

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

20 APRIL 2006

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Regeneration and Transport – Councillor R Cook
STOCKTON TOWN CENTRE – ON-STREET PARKING STRATEGY

1. Summary

In November 2004, Members 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.

This report presents proposals to introduce on-street parking charges in the Stockton Town Centre area and to adopt additional measures to assist Town Centre businesses.

Consultation has been undertaken both with Members and representatives of the Town Centre businesses.

2. Recommendations

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 Recommendations/Decision(s)

Current on-street parking controls are 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. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (paragraph 8) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (paragraph 10 of the code of conduct).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held, whilst the matter is being considered; not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (paragraph 12 of the Code).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc.; whether or not they are a member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting, and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room during consideration of the relevant item.

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DETAIL

Background

1. Members may recall that during deliberations over the application for Decriminalised Parking Enforcement powers, approval was given to bring a report detailing proposals for the introduction of on-street parking charges in selected areas (Cabinet Meeting 24 November 2004, Minute Ref. 653).
2. 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 is consistent with National Planning Policy Guidance and the Council's Local Transport Plan Demand Management Strategy.
3. At the subsequent Members Seminar held on 23 June 2005, it was further suggested that Members be consulted on the relevance of existing waiting restrictions in their wards.
4. The Town Centre Manager has also been engaging with local businesses to determine what can be done to assist the vitality and performance of the Town Centre. Therefore this report also considers ways in which current traders can be assisted when proposing changes to on-street restrictions.

Consultation

5. All Members have 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.
6. 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 is summarised at **Appendix 1**.
7. 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.
8. 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

9. Members will recall 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 has improved although there are still persistent offenders.

10. Authorities that have taken up decriminalised parking powers will shortly be able to apply to enforce moving offences in bus lanes. It is recommended that the Council applies for these powers with a view to introducing camera enforcement of the High Street southbound buses only lane. The Traffic Regulation Order will need to be amended as technically it is 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. These measures are in addition to programmed enforcement measures carried out by enforcement officers in person, and require 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

11. 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 are making use of these bays since they prefer to park in an off-street private car park in West Row. This has led to confusing restrictions and wasted on-street parking opportunity for Norton Road traders.
12. It is recommended that Norton Road be made available for short stay customer parking all week and that an alternative off-street location be found for Market Traders vehicles.
13. 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 is in order to be equitable to traders on both sides of the road as, at present, only those on the East side are able to apply for parking permits to park near their premises.

Blue Badge parking (disabled permit)

14. The European wide blue badge scheme is 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 can be concerns over safety and obstruction if these conditions are not observed. A number of concerns have 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 are an estimated 10,000 blue badge holders in Stockton District alone and it clearly can present a significant problem as they are permitted to park for up to 3 hours on any yellow line where loading is not restricted.
15. Recent problems involving obstructive parking and parking in loading bays are difficult for the Council to enforce due to the way in which national legislation is currently framed. However, the Council also issues blue badges with conditions of use. Misuse of the badge can lead to it being withdrawn. It is 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 are recorded then the blue badge be not renewed upon the triennial application. It is also recommended that specific campaigns are run to inspect badges as there are frequent complaints of able bodied individuals using such badges irrespective of whether the badge holder is present.

Short Stay parking

16. The single issue that concerns 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 charge 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.

17. It is recommended therefore that the introduction of on-street pay and display parking should concentrate on areas that will assist Town Centre traders and control commuter parking. It is further recommended that any Orders are 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 is attached at **Appendix 2** but it is likely that there would be a phased implementation.

Enforcement Issues

18. Short stay on-street parking enforcement is a very resource intensive operation and has in the past been difficult for the Police to effectively enforce. This has 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.
19. The current enforcement team has only sufficient resources to cover off-street parking control and priority yellow line restrictions although some limited waiting enforcement has been carried out. A breakdown of fixed penalty tickets issued since September is given at **Appendix 3**.
20. Most authorities including Darlington, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland have introduced pay and display meters to control the turnover and help finance enforcement. This has the benefit of being able to enforce overstay by spot checks on tickets rather than repeated patrols and observations. It may be possible to consider some free limited stay parking dependent on the level of enforcement available.

Riversides Sites study

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

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

The cost of any Traffic Regulation Orders and the capital cost of introducing on-street pay and display machines (at £2500 each) and approved camera detection systems (£40,000) will be met from Local Transport Plan funding. An allocation to allow a phased introduction of machines from October 2006 has been earmarked in the 2006/07 LTP programme.

It is likely that this new policy will need to be implemented in phases over two financial years as the legal processes will mean that the part year income stream from 2006/7 would be insufficient to fund full implementation. The business community priority areas identified during consultation will be tackled first.

