

# Test Valley Borough Council

## Annual Parking Statement 2015 - 2016

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 All public car parks and roads in Test Valley, excluding trunk roads, are designated as a Civil Enforcement Area. The Council enforces the on-street traffic regulation orders (TROs) within this Civil Enforcement Area under an agency agreement with Hampshire County Council. It manages its own public off-street car parks. The Council's Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs), under the Traffic Management Act 2004, have the authority to enforce on-street restrictions.
- 1.2 This is the eighth Annual Report published by the Council in respect of its management of on and off-street parking in accordance with the guidance published by the Department of Transport. It is intended to provide the public with information about its policies, procedures and key statistics relating to its parking activities.

### **Policy Aims and Objectives**

- 1.3 The Council, in carrying out its management of the Borough's road network and car parks, has identified a number of objectives. A summary of those objectives is set out below where the Council seeks to:
- assist in allowing the free flow of traffic by minimising the use of vehicles in the busiest and most congested areas;
  - improve traffic conditions and reduce the risk of accidents;
  - provide sufficient shopper and visitors parking facilities to support shops/commercial organisations and leisure activities; thereby underpinning the Borough's social and economic life, 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 safeguard the needs and requirements of residents and, where appropriate, to give them priority over commuter parking in residential streets close to the town centres of Andover and Romsey;
  - safeguard the needs and requirements of businesses/organisations and visitors;
  - control the supply of off street spaces by taking a long term view of transport and transport strategies as they relate to the settlements within Test Valley;
  - regularly review parking tariffs which provide revenue to sustain the Council's integrated transport aims;
  - ensure that parking controls are observed and enforced in a fair, accurate and consistent manner;
  - provide a high standard of customer care; provide well maintained car parks that are easy for customers to use with particular regard to disabled customers;

- improve transport infrastructure and the general environment and to ensure that design standards accord with community safety, operational safety and visual amenity.

## 2 Parking Policy

- 2.1 The Council believes that the making and enforcing of parking regulations needs to be done in a transparent, legal and comprehensive manner. It considers that the preparation and implementation is all about being fair to all users of the highway and the public car parks, to ensure the safety of the public and manage the use of road network by minimising the impact of inappropriate parking.
- 2.2 The parking service website [www.testvalley.gov.uk/parking](http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/parking) contains details of the Council's policy and the appeal process. It explains our procedures for handling appeals both on the statutory grounds and the exercise of discretion in the case of mitigating circumstances.
- 2.3 The enforcement procedure for parking contraventions is also outlined and this forms the framework for maintaining compliance with traffic regulations in a consistent manner.
- 2.4 The emphasis is on transparency and on the provision of information for road users. The Council's policies provide a framework to ensure that we regularly review parking management policies, in consultation with stakeholders and communicate those policies effectively.
- 2.5 The Planning Policy and Transport web pages are regularly reviewed and updated to provide easy access to information on car park locations and charges together with information for residents regarding permits and traffic regulation orders. The Council approved a Car Park Strategy and Management Policy in April 2012. The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a framework for the day to day management and provision of off-street parking in addition to providing guidance in respect of parking and access on the highway.
- 2.6 These parking policies are designed to:
- maintain the vitality and viability of town centres
  - manage the traffic network to ensure expeditious movement of traffic, (including pedestrians and cyclists);
  - improve road safety;
  - improve the local environment;
  - promote the use of and improve the quality and accessibility of public transport;
  - meet 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
  - manage and reconcile the competing demands for kerb space.

2.7 The Civil Enforcement Officers who apply the Council's policies whilst on patrol, and the office staff who administer the policies including the appeal process, are in a good position to inform the day to day implementation of restrictions and future reviews.

2.8 Reviews of the current policies 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.

### 3 Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 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.

3.2 The Council operate 16 Pay and Display car parks in Andover and 8 Pay and Display car parks in Romsey plus a few Season ticket car parks and limited stay recreation car parks. The total capacity this equates to is 2197 parking spaces in Andover and 986 spaces in Romsey. In addition to this, most of our car parks contain motorcycle parking bays where single motorcycles can be parked for free.

3.3 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) 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 Council's Civil Parking Enforcement operation. CEOs 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.

3.4 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 an important aspect of civil parking enforcement running costs.

3.5 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.

