

# REPORT

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**Cllr Brown : Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport**

## **EXTENDING THE HOURS DURING WHICH PARKING ENFORCEMENT IS CARRIED OUT**

### **1. Report Summary:**

- 1.1 This report examines the possible requirement for the hours of operation of the parking enforcement team to be extended. It examines possible priorities during the extended hours and recommends a method of enforcement that would meet the needs of stakeholders affected by unauthorized parking outside core business hours.

### **2. Background and history:**

- 2.1 When Salisbury District Council took over parking enforcement in the district in April 2001, it assumed a 24 hour, 7 day a week responsibility. However, in line with many similar authorities undertaking decriminalised parking enforcement, activities have been concentrated on 'core' business hours, Monday to Saturday, 8 am to 6 pm. There are valid reasons for doing this. The payment regime in the car parks (and now on-street) is in force between 8 a. and 6 pm, Mondays to Saturdays, as are the various residential parking schemes. The majority of the retail activity in the City takes place between these times and free movement of delivery vehicles as well as legitimate parking for customers' cars needs to be safeguarded. There has been some enforcement activity undertaken outside these hours, both on Sundays and during late night shopping evenings, but there has been no consistent enforcement activity before 8 am and after 6 pm, or on Sundays.
- 2.2 Enforcement activity during 'core' hours has encouraged a high degree of compliance. However outside 'core' hours, the level of compliance has been significantly less and infringement of 24 hour restrictions, such as double yellow lines and Bus Stop clearways, has been common in some areas.
- 2.3 The Council's enforcement team patrols the parking restrictions throughout the city for a longer period during the day than did the Traffic Warden team used by the Wiltshire Constabulary prior to April 2001. However, motorists do seem to realise the hours of enforcement activity and unauthorised parking can be seen very soon after 6 pm. When the Police had responsibility for parking enforcement, they were not solely reliant on the Traffic Wardens. A police constable could issue parking notices during the day or night if this was considered necessary and resources were available. The police can still issue notices to vehicles parked causing an unnecessary obstruction, but as these notices can be challenged in the criminal courts, it would need to be proved beyond reasonable doubt that an obstruction had occurred. The police are therefore reluctant to use this approach as a routine way of dealing with unauthorised parking at times when the Council's team is not working. The police are also reluctant to take enforcement action when the primary offence committed is a contravention of the on-street parking regulations.

### **3. Requirements:**

3.1 Outside the core hours, the requirement for parking enforcement does diminish as traffic flows reduce. The problems that do occur can be categorised in the following order of priority:

- Obstructive parking that reduces road capacity on traffic sensitive routes and creates danger at junctions.
- Unauthorised parking that creates difficulties of access for public transport vehicles and other essential traffic movements.
- Misuse of spaces provided for disabled drivers.
- Parking on double yellow lines on lesser trafficked streets.

Any out of hours enforcement would need to address these issues in order of priority

3.2 It is a requirement that, as part of assuming powers for decriminalised parking enforcement, local authorities review the appropriateness of all waiting and loading restrictions. The recent revisions of the city centre and Zone E restrictions will bring them into a form that is appropriate for enforcement beyond the 'core' hours for the first three priorities. In view of the potential for residents' dissatisfaction, it would not be desirable to enforce residential areas as a matter of course. Any enforcement in these areas would need to be in response to a series of specific complaints and ideally should have the support of local Councillors.

### **4. Possibilities and financial implications:**

4.1 There are two main methods for dealing with unauthorised parking that takes place outside the enforcement team's normal working hours:

- 1) Extend the working hours of the team.
- 2) Set up random patrols.

4.2 Extending the working hours would significantly increase the overall cost of the enforcement team and could well make recruitment more difficult. A random patrol could be covered by the existing team on an overtime basis.

4.3 During the 'core' hours the benefit to the Council's finances from parking enforcement activities cannot just be measured in the amount recovered from penalty charge notices. Preventing illegal parking has a significant effect on both pay & display ticket income and also the take-up of other permissions to park, such as waivers and permits. Outside 'core' hours no such extra benefits would accrue and the issue of penalty charge notices would be the only source of income for any wider enforcement operation.

