

Committee: Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement Task Group
Date: 9 August 05
Agenda Item No: 4
Title: Parking – Strategic Policy Review
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Summary

- 1 The purpose of this report is to brief Members on the work that has been undertaken by Officers since the Transport and Highways Committee meeting held on 16 June 2005. It provides Members with options and recommendations that could be made to the Committee in September.

Background

- 2 At the June meeting of the Highways and Transport Committee, the Committee received a report which updated Members on the work being undertaken by the Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement Task Group to review parking arrangements in Uttlesford. The objective of the review was to establish detailed policy against which parking could be provided now and in the future
- 3 The Task Group had identified 13 areas that should be investigated. These areas were considered to be urgent priorities as they had serious implications or a clear policy was required to enable more effective and efficient management of the services. It was recommended that these priorities be given immediate consideration and reports be provided with findings and associated policy recommendations to the September and November meetings of the Committee. Some of the issues would take longer to resolve, such as the full implications of the Traffic Management Act, and these would be reported back to the committee at an appropriate time.
- 4 The Task Group had also looked at the safer journeys to school initiative and considered that in order to encourage the introduction of scheme the Council should seek to provide both on and off street parking in places where the initiative could be implemented. It had been suggested that the authority to provide these parking spaces should be delegated to officers.

- 5 The Committee agreed to the priorities of the Task Group for further immediate consideration and agreed that Officers be given delegated authority to provide relevant and appropriate parking spaces for schools involved in the safer journeys to school initiative and local ward members be informed of the changes.
- 6 The table set out below provides Members with details of the work that has been undertaken and where possible provides either options and/or recommendations for Members to consider.

Recommended that Members of the Task Group consider the report and make further recommendations to the Transport and Highways Committee.

ISSUE	WORK TO DATE	COMMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement			
Implications of introduction	Introduced in October 2004. Smooth transition from Police. Public well informed through extensive press coverage. Working to model formula produced by RTA Associates for ECC.	Monitor the model. Concerned that we may not reach the targeted expectations, ergo re-negotiation will be required with ECC. Staff sometimes abused by general public. Being undertaken according to the letter of the law (Traffic Management Act 2004). However, amendments to Act will have implications	See Appendix 1.
Traffic Regulation Orders	Currently managed by ECC in consultation with UDC. Meeting arranged with ECC ON 04/08 - verbal update to be provided at meeting	Expectation that UDC will undertake all future TRO Developments. Buy in service from ECC or provide by Planning Officers. UDC staff do not have an engineering background, ergo, will need to call-in for specialist advice and guidance.	None to date
Staff communications/ Equipment	All staff fully trained and training needs identified are on-going. Information gathered on state of the art safety technology for PAs	Need to purchase new communications equipment in order to ensure staff protected.	Purchase new telecommunications equipment Cost = £6,720 pa to lease equipment and £ £5,920pa to purchase equipment plus a one-off cost of £288 to purchase 'phone holders. Provision of on-going training as required
Marketing/Public Relations	Initial marketing of DPE undertaken – considered to be successful. Met with representatives from ECC to consider County wide marketing strategy	Linkages with ECC are essential to ensure wider understanding of the PA role following the implementation of DPE	To work with ECC and neighbouring authorities to produce a marketing strategy to raise the profile of PAs and parking as an environmental issue

ISSUE	WORK TO DATE	COMMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
Financial Arrangements/ Agreement with ECC	Have entered into an agreement with ECC. Agreed that UDC will pay 0% if there are any increases in car park usage- no increase in usage Agreement been in place for 6 months Meeting held with ECC – have agreed with financial figures presented UDC collection rate is 69% (just above the national average. Agreement has been reviewed – no changes are required	Monitoring must continue and an on-going record of Parking Tickets issued by PAs is now in place.	See Appendix 1
Car Parks			
Adequate off street provision	Considered that there is adequate off street provision at present. Work is being undertaken into the future usage of the Sworders site in Stansted	Expansion of housing in Great Dunmow area etc. will necessitate the need to increase parking provision in this area. Adequate security will need to be considered when introducing any new car parking provision.	None to date

