
DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT- NEW TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS AND INVESTIGATION INTO RESIDENTS' PARKING

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is to update Members on the new traffic regulation orders introduced since October 2004 and to explore whether there is a need within the District to introduce a residents' parking scheme.
- 1.2 This report investigates the need for a residents' parking scheme, the implications of introducing such a scheme and the alternatives.
- 1.3 Some Essex Authorities had residents' parking schemes before the introduction of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE), but none have introduced a residents' parking scheme since taking over DPE. Before the Council took over responsibility for DPE there were no requests received from residents for such a scheme.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 On 1 October 2004, the Council took over the enforcement of traffic regulation orders from the Police. Since this date a number of requests have been received for the Council to introduce new Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) and Residents' Parking Schemes. This is due to the increase in enforcement as residents are occasionally being issued with penalty charge notices for contravening parking restrictions outside their own properties.
- 2.2 A number of roads in the District have parking restrictions to prevent commuter parking and to limit all day parking. However, many residents think they have the right to park outside their own property, even if they contravene a parking restriction. The Police approach has been that the highway is for the passing and re-passing of traffic and not for parking. However, where no parking restrictions apply, parking is tolerated.

3 NEW TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

- 3.1 In July 2003 and again in summer 2004, under Council instruction the Transportation Manager wrote to a number of consultees to help identify 'hot spots' where there might be a need for the introduction of new TROs or where higher levels of enforcement were needed. This included, District Councillors, Parish Councils and Residents' Groups.

There was a good response to this consultation process with around 29 roads being identified as worthy of investigation.

3.2 The Council's Transportation Team have worked closely with Essex County Council's (ECC) Highways Division, as the County Council remains the Highway Authority with responsibility for introducing new TROs. Areas identified included:-

- Parking areas close to schools
- Dangerous parking on bends in roads
- Junction protection to permit sight splays

3.3 Following discussions with ECC, 15 new TROs have been introduced to help traffic management, road safety and traffic movements. The list, compiled by ECC, is shown on Appendix 1.

3.4 The Transportation Manager regularly meets with ECC to discuss the need for TROs and this is an ongoing process and part of the team's annual work plan.

4 RESIDENTS' PARKING SCHEME INVESTIGATION

4.1 Why Introduce a Scheme?

Residents' parking schemes are generally introduced where there is no off-street parking for residents and where there is regular competition for parking. This usually occurs in housing built before the 1940s where parking was not necessarily a consideration. This is best illustrated where there are long streets of terraced properties with short or no front gardens and limited access to the rear of properties.

4.2 Demand can also be justified where larger Victorian type properties are converted into smaller bed-sitter or single person flats or where there are multi-car owning households.

4.3 Although residents have no right to park outside their own properties they expect to be able to do so and this often leads to conflict between neighbours.

5 Criteria

5.1 There are four principal elements to be considered as to whether a scheme is introduced: -

- The majority of residents in the street want a scheme.
- The scheme needs to be self-financing by the levy of a charge.
- There is no off-street parking or no means of providing off street parking at the properties.

- The Highway Authority must be in agreement before the introduction of a scheme and the criteria for introducing such a scheme must be met.

6 EVALUATION PROCESS

6.1 The Council needs to go through a full consultation process, as illustrated below:

- Initial enquiries would come from members of the public regarding residents' parking who may or may not have already spoken to their neighbours. Enquiries should be made in writing and an initial feasibility study would be completed before proceeding.
- A questionnaire would be sent out to every resident in the street asking the following information:
 - Do they own a car?
 - Do they have any off-street parking; if yes, how many spaces?
 - Would they require visitors' parking permits?
 - With space provided for any other comments they wish to make.
- On receipt of the questionnaires, if the majority of residents want a scheme, a visit to the street is made to ascertain if the scheme would be viable.
- Members would be advised and their approval sought.
- Highway Authority contacted for their opinion and whether to proceed or not.

