



TEST VALLEY
B O R O U G H C O U N C I L

Planning Policy & Transport Service

Annual Parking Report 2008/2009

INDEX

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| Parking Policy | 3 |
| Organisation, roles & responsibilities | 4 |
| Performance monitoring | 5 |
| Key challenges & areas of improvement | 7 |
| Enforcement Statistics | 8 |
| Financial – Parking account | 9 |
| Future plans | 10 |

INTRODUCTION

The Council commenced Decriminalised Parking Enforcement under the Road Traffic Act 1991 in October 2003, when powers to enforce on street parking contraventions moved to Hampshire County Council.

All public car parks and roads in Test Valley, excluding trunk roads are designated as a Civil Enforcement Area. Test Valley Borough Council enforce the on street parking restrictions (TRO's) within this Civil Enforcement Area under an agency agreement with Hampshire County Council.

The Department for Transport introduced changes intended to improve the clarity and transparency of parking enforcement policies under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 which came into force on 31st March 2008. From that date the Road Traffic Act 1991 was repealed. Following these changes Parking Attendants became Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs)

This is the first Annual Report produced by Test Valley Borough Council in accordance with the guidance to Local Authorities contained within Chapter 4 to the Department for Transport's, 'Civil Enforcement Operational Guidance to Local Authorities' published in March 2008.

Policy aims and objectives

- To minimise the use of vehicles in the busiest and congested areas at what experience and research shows to be the most appropriate times and to control on and off street parking by means of enforcement, development parking standards and Controlled Parking Zones;
- At the same time provide sufficient short-stay parking facilities to support shops/ commercial organisations and leisure activities thereby underpinning the Borough's social and economic life and to manage the use of spaces by price to encourage retail vitality and match long term provision to the availability of long term spaces;
- To control the supply of off street spaces by taking a long term view of transportation and parking strategies as they relate to the settlements within Test Valley;
- To provide revenue to sustain the Council's integrated transport aims and to review charges on an annual basis using information on demand, competing centres' tariffs and measures of shopping attraction;
- To reduce the risk of accidents;
- To safeguard the needs and requirements of residents with particular regard to ensuring that where appropriate residents are given priority over commuter parking in residential streets close to the town centres;
- To safeguard the needs and requirements businesses/ organisations and visitors;
- To improve traffic conditions;
- To encourage the use of public transport;
- To preserve and improve the infrastructure and the general environment and to ensure that design standards accord with community safety, operational safety and visual amenity;
- To increase and improve pedestrian and cyclist mobility;
- To regulate and control parking both on and off street.

Parking Policy

The Council believes that the making and enforcing of parking regulations needs to be done in a transparent, legal and comprehensive fashion.

The parking service website www.testvalley.gov.uk/parking contains details of the Council's Policy and approach to challenges. This explains our procedures for handling appeals both on the statutory grounds and the exercise of discretion in the case of mitigating circumstances.

The enforcement procedure for parking contraventions is also outlined and this forms the framework for maintaining compliance with traffic regulations in a consistent manner.

The emphasis is on transparency and on provision of information for road users. Providing a framework to ensure that we regularly review parking policies, in consultation with stakeholders and communicate those policies effectively.

These parking policies are designed with particular regard to:

- managing the traffic network to ensure expeditious movement of traffic, (including pedestrians and cyclists);
- improving road safety;
- improving the local environment;
- promoting use of and improving the quality and accessibility of public transport;
- meeting the needs of people with disabilities, some of whom will be unable to use public transport and are dependant entirely on the use of a car; and
- managing and reconciling the competing demands for kerb space.

Policy appraisal

All work undertaken by the Council will pay due regard to the policy and officers will continue to work with Hampshire County Council to encourage compliance with this policy.

Civil Enforcement Officers, who are in a unique position to identify changes to parking patterns, and office staff, who see challenges and representations and the reasoning behind them will be given the opportunity to influence the service to ensure continued compliance with this policy.

