warwickshire are low compared to surrounding councils. Increasing charges will prevent the misguided use of this provision by encouraging contractors and other workers to complete their works in a timely fashion. If dispensations or suspensions are charged at a higher daily or weekly rate this will discourage unnecessary use of this provision as well as mitigate any losses on paid-for parking spaces that would otherwise be suspended for residents.
- 3.3.2 Dispensations/waivers are recommended at £8.00 per day (maximum 6 days) this price is slightly less than the full £10.00 loss of income to the Council in recognition that utilities/builders etc. need to perform their duties. However, to ensure that the income of WCC is protected, it is proposed that there is no discount for a longer duration and as such the proposal is for the weekly (7 days) waiver costs £70; thus, covering the loss of income and associated inconvenience for residents. And the 4-week waiver costing £280. These higher fees will ensure that anyone applying for such dispensations will make the most efficient use of time to complete the works/construction taking place and minimise the impact they may have on the public highway.
- 3.3.3 Suspensions there are 2 parts to the suspensions; those being the administrative costs and loss of income. The present charges of £60 per application and £10 per day per bay; is not necessarily in line with other nearby councils who offer lower administrative fees, but it is recommended that the current suspension charges are continued to cover the loss of income associated with the bays. Tariffs should also be increased for longer time periods similar to the dispensation costs, thereby discouraging users not to prolong bay suspensions for more than is necessary to carry out the appropriate works required. After a continued two-week period, it is recommended that the suspension charges increase to £15 per bay per day.

3.4 Business Permits

3.4.1 WCC does not currently issue business permits and this is not common practice among all the surrounding counties. However, introducing a business permit system would further prevent misuse of the visitor permit system and would ultimately result in more control over the parking situation in Warwickshire.





3.5 Permit Charging 2019

3.5.1 Overall the new recommended charging for resident, visitor, dispensations and suspensions has been summarised in Table 9.

Table 9: Recommended permit charges for 2019.

Permit Type	Recommended Permit Charge in 2019
Resident	1 st Permit £35, 2 nd Permit £55, 3 rd Permit £80
Visitor	£12.50 for a book of 25 permits (max 1 book/3 months)
Dispensations	£8/day, £70/week or £280/month
Suspensions	\pounds 60 administration/£10 per day (for first 2 weeks, £15 per day thereafter)



3.6 3 Year Financial Projection

3.6.1 Table 10 shows a 3 year financial projection of the recommended resident permit charges of £25 for 1st vehicle permit, £55 for 2nd permit and £80 for the 3rd permit. It should be noted that the number of proposed residents purchasing 1st, 2nd and 3rd vehicle permits in the next 3 years has been split 60:30:10 respectively, based on the current number of resident permits.

Table 10: 3 Year projection of recommended resident permit charges.

	Existing	Year 1 April 2019 - March 2020 Cost of Permit			Year 2 April 2020 - March 2021 Cost of Permit			Year 3 April 2021 - March 2022 Cost of Permit			
	2017- 2018										
	Cost of Permit										
	1st, 2nd & 3rd	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd	3 Year Total
	£25	£35	£55	£80	£35	£55	£80	£35	£55	£80	
Number of Resident Permits	11,163	6,698	3,349	1,116	6,698	3,349	1,116	6,698	3,349	1,116	
Total Charged	£279,075	£234,423	£184,190	£89,304	£234,423	£184,190	£89,304	£234,423	£184,190	£89,304	
Total Charged per year	£279,075	£507,917			£507,917			£507,917			£1,523,750





4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1.1 Warwickshire County Council have long held very static charges across permit types which has resulted in various parking control issues. The four types of permits analysed and reviewed in the benchmarking exercise were:
 - Residents Permits
 - Visitors Permits
 - Dispensations & Suspensions
 - Business Permits
- 4.1.2 Of the four permit types it has been concluded that the biggest problem in WCC has been the misuse of visitors permits as there is an unlimited yearly supply that has no management and can be handed out to anyone who knows a resident in the area.
- 4.1.3 WCC must employ new methods to counter these issues by increasing permit charges as recommended in the report and further monitoring the control and usage of parking by implementing a system that limits the number of permits issued to each resident.





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