6.2 If a residents' parking scheme was set up, application forms would be sent and the cost would be fully recoverable through the permit charge. Guidelines would be sent with application forms advising:-

- Who would be eligible for Permits
- Waiting list procedure
- Period and time scheme operates
- What kind of vehicles may be parked
- How the permit is to be used
- No guarantee that a space will always be available

- Procedure for a lost permit
- What happens if a resident moves home; advice on returning permit
- Renewal procedure
- Enforcement of scheme
- Advice on visitors' permits

7 ENFORCEMENT

- 7.1 All enforcement would be carried out by the Council's parking attendants (PA's) and, depending on the number of schemes, there might be a need for additional staff.
- 7.2 Generally speaking, all restricted hours parking would need to be consistent across the District and within the existing patrol regime.

8 ISSUES FOR/AGAINST A SCHEME

For:

- Provides convenient parking for residents and visitors
- Provides potential income for the Council following abuse by motorists and the issue of PCNs.

Against:

- Potential cost of a scheme could be high if there is little participation
- Consultation and implementation timetable is lengthy and consumptive of time
- Any introduction of a scheme would need an IT solution
- Break-even level might be difficult to achieve with unnecessary costs falling on the Council
- Expectation of being able to park outside residents' own property might not be achieved
- Take-up unpredictable
- Residents' expectations of enforcement might not be met
- Scheme might fall into disrepute by abuse:-

- Resident sells permit to commuter
- Excessive requests for visitor parking permits for on-selling
- Loss of income suffered in Council car parks
- Agency agreement with ECC may need to be re-negotiated
- Administrative complications associated with loss or failure to display permit
- Re-designation of existing bays to residents' parking bays would substantially reduce the availability of short-term parking in the District's town centres and therefore affect the traders.

9 OTHER CONTROL OPTIONS

- 9.1 In certain areas there are possibilities of amending or introducing TROs to help residents cope with parking controls. This might mean morning parking being accepted on one side of the road and afternoon parking on the other side – this deters all-day commuter parking.
- 9.2 Relaxation of the Council's parking restriction in all car parks permitting season ticket holders to park overnight.

10 SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED AREAS

- 10.1 The Head of Service has received requests for residents' parking and these have been fully investigated. This included an examination of existing TROs, discussions with the County Highways team and an on-site visit to ascertain whether off-street parking was possible.
- 10.2 Appendix 2 shows the areas investigated, number of requests received against the number of properties in that street, any current TROs in place, officer comments and recommendations.
- 10.3 Photographs have been placed in the Members' Lounge for each of the areas under investigation.

11 CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 This year-long investigation has revealed that the introduction of residents' parking is extremely complex and at this time should not be pursued for a variety of reasons. If it should be considered then take-up could be low. This would have the effect of pushing up the price of the parking permit in order to achieve cost neutrality or the Council being exposed to loss of potential income.

- 11.2 Additionally, there are no guarantees that the Council would be able to achieve residents' expectations, both in terms of space availability and enforcement.
- 11.3 Fortunately, in the Rochford District, houses with direct access onto the street with absolutely no scope for off-street parking occur only in a relatively few locations. Even in these streets, not all of the houses are affected..
- 11.4 In a number of cases residents have scope to provide off-street parking but have chosen not to do so.

12 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There is a risk that if a residents' parking scheme is introduced it may not be enforced as regularly as expected by residents. Additionally, the cost of the scheme could be shared by only a relatively small number of participants, pushing up the cost to the individual or exposing the Council to unrecoverable expenditure associated with introducing the scheme.

13 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 Depending upon the volume of any scheme there might be a need for additional parking attendants and administrative staff. In any case, the Council's computer system is not designed to manage residents' parking schemes and an upgrade would be needed. The Head of Service has received indicative costs of around £12,000 to £15,000 for such an upgrade. There is currently no budget provision for this level of expenditure.

14 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

Parish Councils contributed to the consultation process.

15 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That the introduction of new Traffic Regulation Orders across the District be noted.
- (2) Not to introduce a Residents' Parking Scheme within the District at this time.
- (3) That the District Of Rochford Off Street Parking Places Order be amended to admit overnight parking for cars.

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Background Papers:-

None

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