3.6 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;
- where appropriate, appearing before a parking adjudicator;
- informing the police of criminal parking activity;
- reporting suspected abandoned vehicles;
- 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;

3.7 CEOs are allocated daily rounds to enforce; the rounds are made up of a mixture of off street car parks and on street parking restrictions. These rounds 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 logged and where appropriate extra enforcement is organised.

3.8 The office processes involved in civil parking enforcement are an integral part of the enforcement regime and staff carrying them out need similar levels of skill, training and professionalism as the on-street enforcement officers. It is important 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.

## 4 Performance Monitoring

### **Car Park Occupancy**

4.1 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.

4.2 The Council monitors parking demand through ticket sales data and all car parks are surveyed for occupancy three times a year (May, August and October). The results, published in the Annual Parking Report, are reviewed annually and consideration is given to reallocating spaces from one category of stay to another to maintain optimum occupancy levels.

4.3 Applying the reallocation policy over the last ten years has resulted in the reallocation of spaces in both towns to ensure that sufficient parking spaces are available for shoppers in the car parks closest to the town centres. The reallocation has meant that spaces for long stay parking have been located further out from the town centre.

Summary of Average Peak Demand in Andover and Romsey (public off-street car parks)

<b>Andover</b>				
	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Ultra Short & Short <sup>6</sup>	74%	77%	79%	71%
Medium Stay <sup>6</sup>	50%	50%	55%	59%
Long Stay <sup>5</sup>	44%	37%	43%	41%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>62%</b>
<b>Romsey</b>				
	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014<sup>2,4</sup></b>	<b>2015</b>
Ultra Short & Short <sup>5</sup>	89%	98%	76% <sup>1</sup>	81%
Medium Stay <sup>5</sup>	77%	79%	84% <sup>1</sup>	83%
Long Stay <sup>5</sup>	77%	82%	75% <sup>3</sup>	77%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>79%</b>

1 Crosfield Hall Car Park: 21 spaces have been restricted to a maximum of two hours

2 Lortemore Place car park: divided between maximum 2 hours and maximum 4 hours

3 Romsey Rapids: opened a 249 space long stay car park with up to 4 hours free or all day parking for £2.00

4 Additional shorter waiting period tariffs have been introduced

5 Percentages are average of three snapshot surveys on Fridays in May, August and October

6 Percentages are average of three snapshot surveys on Saturdays in May, August and October

4.4 The Reallocation Policy was reviewed in 2012 as part of the review of the Council's Parking Strategy. The Council aims to operate the short and medium stay car parks at an occupancy rate of 90% based on peak day surveys. This indicator would mean that on a typical busy shopping day, approximately one in nine spaces would be vacant with the exception of Christmas shopping periods.

- 4.5 The peak demand for shopper and visitor parking for Romsey and Andover is Friday and Saturday respectively. The parking patterns for the two centres are monitored on those days and the results inform future reallocation reviews. Where there is a case for additional shoppers and visitors spaces, they would be created by re-allocating existing long stay spaces.
- 4.6 Following the purchase of the former Andover Magistrates Court building, the Council has converted this car park into a medium stay Pay and Display car park, providing an additional 50 spaces including 2 disabled parking spaces.
- 4.7 Following the termination of the agreement between Lidl and the Council, Lidl car park is no longer available to the general public other than to those shopping at the Lidl store.

### **Car Park Charges**

- 4.8 Charges are reviewed annually and Councillors agreed to increase the parking charges in April 2016 having not increased the charges since 2012. The increase agreed by the Council was in line with the RPI increase since the charges were last increased in 2012. In order to round off the parking charges to the nearest 10p, some tariff bands increased by more than RPI and others less, with some unchanged.
- 4.9 The Council has continued to provide free parking after 4pm, all day Sundays and bank holidays.

### **Customer Satisfaction**

- 4.10 The Council is committed to providing a quality level of customer satisfaction in its car parks. To enable us to achieve and maintain its target, a questionnaire regarding car park facilities and environment is handed to car park users in all our car parks during one week in November each year.
- 4.11 In 2015, 930 questionnaires were handed out by the Civil Enforcement Officers and 364 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 responses provided a customer satisfaction indicator of 87.5%.
- 4.12 A questionnaire is also enclosed with all Parking Permit and Parking Appeal correspondence processed during one week each November to provide a random cross sample, requesting feedback regarding the service provided by the Parking Administration staff.

- 4.13 In 2015, 150 questionnaires were sent out by the administration team with correspondence and 36 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 100%.