4.4 An hourly rate for a team of two parking ambassadors working overtime, assuming 30% on-costs, is about £29.00. To set up a random patrol covering three hours would therefore cost just under £90. With the present level of non-compliance there would be no difficulty in recovering this cost through penalty charge notices.

4.5 Motorists very quickly become aware of changes in the enforcement regime and, as the deterrent effect worked through, so fewer penalty charge notices would be issued. This increased compliance would, of course, be the whole point of the operation, and a random patrol funded by overtime payments would be more easily adjusted to remain cost-effective and provide the appropriate level of service. A frequency of one patrol a week on random days would be an appropriate level with subsequent monitoring of compliance and cost-effectiveness during the initial period.

4.6 Some members of the public do report problems that take place outside normal working hours and, on very rare occasions, action has been taken to resolve these issues. If the hours of parking enforcement are widened there may be more requests from the public for immediate action. However, parking enforcement is not a reactive service and any complaints would be investigated on the next planned patrol. To have an ambassador on standby able to react to any complaint would be prohibitively expensive and would also reduce the effectiveness of the overall enforcement team.

## **5. Conclusions:**

5.1 The most practical way that the council could widen the hours in which parking enforcement is undertaken would be through the introduction of random evening patrols. This could be done initially on a weekly basis on varying days. The effectiveness of this enforcement could be monitored during the initial period and the number and frequency of the patrols could be adjusted to maximise cost effectiveness and compliance. The patrols would be carried out between 6 pm and 10 pm by two ambassadors for security. They would be drawn from the existing team on a voluntary basis and paid overtime. They would be in constant communication with CCTV, both for security and to be able to react to perceived traffic flow problems. They would have access to the enforcement vehicle both for security and to maximise the area patrolled. The same regime could be applied to Sunday enforcement.

5.2 It is important to note that out of hours working would be a 'step change' in the level of parking enforcement and the public would need to be informed prior to commencement. The review of current restrictions would need to be continued to avoid the Ambassadors enforcing unnecessary or redundant restrictions, as this would serve to alienate the wider motoring public. For this reason, out of hours enforcement should be confined to main traffic and public transport routes that have been subject to a review of the Traffic Regulation Orders.

## **6. Recommendations:**

6.1 It is recommended that, now the changes to the Traffic Regulation Orders relating to the City Centre and residents' parking Zone E have been implemented, the parking enforcement team is given authority to undertake random evening enforcement patrols in these and other areas subsequently subject to new or revised waiting and loading restrictions. These patrols should be designed to resolve issues relating to the obstruction of traffic sensitive routes and areas that can affect public transport and other essential vehicles. The provision for parking for disabled drivers should also be monitored to ensure that it is not misused. Officers of Salisbury District Council and Wiltshire County Council (in liaison with the police and local bus companies) would monitor the levels of compliance and adapt the level of patrols to suit.

6.2 Cabinet is requested to endorse these recommendations and to refer them to the Salisbury Joint Transportation Committee for information.

## **7. Background Papers:**

7.1 None

## 8. Implications:

- **Financial:** The proposals in the report would be cost neutral.
- **Legal:** The adoption of decriminalised parking enforcement allows for enforcement to be carried out at any time.
- **Human Rights:** There are no human rights implications.
- **Personnel:** No new personnel would be required to implement these proposals.
- **Community Safety:** Improved safety for bus passengers and other road users.
- **Environmental Impact:** There would be no environmental impact.
- **Council's Core Values:** The recommendations in this report are designed to provide a better service to all road users. They will particularly benefit those using public transport. They are designed to make the subject of parking enforcement more fair and equitable in that those penalised for illegal parking during the day will not see others committing the same contravention in the evening without penalty. Some of the recommendations are the result of the Bus Quality Partnership meetings.
- **Ward(s) Affected:** Primarily City Centre wards.
- **Consultation Undertaken:** There has been a series of meetings with the bus company concerning the difficulty of accessing certain areas due to illegal parking. There has also been communication with the local Police about the impact of illegal parking beyond 'core' hours.