An ongoing appraisal will take account of:

- existing and predicted levels of demand for parking;
- the availability and pricing of on- and off-street parking places;
- the justification for, and accuracy of, existing traffic orders;
- the adequacy, accuracy and quality of traffic signing and road markings, including signing for Controlled Parking Zones;
- the level of enforcement necessary for compliance;
- the levels of penalty charges;
- the need to resource the operation effectively and ensure that all parking staff are appropriately trained; and
- impact on traffic flow, i.e. traffic or congestion outcomes.

ORGANISATION, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The provision of parking enforcement in Test Valley is delivered by an in house team; the only external element is cash collection from ticket machines.

Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO's) are the public face of civil parking enforcement and the way they perform their functions is crucial to the success, and public perception, of the Councils Civil Parking Enforcement operation. CEO's are expected to perform their duties in a professional and efficient manner at all times, they should apply consistency, firmness, sensitivity and tact coupled with common sense and patience and be able to think clearly and react sensibly under pressure.

The success of civil parking enforcement depends on the dedication and quality of the staff that deliver it. It is essential to give staff at all levels the skills and training to do their jobs effectively, in order that the Council can command public confidence and respect. This should also improve the self-esteem and job satisfaction of staff, resulting in higher retention rates. Training is seen as a legitimate and important aspect of civil parking enforcement running costs.

The main objective of a Civil Enforcement Officer is to ensure that parking controls are observed and enforced in a fair, accurate and consistent manner.

Civil Enforcement Officers duties also include related activities such as:

- inspecting parking equipment;
- checking and reporting defective signs and road markings;
- issuing information leaflets or warning notices;
- providing witness statements; and
- where appropriate, appearing before a parking adjudicator.
- informing the police of criminal parking activity;
- reporting suspected abandoned vehicles;
- reporting vehicles with no valid tax disc to the DVLA;
- putting in place and removing notices about the suspension of parking places;
- reporting on changes in parking patterns; and
- assisting with on-street enforcement surveys;

CEO's are allocated daily rounds to enforce; the rounds are made up of a mixture of off street car parks and on street parking restrictions. The supervisor draws up these rounds and they are covered in strict rotation by the available staff. The rounds are regularly reviewed to ensure that all restrictions are covered, with extra attention given to problem or high risk areas. Any requests for enforcement or reports of parking in contravention of restrictions are passed to the supervisor to be logged and where appropriate extra enforcement is organised.

The office processes involved in civil parking enforcement are important and staff carrying them out need similar levels of skill, training and professionalism as the more visible on-street enforcement officers. There is an obligation to provide enough staff for the level of work and to ensure that those staff have the skills, training, authority and resources to give the public a high quality, professional, efficient, timely and user-friendly service. Time and quality targets are set for dealing with queries.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Car park occupancy

Government guidance highlights that the availability of car parking has a major influence on the choice of means of transport. It is therefore important that the parking stock in the Borough is managed to provide a balance between encouraging use of alternative modes of transport whilst ensuring that the vitality of both Andover and Romsey is not compromised.

Demand for parking is monitored through ticket sales data and in addition a manual count of cars parked is carried out three times a year. The results of the manual surveys are reviewed annually and consideration is given to reallocating spaces from one category of stay to another to maintain optimum occupancy levels.

The mechanism for the re-allocation of car park spaces approved by Executive Committee in June 2001 provides that occupancy should not exceed 80% of the space provided at peak periods. This indicator ensures that a minimum of one in five spaces should be free in each category of stay in either town at peak times with the exception of Christmas shopping periods etc. However it is inevitable that some car parks will be more popular than others therefore the occupancy rate is taken as the average for each category of stay.

| Summary of Average peak demand based on essential users 2008 | | |
|---|---------|--------|
| | Andover | Romsey |
| Ultra short | 92% | |
| Short | 79% | 93% |
| Medium | 50% | 68% |
| Long Stay | 22% | 77% |

It is important to remember that ultra short and short stay customers are able to use medium stay car at the same rates there is therefore not a case for reallocating medium term spaces to short term.

The definition of an essential user for car parking is someone who does not have access to public transport from home, who cannot walk or cycle or who needs to use their vehicle during the day for business. All ultra short and short stay customers are designated essential users and approximately 80% of our long and medium stay customers are essential users.

The mechanism provides that as a maximum there should be no more than 35% of spaces empty at peak times; future development is taken into consideration when reviewing the findings.

