

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....20th April 2006

1. Title of Item/Report

Stockton Town Centre - On Street Parking Strategy

2. Record of the Decision

street parking charges in the Stockton Town Centre area and to adopt additional measures to assist Town Centre businesses.

Members were reminded in November 2004, Members had agreed that, following the adoption of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement powers, a report be brought to Cabinet detailing proposals for the introduction of on-street pay and display charging in selected areas.

Approval was granted to take over on-street enforcement from 5 September 2005. Policies approved in the Parking Plan and Financial Case that accompanied the application to the Secretary of State included the future introduction of on-street parking charges in Stockton Town Centre. This was consistent with National Planning Policy Guidance and the Council's Local Transport Plan Demand Management Strategy.

At the subsequent Members Seminar held on 23 June 2005, it had further suggested that Members be consulted on the relevance of existing waiting restrictions in their wards.

The Town Centre Manager had also been engaging with local businesses to determine what could be done to assist the vitality and performance of the Town Centre.

Members noted feedback from consultation undertaken which included

. All Members received a Decriminalised Parking Enforcement briefing pack and a plan showing the current restrictions in their respective wards was also provided to assist. The main comments were that some businesses were now being adversely affected by the improved enforcement of yellow lines that perhaps were unnecessary except to prevent all day parking. Consideration should be given to revoking some restrictions.

- The Town Centre Manager contacted over 600 businesses and received detailed comments from almost 50. There were additionally 3 discussion groups held with the traders and the feedback was provided. The main business community concerns were over the restricted access to the High Street (particularly for Finkle Street traders), Market trader parking, the high volume of parking by Blue Badge holders, inconsistency of restrictions and most importantly the lack of short stay quick turnover parking.

- Additional taxi provision in the area of the developing Cultural Quarter will assist the development of the Quarter and the night-time economy.

### High Street Restriction

Members were reminded that the Police were experiencing great difficulties enforcing High Street contraventions due to the vast number of exemptions, permits and access documents. Therefore, in September 2002, a simplified but more restrictive Order was introduced.

Compliance had improved although there were still persistent offenders. Authorities that had taken up decriminalised parking powers would shortly be able to apply to enforce moving offences in bus lanes. It was recommended that the Council applied for those powers with a view to introducing camera enforcement of the High Street southbound buses only lane. The Traffic Regulation Order would need to be amended as technically it was currently a one-way street with an exemption for buses. Camera enforcement should also deter northbound offences and should allow reconsideration of permits and access documents to assist traders. Those measures were in addition to programmed enforcement measures carried out by enforcement officers in person, and required the installation of a Home Office approved camera detection system, at an estimated cost of £40,000 to include camera housing and photograph viewing facilities.

### Market Traders / Norton Road

Following the loss of Market trader permit parking in Wellington Street, an area of Norton Road was allocated for their vehicles on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Very few vehicles were making use of those bays since they preferred to park in an off-street private car park in West Row. This had led to confusing restrictions and wasted on-street parking opportunity for Norton Road traders.

It was suggested that Norton Road be made available for short stay

customer parking all week and an alternative off-street location be found for Market Traders vehicles.

It was also agreed that consideration should be given to extending the Victoria Residents permit zone to include the west side of Norton Road. This was in order to be equitable to traders on both sides of the road as, at present, only those on the East side were able to apply for parking permits to park near their premises.

#### Blue Badge parking (disabled permit)

The European wide blue badge scheme was a valuable initiative to increase accessibility for those with mobility difficulties and whilst there should be few problems if drivers displaying badges park responsibly in accordance with the conditions of issue, there could be concerns over safety and obstruction if such conditions were not observed. A number of concerns had been raised over parking in Stockton Town Centre due to large numbers of vehicles bearing blue badges parking indiscriminately in streets adjacent to the High Street. There were an estimated 10,000 blue badge holders in Stockton District alone and it clearly could present a significant problem as they were permitted to park for up to 3 hours on any yellow line where loading was not restricted.

