

DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT – UPDATE

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides progress on Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) together with recommendations on initial staffing proposals which may go some way to improve the current policing of on-street parking in town centres.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In September the Leader of the Council and the Head of Revenue and Housing Management attended a Member Briefing by Essex County Council on the progress of DPE across Essex.
- 2.2 Attendees heard that Essex County Council successfully applied to the Secretary of State for Transport for powers relating to parking enforcement under the Road Traffic Act 1991, initially in respect of the following Local Authority areas:-
- Brentwood Borough Council
 - Chelmsford Borough Council
 - Colchester Borough Council
 - Epping Forest District Council
 - Maldon District Council
- 2.3 The powers were implemented in these Authorities on 1 October 2002 and the County Council will be requesting powers for the remaining seven Districts within the next two years. Rochford District Council is expected to have its area covered by a Special Parking Area (SPA) in October 2004, or sooner. The intention is for the whole of Essex to be covered by April 2005.
- 2.4 Attendees were further advised that it was intended that the whole of each District fall within its own SPA.
- 2.5 The financial models for the first tranche Authorities (listed above) have been accepted by the Councils involved. Members will recall that the County Council are financially underwriting set-up and initial operational costs and that 'pay back' arrangements are written into the Management Agreement by way of a "bounty" being payable for each penalty notice issued.

3 PROCEDURAL PROCESSES

- 3.1 Two working groups have been established with each Authority making a contribution to the aspects of:-
- Enforcement
 - Publicity
- 3.2 Either the Head of Service or his Parking Administration staff attend the Enforcement Working Group and the Council's Corporate Communications Officer attends the other Working Group.
- 3.3 A Member Working Group of this Council met on 15 November 2001 to receive an annual progress report from the Head of Service. At that Meeting concerns were expressed that the enforcement of yellow lines in some town centres within the District was problematic. This is still the situation and has recently been the subject of a Member Notice of Motion. A proposal to address this issue is set out below.

4 YELLOW LINE ENFORCEMENT

- 4.1 Minute 464/02 addressed an issue concerning indiscriminate parking in Rochford Town Centre and the lack of adequate controls by Essex Police. The problems experienced in Rochford Town Centre could equally apply to Hockley, Rayleigh or Great Wakering in as much as there is little traffic warden presence.
- 4.2 The Head of Service wrote to Essex Police who responded by stating that responsibility for enforcement of parking restrictions is a matter for the Police until the process is decriminalised. The Chief Inspector (Operations) went on to state that the Police cannot undertake enforcement where various lines, markings and signage are defective and that this was the case in Rochford and, increasingly, in parts of Rayleigh. He gave a pledge that his staff will do their best with the limited resources available once the defects in the lining/signing have been rectified.
- 4.3 The introduction of DPE will require a comprehensive review of every traffic regulation order affecting parking restrictions throughout the District. This is obviously a time consuming, but necessary, pre-requisite to the introduction of DPE in the Rochford District and one which needs to be addressed well in advance of DPE being introduced. First tranche Authorities have found this to be an 18 – 20 month process. Other procedural matters will also need to be addressed to ensure the smooth transition to DPE.

4.4 Members have identified an emerging parking problem in our town centres as the cover of traffic wardens reduces and inconsiderate motorists take advantage of reduced patrols. It is now appropriate to consider the first appointment to the DPE team. This Officer will be working in the Transportation Team and will ensure all lines, markings and signs accord with traffic orders and pave the way for the introduction of DPE.

4.5 With Member support it might be considered appropriate to make Rochford Town Centre the first project area in order that the Police can then redirect their resources to an area of high need.

5 FINANCE AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 These will need to be considered by the Policy and Finance Committee and, subject to a favourable consideration at tonight's meeting of the proposal, a report will be submitted to the next meeting of that Committee.

6 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That the response of Essex Police be noted.
- (2) That the way forward as outlined be agreed in principle, subject to Policy and Finance Committee agreement to the resources and staffing required.
- (3) That the Head of Revenue and Housing Management reports to the next Meeting of Policy and Finance Committee on the appointment of a post of Parking Supervisor.

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Background Papers:

Notes to DPE Working Group
Essex Police letter 30 September 2002

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