

Agenda Item No: 10

Report To: CABINET

Date: 12 January 2017

Report Title: Parking Enforcement Review

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Portfolio Holders: Cllr Bradford – Portfolio responsibility for Highways, Wellbeing and Safety



Summary: The report reviews the level of Parking Enforcement within the Borough in line with the corporate enforcement priorities. The increase in resources recommend will allow for the continued delivery of our schools education programmes, support across the Council Services and effective HGV enforcement in addition to the level of parking enforcement that is required to ensure the safety and free flow of traffic across the borough.

Key Decision: Yes

Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: The Cabinet is recommended to:-

- i. Agree the increase of the number of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) from 8.5 FTE to 12.5 FTE.
- ii. Agree that a review be undertaken of the Civil Enforcement Officers' core working hours in order to ensure fit with current enforcement priorities.
- iii. Agree to further increase support to the parking and highways service by 1.5 FTE, namely 1 FTE Appeals and Representations Officer and 0.5 Business Administration Support Officer.
- iv. Agree the purchase of four Electric Bicycles.

Policy Overview: Links to the Five Year Corporate Plan in term responding to growth and generally in terms of ensuring an effective, efficient and sustainable financial, resources, service delivery

and enforcement environment. This delivers as part of the corporate enforcement agenda alongside areas such as Planning, Anti-Social Behaviour and Littering. This is also a specific Health, Parking and Community Safety service object as contained within the 2017/18 service plan.

Financial Implications:

There are costs associated with the increase however these will be offset by the income from penalty charge notices and increased efficiency of investing in electric bikes. The costs are not significant and can be delivered within the services budget for next financial year. There is an overall net income. Full details within the body of the report.

Risk Assessment:

Yes – addressed within the body of the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment:

No

Other Material Implications

None

Background Papers:

None

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Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to review the current level of Parking Enforcement required. To ensure the team can deliver enforcement in line with the current restrictions and priorities including lorry parking whilst working proactively to ensure the free flow of traffic across the borough. In addition to continue to deliver a comprehensive education programme on road safety and enforcement to local primary schools and the general public.
2. Cabinet approval is specifically sought to increase the resources available to the parking, highways and administration teams.

Background

3. Ashford Borough Council commenced the enforcement of decriminalised on-street parking restrictions as agents of Kent County Council, the Highway Authority, in 2000. A team of Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) (then known as Parking Attendants) and a Supervisor were appointed to carry out both on-street parking restrictions covered by Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) in the borough and to continue enforcing parking in all of the borough's pay and display car parks.
4. In 2003 the borough was the first in the county to implement an overnight HGV parking ban in business parks, namely the Orbital and Sevington. This resulted in the CEOs contracts being amended to ensure that enforcement patrols mirrored the times illegal parking took place.
5. The CEO's have led on lorry parking enforcement across the County and following a pilot on lorry clamping recently this has achieved a significantly high level of compliance, the team continue to enforce where necessary. We are working as part of operation Kindle, a multi agency approach, to explore the opportunities to amend legislation to ensure the powers to enforce lorries are fit for purpose along with the necessary lorry parking provision across the county.
6. Over the years the number of TROs in the borough has increased tenfold. There are currently requests from the public for approximately 10 areas of further restrictions a month, these range from corner protection to a full review of a large area such as Tenterden or Wye. In addition there are now four overnight waiting bans, six resident parking schemes in Ashford and a new 'no return to zone' restriction there were none in 2000. These restrictions due to their greater complexity are difficult and time consuming to enforce.