It is initially suggested that a maximum tariff of 20p per 30 minutes be introduced generating income of up to £4600 per machine per annum. A detailed appraisal is attached at **Appendix 4**.

The revenue costs of enforcement will at least be met by the income from charges over the Medium Term Financial Plan with a surplus of £22,000 estimated by Year 3.

Legal

From April 2006, it is anticipated that Councils who are already operating a decriminalised parking enforcement regime will be able to apply for powers to enforce bus lane moving offences, currently the sole remit of the Police. It is envisaged that camera enforcement will be required in addition to ensuring that bus lane Traffic Regulation Orders are in place.

RISK ASSESSMENT

This is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management and budget control systems are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

Environment

The enforcement of bus lane offences and the adoption of on-street parking control will assist in applying demand management measures to central area parking thereby reducing the impact of the motor vehicle on the environment.

Community Safety and Well-Being

The review of parking restrictions will ensure that road safety and traffic management issues are not compromised by the introduction of on-street charging bays.

Health

None

Economic Regeneration

Revocation of unnecessary restrictions and improved control over on-street parking will lead to more appropriate use of available spaces in the town centre to assist the commercial activity of business and retail outlets and improve the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Education and Lifelong Learning

None.

Arts and Culture

The introduction of more flexible and appropriate town centre parking opportunities will assist the Council to achieve its objective of developing the Cultural Quarter as a high quality visitor destination within the context of the Stockton Middlesbrough Initiative, and the 2004 Drivers Jonas Town Centre Regeneration Study.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

All Members were sent a Decriminalised Parking Enforcement briefing pack and an e-mail explaining the review together with a plan showing the detailed restrictions currently applying in their respective wards.

The Town Centre Manager contacted over 600 businesses and received detailed comments from almost 50. There were additionally 3 meetings held with the traders and the results are summarised at **Appendix 1**.

Consultation with Stockton Shopmobility and Blind Peoples Voice will be undertaken prior to any change in the policy towards dealing with instances of inconsiderate blue badge parking.

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Background Papers

Cabinet Report 24 November 2004
JMP consultants report July 2005

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

All

Property

None

PARKING REVIEW

FEEDBACK FROM CONSULTATION WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN STOCKTON TOWN CENTRE

Preamble

A paper on the introduction of on-street parking charges is due to be submitted by Stockton on Tees Borough Council (SBC) officers, for consideration by Cabinet in April 2006. It was agreed that this, and the wider issue of existing parking and loading restrictions in Stockton Town Centre, should be the subject of a consultation exercise with the business community, led by the Town Centre Manager (TCM).

This consultation took the form of a postal survey to businesses situated in the town centre, located by postcode. This survey requested written responses with the respondents being invited to take part in discussion groups thereafter.

The consultation, including discussion groups, was concluded by 28th February 2006.

Purpose of the Consultation

The consultation process achieved two aims;

1. It enabled businesses to comment on parking, waiting and loading restrictions in the town centre in the context of the direct impact of these on business operation and competitiveness.
2. It enabled SBC officers to gain practical knowledge of the impact of current restrictions and to benefit from the suggestions of town centre users (namely, businesses) as to what would improve traffic flows, customer 'churn' which would help businesses to remain in, and profit from, business in Stockton town centre.

Fit with Strategic and Local Initiatives for the Regeneration of Stockton Town Centre

Appropriate, convenient parking to cover a wide range of customer needs is crucial to the success of any town centre. In Stockton, this is brought even more clearly into focus as, given the serious and immediate competition provided by both Middlesbrough and Teesside Retail Park, what Stockton must offer in order to find a niche as a service centre is amenity, accessibility and attractiveness to customers.

Drivers Jonas report

The recent (2004) study on Stockton Town Centre conducted for the Council by consultants, Drivers Jonas, led to a number of objectives for regeneration being adopted by the Council; these underpin the masterplan for the regeneration of the town centre. They are shown in the table overleaf, with those having specific bearing on the provision of parking being highlighted in grey.

Role	Ambition
A Civic HQ/Focus for the local population	A Place of Civic Pride.
Home to the local community	Location for a range of housing types serving a range of needs. Reconnect the Town Centre to the community that traditionally served it and connect it to new areas of opportunity.

A centre serving the retail needs of the local population	A retail centre of quality, linked to the river and fully serving the needs of the local population.
A public transport hub	An operationally efficient location with attractive facilities, tempting people to stop off rather than simply pass through.
A centre serving the needs of the adjacent working / student populations (notably Teesdale)	To fully serve the business and incidental needs of the adjacent and Town Centre working population.
A Focus for Heritage Arts and Culture in the Tees Valley	To become a Cultural and Entertainment Oasis within the sub-region.
A place to eat, drink and enjoy	To provide a quality Town Centre hospitality experience which rivals the very best in the region, and makes the most of Stockton's exceptional civic, heritage and riverside assets (within a safe and well managed environment).
A Riverside Town	To become firmly established as an international-standard water sports destination and to reconnect the river with the Town Centre.
An employment generator for the local and wider population	To maximise the growth of employment within the Town Centre particularly in the retail, leisure and office sectors.