ISSUE	ACTION TO DATE	COMMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
Introduction of Voucher System/alternative payment methods	<p>Alternative P&D options considered by Decrim task Group in 2004/05.</p> <p>Considered that current method most appropriate.</p> <p>Voucher System and multi ticket purchase systems have been investigated.</p>	<p>Voucher system – whilst such a system could be introduced, local shopkeepers have indicated that they would not be willing to help “sell” the vouchers. They could be sold at the Council offices but would then have to be issued in a similar manner to the RPS Visitor Permit Scheme. It is known that a number of Penalty Charge Notices are issued as people do not scratch off or complete the correct date. Ergo, the scheme is open to abuse.</p>	See Appendix 2
Fees and Charges	<p>Reviewed annually, charges increased for first time since 1994 in 2003. Increased again in 2005. All authorities within the East Anglian Parking Forum were contacted with regard to the implementation of fees and charges.</p>	<p>All authorities contacted recognised that the revenue generated helps off-set both Council and Business Tax increases. However, all erred on the side of caution as it could be seen as the “easy” option.</p> <p>On average, authorities tended to increase their fees and charges every other year. In addition, it was considered that the fees should go up in denominations of 5p or 10p as residents and visitors were irritated if prices rose in smaller denominations.</p>	Parking charges are increased every other year
Season Tickets	<p>Reviewed annually, charges increased for first time since 1994 in 2005. All authorities within the East Anglian Parking Forum were contacted with regard to the implementation of fees and charges</p>	<p>All authorities increased their Season Ticket charges in proportion to the amount that was being charged for car parking. Many of those contacted actively encouraged the availability of Season Tickets to local businesses which has gone some way to alleviating on-street parking problems.</p>	<p>Season Ticket Charges are increased every other year in conjunction with car parking prices.</p> <p>Officers produce a brochure which is circulated to businesses on an annual basis providing details of the advantages and availability of Season Ticket purchase.</p>

ISSUE	ACTION TO DATE	COMMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
Signage	Reviewed and changed in 2002. No changes are considered necessary at present. Uttlesford Access has been approached for advice as to appropriate signage in restricted parking zones.	It is anticipated that some work will be required once the recommendations from Uttlesford Access have been received in relation to Restricted Parking Zones – there maybe some financial implications	None to date
Continuation of Pay and Display	See comments above in relation to Voucher system	As above	As above (see Appendix 2)
Other Council owned/managed car parks	Catons Lane and Debden Road	May need to consider introducing charging Ensure adequate security and lighting	None to date
Marketing	No action to date apart from advertising them via the TIC and the Council Website Work has started on updating the website	Many neighbouring authorities produce a “Where to Park” brochure which is well utilised. The cost of producing such a leaflet is being investigated.	Produce a draft example and associated costs of producing 2000 copies bi-annually.
Station Car Parks	No action to date	Develop a working relationship with Audley End and other stations	None to date
Review of Agreements	Longest agreement been in situ since 1984, others have followed The Legal Department has started to look at the current agreements and initial contact has been made with parties concerned.	Require reviewing and updating	None to date

ISSUE	ACTION TO DATE	COMMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
On-Street Parking			
Criteria for considering introduction	No formal criteria as such – introduction is subject to demand, public consultation and agreement Research has been undertaken with the EAPF – no formal criterion exists.	It is considered that each request needs to be considered on its own merits. Having taken on DPE, it affords the Council the opportunity to be more flexible and creative in its approach, e.g., RPS in conjunction with restricted waiting limited to only being enforced for 1 hour per day – 100am to 11am. Such flexibility will deter the long-term commuter and holiday parker but still enable short stay parking on street for resident’s etc popping to shops etc. In so doing, it will prevent the District becoming a Residents Parking Zone.	It is recommended that: (a) The standard questionnaire set out in Appendix 3 is used for any requests where problems/issues have been identified by Residents to either Parish Councils or Ward Members. (b) the questionnaires be analysed and a report be presented to the Highways and Transport Committee with Officer recommendations as to the appropriate course of action to take
Fly Parking	Survey undertaken and in process of being analysed	Analysis will be presented at meeting	To be determined following analysis
Fees and Charges	Reviewed annually – see action taken in relation to off-street parking	As off-street parking	Increase charges every other year in relation to Season Ticket prices etc.
School Parking	Number of schools have addressed issue via the RS Officer which has resulted in a number of Walking to school buses	The Road Safety Officer will be undertaking a new round of school visiting in the next school year in order to continue to encourage schools to participate in the Walking School Bus Scheme and, in turn, encourage and educate parents on safe parking and not using their cars	Highways and Transport Committee gave officers delegated authority to provide parking spaces for the School Bus initiative on the understanding that Ward Members were kept informed.
Disabled Parking	Reviewed by Uttlesford Access – blue badge holders able to park virtually anywhere Access Group undertaking a review of signage (see above)	Awareness will need raising and signage requires improving. Ensure appropriate signage especially in Restricted Zones There may be a budgetary requirement as a result of any changed signage	Should a Parking Brochure be introduced, a specific section be included in relation to Disabled Parking
ECC Parking Policy	Awaiting copy of Parking Policy	To be determined once implications of policy understood.	None to date