Following the results of the 2007 surveys two Andover and one Romsey ultra short stay parking areas (max 1 hour stay) were re-designated short stay (max 2 hour)

| Summary of Average peak demand based on essential users 2007 | | |
|---|---------|--------|
| | Andover | Romsey |
| Ultra short | 90% | 97% |
| Short | 92% | 96% |
| Medium | 51% | 67% |
| Long Stay | 18% | 67% |

Car park charges

Charges are reviewed annually and a minimal tariff increase was introduced on 30th March 2008 as part of the Councils overall budgetary process. As part of this process we compare tariffs with neighbouring authorities and limit increases to remain competitive in order to protect the vitality and viability of the town centres. The objective was to minimise increases in the shorter stay shopper's car parks to accommodate the needs of residents and retailers. The one and two hour parking charges had remained at 60p and £1.10 since 1st April 2004 and as such the rise to 70p and £1.20 after four years was not excessive. We have continued to provide free parking after 4pm since the late 1990's.

Customer satisfaction

The Council are committed to providing a quality level of customer satisfaction in car parks and to enable us to achieve and maintain that target a questionnaire regarding car park facilities and environment is handed to car park users in all our car parks during one week in October to provide a random cross sample.

In 2008, 840 Questionnaires were handed out and 331 replies were received. Customers were asked whether they would agree that the quality of eight key facilities including ticket machines and lighting were satisfactory. The affirmative responses provided a Customer satisfaction indicator of 88%

A Questionnaire is also enclosed with all Parking Permit and Parking Appeal correspondence processed during one week each October to provide a random cross sample, requesting feedback regarding on the service provided by the Parking Administration staff.

In 2008, 150 Questionnaires were sent and 56 replies were received. Customers were asked to rate the efficiency and standard of service from poor through to excellent.

The responses rating average to excellent provided a customer satisfaction indicator of 95%

Administration efficiency

Time taken to reply to informal appeals against Penalty Charges is monitored. The objective is for the reply to be posted within 10 working days of the appeal being received in the Parking Administration office. The Performance Indicator is the percentage of appeals received during one week and replied to within 14 days measured quarterly. In 2008 the Indicator was 95% compliance.

Time taken to process permit renewals is also monitored. The objective is for the permit to be posted within 5 working days of the renewal application being received in the Parking administration office. The Performance Indicator is the percentage of applications received during one week and processed within 5 days measured quarterly. In 2008 the Indicator was 100% compliance.

KEY CHALLENGES AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT DURING 2008/2009

The introduction of the Traffic Management Act 2004 necessitated a major upgrade of the penalty charge processing computer system and a revision of the statutory notices and legal orders.

The service web site is constantly reviewed and updated. We aim to provide easy to access information on car park locations and charges together with information for residents regarding permits and traffic regulations.

Off street car parks

New pay and display ticket machines were installed in all our surface car parks in May 2008 these machines are linked to a web based statistics package enabling us to monitor the machines status remotely and providing accurate car park usage statistics

Since August 2008, customers have had the option to pay for their parking via their mobile phone using a credit or debit card, rather than using cash at a machine. The Council teamed up with RingGo to provide this service in car parks across Andover and Romsey.

The pay-by-phone system is only an alternative and drivers are still able to use the coin operated ticket machines.

Romsey railway station has offered the RingGo service for some time and this was one factor that officers considered when deciding which supplier to use. South West Trains have since introduced this service at Andover railway station which

together with the fact that many of our neighbouring authorities also offer the RingGo service, provides a regional coverage adding to the convenience of users.

The new ASDA supermarket was opened in February 2008 and the adjacent Anton Mill car park was extensively refurbished.

A new riverside walk was implemented in Andover which links our most central car parks to the Town Centre. Pedestrians can now wander from the car parks along a scenic and peaceful DDA compliant footpath into the centre of town or out into the Rooksbury Mill nature reserve

At the request of residents in adjoining properties a barrier was installed at Shepherds Spring Lane car park and the car park is now closed overnight.

On street

Our Traffic Management team implemented a number of new residents permit schemes (Controlled Parking Zones CPZ's) in Andover and a carried out a review of the on street parking restrictions in Romsey; following which many of the two hour limited waiting bays were re-designated to one hour limited waiting or residents only.

