

DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT – PROGRESS REPORT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members to consider the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on progress towards implementing Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) in the Rochford District.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Road Traffic Act 1991 provides for the decriminalisation of certain non-endorsable parking offences in London and allows Local Authorities outside London to apply to the Secretary of State for similar powers. These mainly include parking offences on yellow lines and in on-street parking spaces. It does not include endorsable parking offences and offences related to obstruction for which Essex Police continue to be responsible.
- 2.2 DPE powers allow Local Authorities to take over responsibility for enforcing parking contraventions from the Police and to retain revenue received from penalty notices to fund enforcement activities.
- 2.3 The Council has signed an agreement with Essex County Council to adopt powers to enforce on-street parking regulations with effect from 1 October 2004.
- 2.4 At the meeting of this Committee held on 5 June 2003 an action plan was agreed which would see the introduction of DPE to an agreed timetable. At that time the key tasks were identified as:-
- (a) obtain from Essex County Council consultants an up-to-date revised financial model;
 - (b) consult with Essex County Council on the draft application to be submitted to the Secretary of State for Transport;
 - (c) begin the comprehensive review of all Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) throughout the District.
- 2.5 During debate the issue of accommodation for the Transportation Unit was raised. This was referred to in the Chief Executive's overarching report on accommodation, considered by Policy and Finance Committee last month. It is proposed that Room 3 of the Civic Suite be converted and used for this purpose. There will be some disruption in terms of bookings, but it is

envisaged that most can be relocated to Room 5. Overall there will be a loss of income from lettings in the region of £1,500. The cost of accommodation works is around £1,500; additionally, there is a need to upgrade the telephone system for around £1,800, re-carpeting at £800 and IT equipment at £3,000. Provision is contained in the Essex County Council (ECC) Financial Model, so will be eligible for their funding. Consideration was given to using Room 5, but for management and staff supervision purposes this will not be possible. It is proposed to make a start on converting room 3 to suitable office accommodation in early January 2004.

3 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 The Head of Service is pleased to report that progress towards implementing DPE is proceeding well and in accordance with the Action Plan. The revised financial model for Rochford has now been obtained from Essex County Council consultants and extracts have been incorporated into the 2004/5 Draft Budget.
- 3.2 The wording of the draft application to the Secretary of State has been common to all Essex Authorities and is unchanged from that originally agreed in 2001. The review of TRO's covering around 33 km of yellow lines is an eight-month exercise, which was started (on target) in September 2003. The "outside" exercise of matching yellow line marking, signage and written data will conclude in January, from which time a desk-top exercise will ensue to transfer information onto a comprehensive common database maintained by all Essex Authorities.

4 KEY ISSUES FOR NEXT SIX MONTHS

- 4.1 As the pace towards implementation quickens, an increasing number of key issues will appear on the horizon.

These include:-

- a) Submission of formal Special Parking Area Application to Department of Transport.
- b) Decisions to be made on charges for dispensations.
- c) Publication of consolidating TRO.
- d) Publication of Public Notices regarding DPE and Penalty Charge Notices charges.
- e) Move to new accommodation and reconfigure IT links; equip office.

- f) Administrative staff appointments.
 - g) Patrol Officer staff appointments (see 4.2 below).
 - h) Administrative staff training and draft procedures manual.
- 4.2 Members have requested that consideration be given to contractorising the patrolling element of parking management and this has been built into the programme for March/April time. However, incorporated within the Best Value Review of Public Regulation, Inspection and Protection, which will be considered by Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 December 2003, is a recommendation that the Patrol Officers' role be extended to include Environmental Enforcement. This would include issues such as reporting and taking enforcement action concerning abandoned vehicles, graffiti, dog fouling, littering etc. Until the final outcome of that Best Value Review is known the Head of Service will need to delay the review of contractorisation. The Head of Service also has some concern about losing control of the ticket issuing process. Penalty Charge Notices issued will be the only source of income for the Council to fund the service, and it relies on a minimum number of tickets being issued per annum. A scenario could develop where expected levels of penalty notice issues are not met, creating a shortfall of income which would have to be borne by the Council and impact on the core budget. The Head of Service feels there is real merit in retaining this element of the service in-house so that strict controls can be exerted to ensure predicted income levels are maintained.
- 4.3 All other Essex County Council Agency Districts have retained this process in-house, recognising the critical exposure to risk in not reaching targets. Although a number of London Authorities have outsourced this process the potential for ticket issues, and related penalty income, is far greater than in Districts.
- 4.4 The Implementation Plan, timetable and fully revised financial model remain in the Members' Library for inspection.
- 4.5 In view of the quickening pace of DPE, the Head of Service intends to report on progress on a quarterly basis during the run-up to implementation.

5 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) To note progress towards the implementation of DPE.
 - (2) To consider quarterly progress reports between January and October 2004.

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- (3) To **recommend** to Council that Committee Room 3 at the Civic Suite be converted into office accommodation for the Transportation Team.

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Background Papers:

None

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