### **Administration Efficiency**

- 4.14 To allow for thorough investigation of the circumstances surrounding an appeal, consideration of the merits of the case including an appeals panel meeting and the drafting of a detailed response; the target for issuing a decision is 20 working days after acknowledgement (acknowledgement letters are sent the next working day, following receipt of the appeal). In 2015/16 the team processed 2442 appeals and achieved 88.3% compliance for the year.
- 4.15 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. In 2015/16 the team processed 1475 new permit applications and 1012 permit renewals achieving 97% compliance with the PI. There were a number of new permit schemes introduced in Andover this year and the number of new permit applications processed was again more than the previous year.

## **5 Key Challenges and Areas of Improvement During 2015/2016**

- 5.1 In December 2015 the Council moved over to using smartphones for enforcement. This allowed real time downloads of penalty charge information and better interface with payment support systems Ringgo.
- 5.2 Civil Enforcement Officers now use electric vehicles for patrolling outlying areas and an electric vehicle charging point was placed in the Romsey Rapids car park.
- 5.3 The Council is currently reviewing its parking enforcement and appeals policy. This review will be completed with an amended policy adopted by the Council in 2016/17.

### **Off Street Car Parks**

- 5.4 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 have a contract with RingGo to provide this service in car parks across Andover and Romsey.

The pay-by-phone system is an alternative method of payment; drivers are still able to use the coin operated ticket machines.

The use of the RingGo service continues to grow and for the period 2015-16 we registered 106,616 transactions representing £333,542.25 car park income; in context this is just over 13.7% of our total car park income.

- 5.5 The facility for season ticket holders to pay monthly direct debit was introduced in October 2012, we currently have 81 customers using this option.
- 5.6 In January 2016 we introduced the ability to pay for parking by credit or debit cards at the Chantry Centre multi storey car park. This is a check in check out system whereby your stay duration is calculated at the end of the parking. This system will be evaluated in 2017 with the potential option to extend it to other car parks.

## **On Street**

- 5.7 To address issues raised by local residents and Councillors, such as excessive commuter parking in residential areas or to address access and safety concerns, parking restrictions in the following areas were reviewed following public consultation changes to the restrictions have been introduced:
- Romsey
  - Valley Park
  - Chilworth
- 5.8 Reviews have also been undertaken with a view to introducing changes to the restrictions in the Anna, Harroway and Millway wards.

## **6 Enforcement Statistics**

- 6.1 In the financial year 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016, 8665 valid Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) were issued. During this period 2531 appeals were received of which 1485 were upheld on technical or consolatory grounds. Ten cases were appealed at the Traffic Penalty Tribunal of which two appeals were allowed by the adjudicator, six appeals were dismissed, one appeal was not contested by the Council as additional evidence was provided and one appeal was not contested as it was issued in error.



## 7 Financial - Parking Account

Test Valley Borough Council Summary of Parking 2015/16

<b>Expenditure</b>	£
On street enforcement costs **	103,618
Off street enforcement costs **	300,985
Off street operation and management costs	938,594
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1,343,197</b>
<b>Income</b>	
On street residents parking permits administration fees	39,069
On street Penalty Charge Notice Income	66,125
On street Parking Waivers administration fees	755
<b>Total Income On street **</b>	<b>105,949</b>
Off street management fees	177,289
Off street Penalty Charge Notice Income	192,075
Off street Parking Waivers administration fees	2,195
Off street parking tariffs	2,066,545
<b>Total Income Off street</b>	<b>2,438,104</b>

\*\*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.

## 8 Future Plans 2016/17

- 8.1 In 2016/17 the service will continue to work towards achieving the objectives set out in this report and in the Planning Policy and Transport Service Plan.
- 8.2 We will complete the review of the Parking Enforcement and Appeals Policy and implement the policy once approved by the Council's Cabinet.
- 8.3 The finding of the reviews of on street parking in Millway and Harroway wards, Andover, Valley Park and Chilworth will be implemented.
- 8.4 A review of the parking restrictions in Walworth Business Park will be undertaken and restrictions introduced to ensure the free movement of traffic. This review is in response to the redevelopment of units within the business park, with resulting increases in vehicle movements.

For more information please contact:

**Mrs Hottinger**

Senior Parking Officer, Planning Policy & Transport Service

**Telephone:** 01264 368733

**Email:** [carparks@testvalley.gov.uk](mailto:carparks@testvalley.gov.uk)