

WHAT IS DECRIMINALISATION OF PARKING ENFORCEMENT (DPE)

At present in North Wiltshire, car-parking enforcement on the roads is the responsibility of the police. If you obtain a parking ticket you are actually committing a criminal offence.

There are provisions within the Road Traffic Act 1991 for the responsibility of parking enforcement to be transferred to local authorities. At present this is voluntary, but it is possible that the Government will be considering transferring this function away from the police in the near future. Nevertheless, the Wiltshire Police have expressed the desire to transfer this function to local authorities.

Already in Wiltshire, Salisbury District Council and more recently, Swindon Borough Council have taken on this responsibility and the remaining 3 District Councils in Wiltshire and the County Council have been asked to consider this.

The County Council are involved as they are the highway authority and have responsibility for Traffic Regulation Orders which are an essential part of Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement (DPE), as it is correctly referred to.

The County Council has an opportunity to undertake DPE themselves but have expressed a willingness for the District Council's to take on this responsibility through an agency agreement. This will enable the district Council's to integrate on street parking enforcement with off-street parking enforcement (car parks) for which they are currently responsible.

An application has to be made to the Department for Transport (DfT) to create what is known as a Special Parking Area (SPA). If approved parking enforcement powers will be transferred from the police and a parking offence will no longer be classified as a criminal offence, hence the term "decriminalisation". Police will still retain powers for endorsable traffic offences though.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DECRIMINALISATION

The Traffic Warden Service will be replaced by Parking Attendants managed by North Wiltshire District Council and not the Police. It will be good for North Wiltshire because:

- Car parking issues can be easier linked to Council Transportation policies/issues etc.
- It enables integrated on-street and off-street parking management and enforcement.
- The Council will be able to introduce new restrictions (e.g. residents parking schemes) and be able to enforce them, subject to approval by Wiltshire County Council.
- New focus to enforcement means clearer roads and pavements - traffic regulations will have greater significance.

- The income comes to the Council to help pay for the service.
- Increased permitted parking enforcement leads to an increase in parking place turnover and a better and fairer use of the available parking places.
- Money from fines obtained by the Police go to the treasury not the Police.
- Changes in enforcement will allow the money to go to the Enforcement Authority.
- Improved safety and reduced pollution from reduction in vehicle circulation
- A single responsibility for parking means greater clarity and simpler perception to the general public.
- Scope for Parking Attendants (Wardens) to develop a broader role to enhance customer relations.
- The actual restrictions are not changing, only the means of enforcement.