Outcome of Survey

The postal survey asked three questions:

Q1. How effective are the current parking restrictions e.g. yellow lines, notices of restriction, loading, waiting and access?

Q2. What would constitute an improvement? In this regard, we are particularly interested in changes that would improve the vitality, viability and competitiveness of Stockton town centre;

Q3. How well are pedestrian routes signed? .

Over 600 businesses were surveyed in this way. Some 46 businesses responded, which represents a response rate of around 7.4% - well above the expected response rate for postal surveys (usually between 1% and 3% for a targeted questionnaire).

The range of issues identified was analysed and the results were divided broadly into themes, to take forward to the discussion groups, as follows: -

Theme One: High Street ban (effect on trade); ticketing.

Theme Two: Blue Badge holder parking or indiscriminate parking; use of loading bays.

Theme Three: Provision and mix of long and short stay parking.

Theme Four: Parking for market traders; confusing signage.

There was very little response to the question regarding pedestrian signage; any who did respond were generally fairly satisfied with the range and detail of pedestrian signage, although it was noted that businesses located in yards and down alleyways found it hard to attract sufficient footfall as signage was insufficient in this regard. Therefore, this topic was not taken further via the discussion groups.

Discussion Groups

All those who responded to the postal survey were invited to the discussion groups, held as breakfast meetings on the 21st, 23rd and 28th February at the Swallow Hotel, Stockton. In total, 20 people attended over the three discussion groups. Some represented more than one business and therefore total representation was equal to around 40 businesses located in the town centre area, or 6.47% of all businesses reached by the postal survey and almost 87% of the total who responded to that survey.

The town centre manager facilitated each group, with two senior officers from the traffic and road safety group in attendance at each event to provide expert advice and feedback.

Outcome of Discussion Groups

The findings of the discussion groups have been summarised under each discussion heading, as follows:

Theme One: High Street ban (effect on trade); ticketing.

Issue	Suggested Response
Stockton High Street has become unfriendly to customers and the ban makes daily business operation difficult, particularly for deliveries, drop off and collection of goods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ If the ban remains in place, issue permits to businesses, which they can use at their discretion.▪ Ideally, remove the ban and allow controlled access to the High Street.▪ Reintroduce parking at either end of the High Street
Use of Finkle Street as permit area for contractors' vehicles restricts access and visibility of businesses.	Provide contractor parking bays in the town centre.
Finkle Street and Green Dragon Yard have no egress or access during the ban.	Lift the ban or issue permits as above.
Over-zealous ticketing of vehicles quite obviously loading or unloading, is driving customers away in all areas of the town centre. Many small businesses rely on customers calling in on a quick turnaround basis, e.g. sandwich shops, key cutting, fancy dress, florist etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Introduce very short term, churn parking, in the town centre area.▪ Wardens exercise more discretion and stick to the rules.▪ <i>Develop better relationship between business community and wardens/enforcement.</i>

Theme Two: Blue Badge holder parking or indiscriminate parking; use of loading bays.

Issue	Suggested Response
Blue Badge holders take up what should be short stay parking, for 3 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council is constrained by Central Government and EU regulations governing the use of Blue Badges. However it is suggested that incidences of abuse of the conditions of the permit are recorded by businesses and officers observing them, and a letter sent to warn that permits may be withdrawn if abuse of privilege continues. ▪ Charging standard parking fee for blue badge holders not parked in disabled bays in car parks and on street.
Blue Badge holders park indiscriminately in front of shops restricting access	
Blue Badge holders park in loading bays forcing legitimate loading to take place on the road.	
Blue Badges used by people who are clearly not disabled.	

Theme Three: Provision and mix of long and short stay parking.

Issue	Suggested Response
Church Road – High St ban and double yellow lines mean bay alongside church not used	Clarify who can park there/what usage and when
Loading bays and parking on Norton Rd under-utilised, whereas customers parking there are ticketed.	Change to meter parking, ultra short stay, very small fee e.g. 20p for 20 minutes. No blue badge holders.
Same issue on Yarm Lane layby and Yarm Street	As above, up to 6pm. Enforce 6pm until gates come down. Extend yellow lines to ensure bollard can come up.
Visitors and customers unclear about where car parks are	Promote safe pedestrian routes and location of car parks.

Theme Four: Parking for market traders; confusing signage.

