

DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT (DPE) – AN UPDATE REPORT

1 SUMMARY

In June 2000 the Council agreed in principle to support Essex County Council in an application to introduce a Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) regime in Essex. This report advises Members of the latest position on DPE and addresses concerns expressed by Members of the Audit Services Committee about the integration of off-street and on-street patrols.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Road Traffic Act 1991 gave powers to Highway Authorities to apply to the Secretary of State for the transfer of responsibility for parking enforcement from the Police. In partnership with the twelve District Councils and Essex Police, Essex County Council identified the need for a County-wide strategy for DPE and commissioned consultants to undertake a study.
- 2.2 On 24 May 2000, the County Council hosted a Member consultation exercise when this Council nominated Councillors T G Cutmore, G Fox and V H Leach to attend. These Members were party to a detailed presentation which set the scene for the whole of Essex. The Head of Service was asked by these representatives to invite the consultant to make an abridged presentation to Council which occurred on 28 June 2000.
- 2.3 At that meeting, further questions were raised seeking clarification of the operation of the scheme. These were submitted to the consultant who provided a detailed response.
- 2.4 The decision taken at Council on 28 June 2000 and supplemented by the DPE Working Group Meeting was sufficient for Essex County Council to move forward with a report to the County Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transportation and then to report on to the Executive Board on 26 September 2000.
- 2.5 At Essex County Council full Council on 5 December the following three recommendations were ratified:-
 - a) That the principle of Countywide implementation of DPE in Essex be approved, subject to sufficient funding being received from the LTP settlement, a minimum £60 Penalty Charge and no net revenue cost to the County Council.

- b) That implementation be over a two year period, if possible, but a maximum of three years.
 - c) That officers be authorised to discuss agency and funding arrangements with districts individually and to ensure that all relevant staff are transferred to districts.
- 2.6 Some delays have occurred in the timetable for implementation and Essex County Council have not yet applied to the Secretary of State for leave to introduce a DPE regime. An officer meeting has been scheduled for Monday, 19 February 2001 at County Hall and the Head of Service will give Members a verbal update at the Meeting.

3 OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 At an Audit Services Committee Meeting of 2 January 2001, Members concurred with the Head of Service's suggestion that investigation of the level of coverage of car parks be deferred as a result of the implementation of DPE legislation recognising that for the efficiency of both on-street and off-street parking services would need to be integrated with the new on-street regime. It was anticipated that by early March the Secretary of State would have considered Essex County Council's application and a comprehensive report examining staffing levels and patrol coverage could be considered at a Meeting of the Audit Services Committee or this Sub-Committee. Clearly, the delays at County have prevented this occurring and, depending upon the outcome of the Officer Meeting on 19 February 2001, a report will be presented to the next Transportation Sub-Committee Meeting.
- 3.2 The target date for Rochford's DPE regime still remains as Autumn 2001.

4 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That a report on staffing levels and patrol coverage be made to the next Transportation Sub-Committee. (HRHM)

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Background Papers:

Road Traffic Act 1991
HMSO Guidance on DPE Outside London
RTA Associates Ltd – Consultants Report

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