

Information

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for County Councillors

MINEHEAD AREA PANEL – FOR INFORMATION

From:	Brian Cull – Group Manager Traffic Management
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Date:	17 August 2011
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To:	All County Councillors
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Civil Parking Enforcement

Background

The Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) project has been progressing in accordance with the decision of the Cabinet Member for Environment made on 12 August 2010.

CPE means transferring the responsibility for the enforcement of most on-street parking regulations from the Police to the Local Authority. It brings the enforcement of car park and on-street regulations within the same procedures. CPE was introduced in Taunton Deane in 2001. The current proposal is to extend this arrangement to the rest of Somerset. The County Council must apply to the Department for Transport and a designation order must be passed through Parliament. All the local authorities must support the application.

To deliver this service, a partnership arrangement between the authorities has been explored and rejected for various reasons. The County Council was asked to develop an enforcement delivery service that the District and Borough Councils could buy in to.

Progress with the CPE project

Each of the District and Borough Councils in Somerset has considered the County Council's formal proposal to apply for the extension of CPE powers to all the districts of Somerset and the offer to provide a CPE service.

Sedgemoor, West Somerset and Taunton Deane councils accepted the offer in principle; South Somerset District Council has agreed to support CPE but not to accept the enforcement offer.

Mendip District Council decided not to accept the offer or to support the CPE application. County officers have been in discussion with Mendip prior to Mendip Cabinet considering a revised paper at a future meeting.

In the meantime the responsibility for some of the on-street pay parking has been taken back by the County Council. This is being managed through new interim agency agreements. Other elements of the project are progressing as set out below.

Recent Progress

A formal consultation about the proposals for the parking enforcement service is under way with parking enforcement staff and union representatives.

The service procurement exercise has also started with the OJEU notice being published and Pre-Qualification Questionnaires issued. The next step is to prepare the tender documents.

A draft application for CPE has been submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT), and discussions are taking place about the details. The plan is to apply for CPE for the whole of Somerset and to change the application if the DfT does not accept it. If Mendip changes its decision and supports the application, we anticipate that the DfT will accept the application without significant changes.

All the existing traffic regulation orders in the County have been reviewed and new map based Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are being drafted to accurately describe all the existing restrictions. These orders will be advertised soon, and will replace all the previous TRO schedules in a more accessible format. This work is vital to ensure that penalty notices can be issued with confidence.

Current Issues

If the County Council can only apply for CPE for part the County, this will significantly reduce the benefits of the project for the people of Somerset. South Somerset District Council's decision not to buy the enforcement and processing service will mean two services operating side by side in that District. These decisions have a significant impact on the financial models, by reducing the potential for shared services and for sharing fixed costs. If the overall size of the service is reduced, the enforcement contract would be less attractive to potential bidders, so the ongoing cost of enforcement services would rise.

The County has been working towards a go-live date in February 2012, but it is now unlikely that this could be achieved without rushing the consultation, procurement and mobilisation processes. The project team is now reviewing the programme to achieve an implementation date no later than 1 April 2012.

Detailed analysis of the cost and income from on-street parking enforcement in Taunton suggest that it may be necessary to increase the amount of on-street paid for parking in the town centres of Somerset, and to review existing charges for pay parking and resident permits, in order to pay for acceptable levels of enforcement.

What will the new service be like?

The proposed enforcement service has been designed following an exercise to determine best practice nationally, aiming to make the best use of established new technology. The adopted philosophy is to pass all the tasks that are repetitive and governed by set procedures to an external service provider. The client organisation employed by the County Council will consider appeals and representations that fall outside the set procedures. In this way the client team will be involved in the daily routine, but still able to concentrate on the effectiveness of the service, the enforcement policies and the impact on compliance, without the concerns of scheduling and managing routine operations.

Civil enforcement officers will wear uniforms similar to those worn by the Taunton Deane CEOs. They will be qualified in enforcement procedures including customer care, and will act in a professional manner as representatives of the local authority. They will carry individual numbers for identification and their vehicles will carry a Somerset Parking Service logo. The service provider will record the details of contraventions, including photographs, on a system with access from the internet. This means that penalty notices can be reviewed and paid, or representations made, on line. For those without internet access, arrangements will be made to provide mediated access by telephone, face to face contact or by mail. All correspondence will be scanned and linked to the appropriate case.

County, District and Borough council parking managers will have access to all the information to review individual cases. The system will also provide reports so that the effectiveness of enforcement policies for improving compliance can be monitored.

Enforcement policies have been developed to reflect national best practice but they include local considerations such as observation times, policies in relation to incorrectly displayed blue badges, tickets, permits and the like. These policies currently vary between districts. The County Council will adopt consistent policies across the County for on-street contraventions. The variation in policies between the district councils for their car parks will be respected. Existing on-street parking provision will be reviewed in relation to transport polices and local parking strategies, congestion, competing demands and the cost of enforcement. Where appropriate, new regulations will be proposed. New regulations and any new on-street pay parking arrangements would be introduced through the established TRO procedures for advertisement and consultation. It is unlikely that they would be introduced before the introduction of CPE, though the consultation processes may be started in advance of that.

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