ISSUE	ACTION TO DATE	COMMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
Consultation Uttlesford Transport Forum Uttlesford Futures Road Safety Working Group Saffron Walden Initiative Great Dunmow Chamber of Trade and Commerce Stansted Breakfast Club DTSG Strategic Development Advisory Group Town and Parish Councils Partners, e.g., Waitrose, Boots and Co-op PCT/ECC	Consultation takes place on an ad hoc basis with the groups listed Meeting with Saffron Walden Business Forum on 09/08	An appropriate Consultation Strategy/protocol needs to be devised and issues may arise following consultation Officers will be writing to all groups listed requesting information on the types of consultation that they would like to be involved in.	None to date
ISSUE	ACTION TO DATE	COMMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS

Performance			
Customer Satisfaction	Last Customer Satisfaction Survey specifically of car parks undertaken in 1999 – levels of satisfaction was high. Shoppers Survey been undertaken by the English Tourist Board in 2004 re-iterated levels of satisfaction.	Determine how frequently a Customer Satisfaction Survey needs to be undertaken Could be implications subject to outcome of any future consultations	None to date
PCN Issuing	Staff fully conversant in use of ticket machines. Low levels of spoilt ticket issues Standards are now being monitored and a rota system has been introduced which covers the whole district	Long-term staff sickness has had an impact on the numbers of tickets that are being issued. This is difficult to address, as it is impossible to recruit “short-term” due to the nature of the post. This may have an affect on the end of year returns.	Monitor the quality and standard of tickets issued on a monthly basis and provide Members with detailed quarterly updates.
Recovery Rates	Consistently high – above the national average expectancy levels	The back office is now fully staffed.	None required
Benchmarking	Limited comparisons made with other neighbouring authorities	Comparisons are made vis a vis charging, complaints, compliments etc.	Provide Members with bi-annual comparators when reviewing fees and charges
Staff			
Training	Staff are fully trained and considered to be extremely effective and adept in their respective roles	Training must be on-going in order to keep up with the growing demands of the service via the appraisal system	None to date

ISSUE	ACTION TO DATE	COMMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
Interaction of PAs and Public	Few complaints. Monitored regularly and act accordingly	Parking Attendants and back office staff are frequently abused as people are frustrated at the penalty of the parking fine	Nos. of complaints and compliments monitored Nos. of incidents logged with details of action taken
Staffing Levels	Long term sickness is above average due to serious medical conditions	None	None to date
Safety	Staff fully trained. Subject to telephone recommendation being accepted, abuse levels will remain at a minimum	Ongoing training will be required.	None to date
Traffic Management Act – The implications are set out below but not all of them have been approved as yet. Will not receive Royal Assent until after the election in May 2005			
Obstruction	No action to date but we are aware that there is an expectation that the Council will undertake this responsibility	Proposal that the Council undertakes dealing with obstruction on street – previously dealt with by Police. Would potentially require extra staffing levels and more flexible rota systems.	None to date

ISSUE	ACTION TO DATE	COMMENT	RECOMMENDATIONS
Coning	No action to date but we are aware that there is an expectation that the Council will undertake this responsibility UDC has not got the power to enforce cones Appropriate provision of cones was/will be made for Audley End Concerts, Thaxted Ring, Saffron Walden Carnival and the Remembrance Sunday Service in November Meeting arranged with ECC/Police arranged	Determine what Police are going to do Costs of providing cones in-house or contracting out Criteria determined for charging See Minute DPE 43 of the meeting of the Task Group held on 10 May 2005	None to date
Traffic Regulation Orders	No action to date but we are aware that there is an expectation that the Council will undertake this responsibility	Previously undertaken by Highways Authority (ECC) – members have indicated that they wish Council to undertake responsibility. Caveat that staff do not have engineering background which is required in order to undertake this role proficiently	None to date
Footway Parking – parking on verges, pavements etc.	No action to date	Guidance unclear, Bearing in mind the number of verges, byways etc, this too could prove extremely costly to administer	None to date
Moving Traffic Offences	No action to date No action to date	Guidance unclear	None to date
Zig Zag Lines	No action to date	Guidance unclear. This would link with Schools initiatives and general PA patrolling of Town Centres	None to date
Transport Officer	No action to date	Guidance unclear. There is a suggestion being floated that each District will be expected to have a dedicated transport officer which would have revenue implications	None to date