Issue	Suggested Response
Proliferation of waiting times, times when restrictions apply, etc. around the town centre area means visitors and customers are caught out and may be fined when they thought they were complying.	<p>One rule for the whole town centre, e.g. restrictions apply from x am to x pm across all areas.</p> <p>Parking restrictions (20 minutes, 1 hour, 3 hours) clearly marked and signed</p>
Market trader parking bays along Norton Road largely unused by traders in some areas, and in others, vans block permanent businesses from view.	Move market trader parking and make these areas short stay 'churn' parking bays Mon-Sat.
Some signs/restrictions simply do not make sense	Review all signage and restrictions and remove what is no longer applicable or appropriate.

Recommendations

It is recommended that those of the above measures able to be quickly and cost effectively implemented (quick wins) are agreed to be Delegated Decisions and receive immediate attention.

It is further recommended that those issues that require the Council to revisit policy, such as changes to or removal of the High Street ban; medium and long term provision of short and long stay parking for workers and town centre users, etc. are taken forward and developed to be presented as part of the major review of parking strategy planned to take place in the new financial year 06/07.

Next Steps

Officers from Highways, and the Town Centre Manager, should now work closely together to ensure all issues raised by the business community as part of this consultation exercise are given proper and adequate consideration and practical, workable solutions reached which support the objectives for the regeneration of Stockton town centre, as set out above.

A report to Members will be prepared for submission during 2006, stating in detail any recommendations for major changes to policy should these occur.

Sue Burgess

Town Centre Manager

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On behalf of the following officer group present at consultations:

Bill Trewick, Traffic and Road Safety Manager
David Lynch, Group Leader Traffic Management
Nigel Gibb, Car Park Manager
Sue Burgess, Town Centre Manager

A4 plan of proposed charging area – to follow

**Penalty Charge Notices for Parking Contraventions
Stockton-on-Tees
5 September 2005 to 28 February 2006**

10 most common contraventions

Code	Description	Number	%
01	Parked on yellow lines	2640	47
16	Parked in a permit space (not RPZ)	547	10
25	Parked in a loading space	420	7.5
30	Parked for longer than permitted	357	6
02	Loading or Unloading where not allowed	309	5.5
83	Failure to display a ticket in a charging car park	255	4.5
15	Parked in a resident's parking space	231	4
40	Parked in a disabled bay	202	3.5
82	Time expired in a car park	169	3
86	Parked beyond the bay markings	164	3
Other	Various	344	6

Total 5638

5 September 2005 to 28 February 2006.
22 code numbers have been used in total.
5,638 penalty charge notices have been issued

Financial Appraisal

The July 2005 JMP consultants report (produced as part of the Decriminalised Parking Enforcement review) identified up to 1440m of highway as suitable for 240 limited waiting charging bays and on the basis of 20 machines and patrols per day would require an additional 2 parking attendants.

The projected costs and income stream is given below: -

	Total	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9
<u>Capital</u> (LTP contender)				
Machines (£2,500 each) ¹	£50,000	£25,000	£25,000	-
Legal Orders / Signage	£5,000	£5,000	-	-
High Street Enforcement Camera ²	<u>£30,000</u>	-	<u>£40,000</u>	-
Total Capital	<u>£85,000</u>	<u>£30,000</u>	<u>£65,000</u>	<u>£0</u>
<u>Revenue</u>				
Other installation costs (£1,500 per machine)	£30,000	£15,000	£15,000	-
Cash Collection		£10,000	£10,000	£10,000
Other Maintenance (telephones, electric, etc)		£2,000	£4,000	£4,000
Parking Attendants (inc on costs)		£10,000	£36,000	£36,000
Back Office costs		£2,000	£4,000	£4,000
Loss of income in off-street car parks ³		£5,000	£10,000	£10,000
Total Revenue Costs		£44,000	£79,000	£64,000
Annual Income (excl. penalty charge income) ³		(£23,000)	(£93,000)	(£93,000)

Notes

1. The purchase of car parking machines can be funded from Local transport Plan capital allocations and therefore there may be a small surplus (£22,000) over the Medium Term Financial Plan depending on turnover and contravention levels.

2. The purchase of the CCTV camera is shown as Year 2 due to the need for an Appeals system to be established by NPAS. Includes cost of housing and viewing facilities.

3. Income is based on a tariff of 20p per 30 minutes, 50p for 1 hour maximum stay and average daily turnover of 8 vehicles per bay. It should be stressed that the on-street income estimates and the consequential reduction in off-street car parks income are estimates based on discussions with other authorities and are dependent on specific site characteristics and demand. The figures have been reduced by 20% for optimism bias. 2006/7 income figures are based on October 1 start date.