

REGULATORY COMMITTEE
17th DECEMBER 2003

**MARLBOROUGH: HIGH STREET – ON-STREET PARKING
OBJECTIONS TO SUNDAY CHARGING**

Purpose of Report

1. To consider objections to the introduction of on-street parking charges on Sunday, the resolution of a public meeting and to seek Members' advice on the way forward.

Background

2. The meeting of this Committee on 8th October, in considering the 23 objections to Sunday charging, resolved:-

To defer consideration of this matter to the next meeting in November and to ask Kennet District Council to provide additional information in support of the proposed changes, and in particular, additional evidence on the need for such changes and additional detail of proposals for dealing with disabled drivers wishing to access places of worship.

3. The November meeting resolved that the matter be deferred to this meeting for consideration. Members are asked to consider this report in conjunction with the earlier report, presented to the meeting on 8th October 2003 (a copy of which is available in the **Members' Room**).

History

4. In the early 1990s, it became apparent that car parking issues in the central area of Marlborough were becoming a significant problem.
5. As a result of a lack of enforcement, illegal long stay parking in the High Street was leading to reduced turnover of spaces (with resultant impacts on reduced parking/shopping opportunities) and the competition by motorists for the spaces that did present themselves was leading to a poor road safety record (particularly for pedestrians).
6. Following extensive consultations and discussions (spread over a couple of years), the County and District Council resolved, in 1994, to introduce a co-ordinated charging regime for on-street and off-street parking with the objectives of:-
 - improving road safety
 - improving the availability of on-street parking opportunities
 - encouraging greater use of the off-street car parks for longer stays

7. The essential principle adopted by both authorities was that the objectives could only be achieved through appropriate enforcement of the parking controls and that the motorist should bear the costs of enforcement, rather than someone else. The proposal to introduce charging was then, as now, a very sensitive one and was opposed at the time by the Town Council, the Chamber of Commerce and others.
8. However, looking back over the last 10 years, it is generally accepted that the charging and enforcement regime has been a success. Those motorists who require a short stay in the central area (half-an-hour free on the edges of the High Street and up to two hours chargeable parking in the centre of the High Street, with special arrangements for the disabled) have found, as a result of dedicated enforcement, parking spaces available.
9. Concerns of the impact on the commercial vitality of the town have proved to be unfounded. The District Council is satisfied that the retail economy in Marlborough is buoyant and vibrant. While there is still considerable pressure for non-retail uses in other town and village centres this is not the case in Marlborough. Empty shops are soon occupied and Marlborough is actually unique in the District in that there is positive pressure for retail expansion. Recent examples of this are the substantial extension of Waitrose and the new Dorothy Perkins and Laura Ashley shops.
10. However, these parking controls and associated enforcement only apply on a Monday through to Saturday basis and exclude Sundays.

The Current Proposals

11. Over the last 10 years, the District Council has observed a growth in commercial activity in the High Street on a Sunday with associated growth in traffic and parking.
12. The view of the District Council is that the circumstances that now prevail, 10 years on, are such that the logic that led to the introduction of parking enforcement and charging during a period of Monday to Saturday should now be extended to include Sundays. The District Council considers that long stay parking in the High Street on a Sunday is leading to reduced parking opportunities for short stay visitors, tourists and shoppers, with a re-emergence of circulating traffic seeking on-street parking spaces. Meanwhile, on a Sunday, the off-street car parks remain under-utilised.
13. Consequently, in September 2002, Kennet District Council resolved to extend the current parking controls and charging regime by introducing charges on a Sunday in the off-street car parks and to request the County Council to do the same in the central area of the High Street.

Main Considerations for the Council

14. Kennet District Council considered the objections to both on-street and off-street Sunday charging on 16th September 2003. In the light of comments received it resolved not to introduce the charges off-street to meet the public demands for free parking but to request the County Council pursue the on-street charging to provide a turnover of spaces close to the shops. This is covered in more detail in the previous report of 8th October.

15. Marlborough Town Council called a Public Open Meeting to discuss the matter of Sunday charging. This, as mentioned in the November holding report, was held on 28th October and was attended by 130 members of the public. The Chief Executive of the District Council and the Chair of the Community Development Policy Committee attended the meeting to answer questions on the proposal. There was no support from residents or shopkeepers present for the proposal and the meeting resolved unanimously that:-

No action be taken on the introduction of Sunday parking charges. We request that Kennet District Council and Wiltshire County Council defer their decision for two years until evidence is collected after due consultation and research with representative bodies in Marlborough and following the completion of the Integrated Transport Study.

16. This response is similar to the views expressed in 1993-94 by these bodies when the original debate surrounding the initial introduction of parking enforcement and charges was underway.
17. In preparation for the next generation of Local Transport Plans, due to be submitted to Government in 2005, work is underway to develop new integrated transport 'packages' for bids for funding. A report is due to be presented on 15th December to the Marlborough Local Strategic Partnership on the Scoping Report for the Marlborough Community Area Transport Study. This Scoping Report includes a range of transport issues that require further investigation and resolution including:-

The development of a parking strategy within the principal settlement of Marlborough.

The study will include a range of traffic and parking surveys. Draft conclusions might be expected to emerge over the next 12 to 18 months.

Additional information

18. Following the October resolution of the Regulatory Committee further information has been forwarded by the District Council. Copies of two letters (dated 24th October and 5th December) are attached at **Appendix 1**. The photographs referred to (in the letter of 24th October) are available in the **Members' Room** for inspection in the usual way.
19. Members may wish to note the comments attributed to the Police (letter dated 5th December):-
- "that Sunday afternoons can be particularly problematic."*
20. In the relatively short time since the October meeting it has not proved possible to undertake any traffic and parking surveys. Indeed, at this time of year, the situation is increasingly distorted in the run-up to Christmas and the next available 'neutral' month for representative survey work would be March 2004.
21. A summary of the District Council's revised proposals (compared with the current restrictions) is attached at **Appendix 2**.

Options Considered

22. Members are presented with two options at this time. First, to accept the advice of Kennet District Council that the parking and traffic situation in Marlborough on a Sunday is such that it is now appropriate to extend enforcement (and limited charging) to include Sundays. Alternatively, Members could accept the advice of objectors to defer a decision pending a more widespread transportation study (including parking policies) to reach a conclusion in 12 to 18 months time.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

23. Deferring the matter for consideration in the Transport Study will mean that enforcement action to deal with the problems which the Police describe as particularly problematic on a Sunday afternoon will be delayed. The Study will consider the wider environmental effects of all transport issues.

Financial Implications

24. Kennet District Council indicated at the public meeting that the introduction of Sunday charging on-street is “cost-neutral”.

Reasons for Recommendation

25. Members are requested to identify their preferred approach.

Recommendation

26. That:-

(i) Either:

- (a) The introduction of limited Sunday charging and associated enforcement as requested by Kennet District Council be approved;

Or:

- (b) Parking matters be further considered in the context of the Marlborough Community Area Transport Study.

(ii) The objectors be informed accordingly.

(iii) District Council be advised of the resolution.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None