

To: Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board

On: 24 August 2020

Report by: Lead Officer

Heading: Conversion of Grassed Areas to Parking

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 4 November 2019, members of the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board agreed the purpose, scope and timeline for this review.
- 1.2 This review will consider the potential to relieve parking pressures within residential areas through the repurposing of Council maintained open spaces.
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2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Board is asked to:
- Note the current position regards progress with this review.
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3. **Background**

- 3.1 There are many small areas of grassed and / or planted areas within our residential estates. The majority of which are maintained, on behalf of the Council, by Environment and Infrastructure (Amenity Services).

- 3.4 There are also suggestions of increasing pressures around available parking spaces within our residential estates.
- 3.5 This review will consider whether there is a need to, and whether it would be possible to, repurpose some of these maintained small areas to create additional parking space and thereby relieve some of the parking pressures.

4.0 Purpose of the Review

4.1 The key purpose of the review is to:

- (1) Set out the Council's current arrangements for maintaining and / or repurposing open spaces across Renfrewshire;
- (2) Review available evidence to measure and identify the scale of the parking problem, linked to open spaces, within specific areas and across Renfrewshire;
- (3) Identify benefits or challenges regards the repurposing of open spaces within residential areas; and
- (4) Provide recommendations for consideration of the Board.

4.2 A previous update was provided to Board which focused on Point 4.1(1) above.

4.3 This update provides information on Points 4.1(2), available evidence to measure and identify the scale of the parking problem, linked to open spaces and 4.1(3), identify benefits or challenges regards the repurposing of open spaces within residential areas.

5 4.1(2) The scale of the parking problem, linked to open spaces

5.1 The lead officer was unable to identify a centralised, formal method of systematically recording specific enquiries / complaints regards parking issues and linked requests to repurpose open spaces to create additional parking areas.

Therefore, analysis was undertaken through discussion with colleagues from Communities, Housing and Planning (CHP) and Environment and Infrastructure (E&I)

CHP and E&I colleagues confirm that there have been a low number of enquiries / complaints over the past few years.

They suggest that such enquires / complaints could be described as being few and random in nature.

Colleagues also confirm that enquiries / complaints tend to come from individuals rather than groups.

Therefore, a number of the complaints / enquiries can be duplicate and linked to a small number of specific areas across Renfrewshire.

5.2 The previous update, March 2020, noted that few of these complaints / enquiries led to specific requests to repurpose an area of open space.

With there being no more than 10 applications, on average, each year and very few requesting repurposing to create parking facilities.

5.3 This would indicate that the scale of the problem is not significant, in terms of the number of complaints / enquiries received.

6. **Benefits or challenges regards the repurposing of open spaces within residential areas**

6.1 **Benefits**

There would be 2 main benefits derived from repurposing an area of open space to create parking facilities.

The first, and most obvious, would be the creation of additional and potentially safer off-street parking spaces for those local residents who have a vehicle.

The second benefit would be a reduction in ongoing costs for the annual maintenance of the open space in question.

However, as the size of each open space varies it is difficult to quantify such savings in a meaningful way, without firstly identifying a specific area(s).

6.2. **Challenges**

The two main challenges to consider would be around Climate and Cost.

6.3 **Climate**

On 27 June 2019, full Council approved two motions relating to the declaration of a climate emergency in Renfrewshire.

Following engagement with a Cross Party Sounding Board in September 2019, the Climate Emergency Working Group (CEWG) was established. The CEWG is chaired by the Leader of the Council and

has cross party representation. The CEWG has met regularly to consider evidence and information in relation to climate change, with a specific focus on the Council's current and planned activities, and the subsequent actions that the Council can take to lead and drive change across all of Renfrewshire.

Council agreed to work to ensure Renfrewshire was carbon neutral by 2030. Being carbon neutral means that organisations or places reduce the carbon that they emit to the lowest possible level, whilst offsetting or mitigating against the impact of these emissions.

Emerging practice in some local authorities is to calculate a carbon budget for the local authority area: - working back from the target date to map out the level at which emissions would have to reduce each year. The local authority with partners, would then require to identify the actions which would achieve this as quickly as possible. It should be noted that the level of reduction could be in the region of up to 20% each year, indicating a very steep reduction required in carbon emissions over a relatively very short period of time.

6.4 Costs

At its' meeting of 22 January 2020 the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board considered a report regards the potential repurposing of an open space area at Whiteford Road, Paisley, so as to create parking spaces.

The report identified a real challenge in properly estimating the total costs required.

Whilst repurposing costs can be estimated, it was noted that should there be a requirement to relocate utilities the typical cost was between £10,000 and £100,000 with the exact cost only known following excavation works.

CHP colleagues noted that there is often a need to consider the relocation of utilities, given the close proximity of residential and / or business properties to the open spaces identified.

The Board decided against the request to repurpose noting the uncertainty over cost and the inconsistency with Council position regards climate change.

Further, CHP colleagues noted that for many of the enquiries they had received the open space in question was maintained through the Housing Revenues Account (HRA). However, many of the residential properties adjacent to the open space identified were now owner occupied.

Therefore, any repurposing would not seem to directly benefit those tenants who were contributing to the HRA.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – A decision might lead to additional expenditure to the Council, in particular to the Housing Revenue Account,
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – Not applicable
3. **Community/Council Planning** – None
4. **Legal-** None
5. **Property/Assets** - None
6. **Information Technology** – None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** –
 - a) The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** – None
10. **Risk** – None
11. **Privacy Impact** – None

12. **Cosla Implications** – None
 13. **Climate Implications** – Council decision of 29 June 2019 declaring a climate emergency would have to be considered for this Review.
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List of Background Papers

- (a) Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board Approval 27/08/18
- (b) Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board Minutes 04/11/19
- (c) Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board Minutes 16/03/20

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Finance and Resources for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Michael Moran, Assistant Economic Development Manager, 0141 618 7269

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