Recent problems involving obstructive parking and parking in loading bays were difficult for the Council to enforce due to the way in which national legislation was currently framed. However, the Council also issued blue badges with conditions of use. Misuse of the badge could lead to it being withdrawn. It was recommended that warning letters be issued to Stockton Blue Badge holders (visitors could only be reported to their issuing authority) and that if 3 warnings were recorded then the blue badge be not renewed upon the triennial application. It was also recommended that specific campaigns be run to inspect badges as there were frequent complaints of able bodied individuals using such badges irrespective of whether the badge holder is present.

#### Short Stay parking

The single issue that concerned most of the traders that responded to the survey was the lack of availability of quick turnover short stay customer parking. There was a willingness to accept modest charges paid at meters, 20p was suggested) if this was necessary to prevent longer stay and blue badge parking. Currently, Darlington and Middlesbrough charged 40p for 30 minutes and Redcar & Cleveland 20p for 30 minutes. The main areas suggested for pay and display ultra short stay (30 minute) bays were Yarm Lane/ Yarm Street, Norton Road and around the Cultural Quarter.

It was recommended therefore that the introduction of on-street pay and display parking should concentrate on areas that would assist Town Centre traders and control commuter parking. It was further recommended that any Orders were framed in such a way to exclude free parking in metered bays by blue badge holders as otherwise this would undermine the objective of the initiative. A plan showing the broad area suggested for the introduction of charging bays was provided, but it was likely that there would be a phased implementation.

### Enforcement Issues

Short stay on-street parking enforcement was a very resource intensive operation and had in the past been difficult for the Police to effectively enforce. This had led to longer than permitted stays in areas that were intended as high turnover parking bays to assist town centre traders and businesses, e.g. Church Road, Norton Road.

The enforcement team had only sufficient resources to cover off-street parking control and priority yellow line restrictions although some limited waiting enforcement had been carried out. A breakdown of fixed penalty tickets issued since September was provided.

Most authorities including Darlington, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland had introduced pay and display meters to control the turnover and help finance enforcement. This had the benefit of being able to enforce overstay by spot checks on tickets rather than repeated patrols and observations. It was suggested that it may be possible to consider some free limited stay parking dependent on the level of enforcement available.

### Riversides Sites study

Members noted that Master planning was underway for the Stockton Riverside area. This exercise would have had major implications for off-street parking in the Town Centre. A strategy to deal with this issue was currently being investigated and would be the subject of a further report after consultants' reports were received in June/July 2006

### RESOLVED that

1. Members note the results of the consultation exercise with the Stockton Town centre business sector are generally supportive of charging for more accessible on street parking management.
2. Members approve the principle of revocation and/or relaxation of

waiting restrictions where it would assist Stockton Town Centre Regeneration initiatives without detriment to road safety or the free flow of traffic.

3. Members approve the principle of on-street parking charges in Central Stockton where it would assist the turnover of spaces for short stay customer parking.
4. In line with the Scheme of Delegation, the Head of Service, and appropriate Cabinet Member, determines the detailed location and extent of the associated alterations to existing Traffic Regulation Orders and the Victoria Estate Residents Parking Zone.
5. The Stockton High Street restricted access order be amended to allow for bus lane enforcement and the re-introduction of business access permits.
6. The Council applies to the Secretary of State for Transport to assume powers that will allow civil enforcement of bus lane offences.
7. The Council takes sensitive action to reduce the inconsiderate parking by blue badge holders in loading bays.
8. Market Traders vehicles be relocated from Norton Road.
9. A review of taxi rank provision in Stockton Town Centre is undertaken.
10. Members note the likely impact of the Stockton Riverside Sites master planning exercise and the need to bring a further report revising the current off-street car parking strategy for Central Stockton.

3. Reasons for the Decision

Current on-street parking controls were viewed as having a detrimental effect on Town Centre vitality. Early experience of Council enforcement of waiting and loading restrictions has suggested that some restrictions are in need of review. Enforcement of short stay parking is resource intensive and parking charges will need to be applied so that this activity is at least self-financing. This is regarded as a change in policy for the Council.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Mrs Cains declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of this item as a result of her position as a Council representative on Shopmobility Limited.

6. Details of any Dispensations

None

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By no later than midnight on Friday, 28 April 2006.

Proper Officer  
25 April 2006