These offered a welcome opportunity for interdepartmental working. Parking administration staff helped to host the public consultations and the Civil Enforcement Officers were able to provide valuable feedback to the traffic engineers designing the schemes.

The practicalities of identifying which properties comprise each catchment area and ensuring that all eligible householders were provided with the details of their scheme and an application pack through to issuing the permits and incorporating the restrictions into our enforcement schedules highlighted our forward planning skills and team work.

ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS

In 2008/2009, 7587 valid Penalty Charge notices were issued for the following contraventions:

On street

807 to vehicles parked on waiting restrictions
124 to vehicles parked on loading restrictions
211 to vehicles parked in on street permit bays without displaying a valid permit
144 to vehicles not parked correctly within the markings of on street parking bays
212 to vehicles parked in a Loading bay with no sign of loading
758 to vehicles parked for longer than permitted in on street limited waiting bays
69 to vehicles parked in Disabled bays without displaying a valid Blue badge
11 miscellaneous

Off street car parks

2062 to vehicles parked after the expiry of paid for time in off street car parks
2278 to vehicles not displaying a valid ticket in off street car parks
396 to vehicles not displaying a valid permit in permit holder parking bays
144 to vehicles not parked correctly within the marked parking bays
313 to vehicles parked in Disabled bays without displaying a valid Blue badge
46 miscellaneous

2160 of the above charges were higher level contraventions and 5427 were lower level contraventions.

During this period 2708 appeals were received of which 2036 charges were cancelled after appeal. 983 of these after a valid pay and display ticket, permit or Blue Badge were provided.

5010 of these charges had been paid as at 09/09/09 of which 4111 Penalty charges were paid at the discount rate.

215 were written off as unrecoverable for reasons such as vehicle not registered at DVLA

FINANCIAL - PARKING ACCOUNT

| Test Valley Borough Council Summary of On street Parking 2008/09 | |
|---|------------------|
| <u>Expenditure</u> | |
| On street enforcement costs | 103,295 |
| Off street enforcement costs ** | 236,275 |
| Total Expenditure | 339,570 |
| <u>Income</u> | |
| On street residents parking permits administration fees | (21,123) |
| On street Penalty Charge Notice Income | (52,628) |
| On street Parking Waivers administration fees | (1,565) |
| Total Income On street | (75,316) |
| Off street management fees | (12,618) |
| Off street Penalty Charge Notice Income | (124,486) |
| Off street Parking Waivers administration fees | (507) |
| Total Enforcement Income Off street ** | (137,611) |
| Total Deficit on Parking Enforcement Account for 2008/09 | 126,643 |

**The income and expenditure of local authorities in connection with their on-street charging and their on-street and off-street enforcement activities are governed by Section 55 (as amended) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

The Secretary of State included a provision in the Traffic Management Act 2004 that further amended section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. An authorities on-street account is no longer limited to permitted on street parking and expenditure.

This means that **all** their income and expenditure **as enforcement authorities** (i.e. related to the issue of and income from PCNs) in respect of off-street parking places is covered by section 55.

The Council enforce on street parking restrictions under an agency agreement with Hampshire County Council. The justification for assuming these delegated powers is that enforcement is a Traffic Management activity rather than a revenue raising one and the local authority is better placed to manage enforcement priorities. Whilst the enforcement account shows a deficit the expenditure attributed to Off street enforcement is offset by the income from off street car parks which in 2008/9 was £2,062,136.

FUTURE PLANS

In 2009/2010 the service will continue to work towards achieving the objectives set out in this report.

The following reviews are planned:

- Andover town centre enhancement schemes which include Lower High Street, Bridge Street, London Street, Winchester Street, the riverside path and other improvements. This will include an accessibility audit.
- Romsey on-street parking including various access only restrictions, Station Road enhancement and Canal Walk improvements.
- School Zig Zags
- Disabled persons parking places
- Further residents permit schemes (Controlled Parking Zones) in Andover.

For more information on the matters contained in this report please contact

Mrs Hottinger
Senior Parking Enforcement officer
Planning Policy & Transport Service
Telephone 01264 368733
email carparks@testvalley.gov.uk