Other Issues			
Land Purchase for future off street provision	No Action to date	Could be considered in line with any Section 106 Agreements? For example, Catons Lane	None to date
Future Housing developments	No action to date	Adequate infrastructure on and off street will be required. to cope with increases in car volume Propose that this should be considered by the SDAG Street design – liaison with architectural police officer Increased provision maybe required in the 4 major towns as housing develops in the district	None to date
Airport Expansion	No action to date	Need to work closely with both Planners and the Airport in order to ensure that demand for passenger parking is met Potential trafficking of narcotics/stolen goods etc	None to date
M11 Expansion	No action to date	If the M11 is to expand that there will be increased car usage throughout the district. Implications of trafficking of illegal goods through district	None to date
Introduction of Park and Ride	Approach has been made by a company that wishes Council to consider the possibility of introducing a Park and Ride System from the extremities of the District to Stansted Airport via the main towns	Were Members to further consider this option, there is the possibility that it could both ease road congestion and pollution whilst offering local residents/visitors the opportunity to have increased transport provision being provided throughout the District.	That this area of work be pursued
Environmental Implications	No action to date	Any new provision will require an environmental impact assessment	None to date
Local Transport Plan	Awaiting copy	None	None to date

Appendix 1

Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement (DPE)

Introduction

The Road Traffic Act 1991 made councils in London responsible for the majority of parking enforcement and also enabled local traffic authorities outside London to apply to enforce off-street parking restrictions under this scheme. Penalties are also no longer considered in the Magistrates Courts and the enforcement process is therefore “decriminalised”.

Essex County Council (ECC) supported the principles of DPE and in March 2002, adopted policies with the view of efficiency gains in having a unified DPE operation by giving delegated powers to district and borough councils.

Uttlesford completed the process in October 2004. Prior to this, the Council, in conjunction with ECC and RTA Associates Ltd. completed a comprehensive planning and review process. This process enabled a business plan to be completed predicting the income, expenditure, staffing requirements and the numbers of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued on and off street together with changes to the existing income base and other resources and equipment requirements.

Local Authorities are able to use the revenue they receive from PCNs issued on-street to fund the enforcement activities. Any surplus can be used to improve on-street parking facilities, or, where this is unnecessary or undesirable, for certain other transport related purposes.

Start-up costs for the scheme were predicted to be high and it was agreed that the funding provided by ECC would be re-paid over a number of years from on-street income.

The Strategic Approach

From a strategic point of view, the Council needs to ensure that the following occurs:-

1. Financial returns are accurately completed to provide reassurance to ECC DPE Team that
 - (a) Adequate financial controls are in place.
 - (b) All expenditure charged to the account is directly attributable to the support of the on-street DPE Service.
 - (c) Apportionment of expenses between the on and off-street service is in line with the original business plan and appears to be appropriate and reasonable with a logical rationale behind the split.
 - (d) All income from the issue of on-street PCNs, on-street parking and Residents’ Permit Service (RPS) are correctly allocated to the on-street service.
 - (e) Claims from the Council in respect of deficit support are valid and accurate
 - (f) The apportionment of costs between the on and off-street service is reviewed annually to ensure that the split is consistent with the activity, i.e., issue of

PCNs and Parking Attendants time allocation. The apportionment ratios should be documented giving sound reasons for the rational behind the decisions.

2. The Council needs to ensure that a comparison is made between the original business plan to ensure that the performance is on target
 - (a) Patrol Hours on-street – enabling salary apportionment
 - (b) Number of PCNs issued on and off-street taking into consideration any special circumstances that may have arisen affecting the issue of notices (e.g., long-term staff sickness)
 - (c) Any marginal increases in off-street car park receipts
 - (d) Percentage of PCNs paid and at each rate, i.e., recovery rate (national average is 68%)
 - (e) Monitor the number of PCNs waived or cancelled and take remedial action should it be required, e.g., re-training
 - (f) Monitor the numbers of PCNs outstanding and ensure that the Debt Recovery Process is in place to pursue any outstanding balances
 - (g) Any proposed changes following the annual review of the Agreement is presented to Members for formal ratification
3. The Council needs to ensure that all returns are submitted on time to the National Parking Adjudication Service (NPAS), Home Office and Essex County Council
4. The Council needs to ensure that any financial claims or payments to ECC are made in accordance with the agreement in relation to:
 - (a) The Agreed sum payback
 - (b) The Management Charge
 - (c) In accordance with the Agency Agreement, a certified copy of the audited accounts relating to the On-street Parking Account be submitted to ECC on an annual basis.

