

Email response sent by the Deputy Leader on 15th November 2010

Dear Henry

Thank you for your e-mail of the 1st November with details of a petition submitted by residents of Dyers Almshouses. I am sorry to note their concerns and having spoken to my officers, now hope to clarify the latest position.

Northgate Road became part of the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) in December 2002, with a capacity for 16 vehicles. As Dyers Almshouses was a gated/private development, it was not initially intended that this should form part of the CPZ. WSCC consulted with the Almshouses Charity prior to installing the CPZ, following which it was understood that very few, if any residents owned vehicles and with the town centre being so close, any visitors would be able to use the nearby off-street car parks (e.g. Kilnmead) and/or public transport links. The charity's website itself does state that the complex is only 440 yards from the town centre facilities.

Once the initial demand for parking permits had been satisfied in Northgate Road, it transpired that a small number of residents in the Almshouses did actually own vehicles. Therefore, to help the Almshouses residents and in order to make the best use of the available spaces left, the County Council approved the issue of 4 annual permits to those in the Almshouses who expressed a need to park. Some other Almshouses residents also took up the option of using residents visitor permits. It was always maintained by the County Council that this situation was not permanent and would be kept under review. We can not be certain if this information was passed on by the Borough Council to the Almshouses residents when applying for permits.

Unfortunately, over time, demand for space has grown in Northgate Road and capacity has now been reached (currently 18 annual permits issued with one resident on a waiting list for a permit). Northgate Road is a 'stand-alone' zone so if all of the spaces are taken, the resident permit holders living in the road do not have an alternative. With many visitors also using permits to park in the road, the situation was not sustainable. Regretfully, we had no other alternative but to recently revert to the original terms of the scheme and residents in the Almshouses have not been able to purchase visitor permits in recent weeks.

However, the County Council is keen to install a long term solution. Proposals to increase the capacity in Northgate Road by extending residents' parking bays, have been prepared and are currently subject to an informal consultation. If supported, a formal consultation will take place in the new year and proposals could possibly be implemented by the summer of 2011. In the meantime, prior to a permanent solution, officers have now asked the Borough Council to renew any outstanding annual permits and inform residents of Dyers Almshouses that visitors permits will be made available again, but ideally should be used from Monday to Friday only. We will be writing to the Almshouses Charity to advise them of this.