Appendix 2

Proposed Introduction of a “Voucher” System for Parking

Introduction

Members of the Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement Task Group (DPEG) considered a range of options relating to differing payment methods for the car parks in the District during the latter part of 2004 and decided that the most appropriate payment methods were that of the existing Pay and Display.

However, there was a request made to look at the possibility of introducing some form of “voucher” payment system, whereby residents and visitors could purchase a block purchase of tickets from either the Council or local businesses.

A range of local businesses have been approached and they have indicated that they are not keen to participate unless they are able to demonstrate financial gain. However, a voucher system could be managed from the Council offices and an approach could be made to the three Town Councils were this to become operational.

The Options

(a) Option One

The Council could consider selling block tickets akin to the Residents’ Parking Visitor Permits – this would mean that the purchaser would be expected to complete the date, time etc. correctly on the form and leave it displayed in their window.

The positive side of adopting this approach is that there would be minimal cost to the Council as the forms are already in a desk-top version and minor alterations could be made easily.

The negative side of adopting this approach is that there are problems with the existing system in that Residents complete the forms with pencil as opposed to pen and re-use them. In addition, incorrect dates and times are inserted on the forms and Penalty Charge Notices have been issued as a result.

(b) Option Two

The second option is to introduce a Scratch-card. This approach has been adopted by Norfolk County Council in order to promote the use of Park and Ride. Residents are provided with cards and using a coin, scratch off the date, month and year that they wish to use the ticket. It is assumed that there would also be the ability to scratch off the time of arrival and the number of hours that the person wished to park for.

Officers are currently trying to ascertain the actual cost of introducing this type of system.

The positive side of adopting this approach is that there is less likelihood of abuse and subsequent issue of Penalty Charge Notices. Conversely, the cost of introducing such a system could be prohibitively expensive for the amount of take-up.

Comment

Were either system to be introduced, Members need to be mindful that in order to minimise bureaucracy, that it should only be introduced for usage in long stay car parks. In addition, Officers would suggest that, if introduced, it should be run for a trial period of no more than one financial year.

Recommendation

Members of the Task Group determine, subject to accurate financial costings being provided at a future meeting whether or not to introduce a voucher payment system.



**ON-STREET PARKING
A SURVEY OF AFFECTED RESIDENTS**

DEAR RESIDENT

It is clear that on-street parking (believed to be by commuters & airport passengers) is disturbing some residents, for example when people leave their cars in XXXXX Street all day or if taxis call to pick up at unsocial hours.

In order to try and help address this situation, it has been decided that residents should first be asked for their views on options that the District Council could consider enforcing under its parking enforcement powers. We would therefore be grateful if you would complete this short questionnaire and return it to the ???? in the attached pre-paid envelope by the end of ????.

Question 1

Would you like a no waiting restriction, which would prevent on-street parking for an hour each day? (Note: the restriction would apply to all vehicles)
YES /
NO

Question 2

**If you have answered YES to Question 1:
Which hour of the day should be restricted? (i.e. 10-11am) _____
Should the restriction be WEEKDAYS ONLY or EVERY DAY? (Please strike through the one you would not like).**

Question 3

**If you have answered YES to Question 1:
One option could be to alternate the restriction from one side of a road to another on a daily basis, which could help residents a bit more. Would you like this?**
YES /
NO

Question 4

If you have answered NO to Question 1, why would you not like a no waiting restriction?

Question 5

Would you like a residents' parking scheme instead? This scheme would require residents to pay for on-street parking permits which they or their visitors could use.
NB: On street parking permits are only made available to residents who have no off-street parking at all.

Permits would cost £70 a year each for residents
£15 for 20 x 4 hour segments for visitors
£5 for 20 x 1 hour segments for visitors

YES / NO

Question 6

Would you like the possibility of having restricted parking introduced whilst maintaining the ability to park with a permit at a reduced cost?

Question 7

If you have answered NO to Question 5 & 6, why would you not like a residents' parking scheme?

Question 8

Do you have any other comments or suggestions? Please attach an extra page if you want.

Please include your name and address below (optional)

Thank You. The next stage will be for officers to look at the responses to the survey before deciding how to proceed.