7. Parking outside schools continues to be a growing concern. There are now 15 schools in the borough that have enforceable 'school keep clear' restrictions. Due to recent changes to the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 which removes the need for a TRO for certain parking restrictions including 'School Keep Clear' restrictions. This means that many more schools are likely to request and have restrictions put in place or advisory school keep clear markings signed to allow for enforcement. In 2000 there was only one school in the borough that had enforceable restrictions. There are now more than 30 primary schools alone in the borough, many in rural areas, and more school being built as the borough adding to the pressure. This situation alone is placing extreme pressure on the enforcement team.
8. The priorities of enforcement have changed and increased over the years and in order to continue to keep safety at the forefront of delivery further resources are required.
9. It is of concern that the number killed or seriously injured on our roads is high compared to other boroughs within Kent and the number under 16 is of particular concern. Indications are that the 2016 figures are likely to show a further increase in this worrying statistic. This further emphasises the needs for the service to give priority to our parking and highways activity which has road safety benefits.
10. There is also a need for the service to be proactive in terms of introducing appropriate and timely parking controls for new housing and commercial developments within the borough. They needs to be clear right from the beginning of a schemes development and not retrofitted with all the obvious difficulties. Ashford is a growing borough and as such there will be a continuing demand for further restrictions and enforcement.
11. More recently the team has started to take a proactive role in road safety and have begun visiting schools to promote road safety to educate and reinforce the dangers of parking outside school entrances. A recent presentation at Beaver Green school confirms this with the school reporting a noticeable reduction in problem parking. It will still be necessary to continue to focus on enforcement alongside education.
12. Due to a change in recent legislation, the team have recently being trained alongside KCC officer to ensure they are equipped to deal with Blue Badge abuse that they now have the power to take enforcement action.
13. Since 2013 the Parking and Highways team has been part of the Health, Parking and Community Safety Service and have become an integral part of that services workings with also supporting many other services across the Council. The CEO's are the eyes and ears of the borough, they assist with noise and licensing complaints, deal with abandoned vehicle, control illegal vehicle sales on the highway, deal with fly posting and much more. The team also assist with elections, support the council in dealing with emergency and

business continuity incidents and public events as and when necessary. Much of this work goes unseen but is invaluable.

14. Talent in this area (enforcement) is difficult to source and a benchmarking exercise has taken place to review terms and conditions offered by Ashford Borough Council in comparison with other local authorities and private sector organisations that offer a similar service.

Proposals

15. In order to respond to the pressures it is necessary to increase resources within the Parking and Highways team.

16. Proposal (i)

To increase the number of CEOs by four. All officers will be generic and will be trained in all areas, discussed within the body of the report, to ensure the highest level of resilience within the team. To increase the number of Highways, Parking and Administration staff by one and half to deal with the increase in PCN's, appeals and general queries and correspondence. Each CEO is self funding and it is estimated that there will be an overall net income of approximately 10,000pa.

Proposal (ii)

Commitment to undertake a review of the existing employees (CEO team) Job Descriptions, to consult on a proposed amendment to working hours, required modes of travel and anti-social hours allowance with a view to implementing a change to contracts of employment in order that the teams and condition of existing employees reflect proposed terms and conditions to new employees. This could potentially allow for more attractive shift patterns to further assist with recruitment and retention. This review will be undertaken with the support of Human Resources and any necessary staff consultation.

Proposal (iii)

The increase in work associated with the delivery of a parking service (on-street parking, off-street parking, enforcement activity and road safety campaigns) has the effect of increasing workload for not only the CEOs but also the supporting administration and appeals staff. For example we are now issuing 13000 Penalty Charge Notices compared to 9800 in 2013/14 and dealing with 4000 representations and appeals compared to 2500. Only 4 appeals were subsequently upheld by a Tribunal. We offer a number of warnings supported with advice to those receiving Penalty Charge Notices for the first time in categories such as incorrect registration number when using phone parking and those displaying disabled badges face down or with a missing time clock. This increase in overall volume of work needs to be balanced with a complimentary increase in the support services. The proposal is to employ an additional Appeals and Representations Officer

(which as well as dealing with the increasing volume of work but also provide resilience during leave periods that we have never had) and an increase in administration support by 0.5 FTE.

Proposal (iv)

The purchase of two bicycles in September 2015 has proven extremely successfully from both an enforcement and deterrent perspective. A CEO using a bicycle covers a much larger area than a CEO on foot patrol. Initial suggestions were that this would mainly act as a deterrent as opposed to an increase in the issue of Penalty Charge Notices, however, this has been proven incorrect with more PCN's being issued by those on bicycle patrol. The bicycle patrol supports the promotion of the council's wider environmental aspirations (i.e. when a bike is used in place of a vehicle) as having active travel and health and wellbeing benefits. The team have recently trialled an electric bike this has proven to have the same impact as the bicycles and covering an even larger area and taking into account reasonable daily physical exertion.

The proposal is to purchase four electric bicycles to complement the existing vehicles and standard bicycles. This would provide the best balanced approach to enforcement on the key priorities whilst supporting the officers to deliver effectively. Enforcing School parking will also be more effective using electric bicycles and will increase the number of schools that can be visited during the school run period.

The income figure per CEO is an average and it should be noted that officers patrolling using the bicycle issues significantly more PCN's due to the area that can be covered.

It must be emphasized that the requested increase in the number of CEO's is to achieve a better compliance with the increasing number of parking restrictions. There will be ongoing checks and balances between education, warnings and enforcement. Enforcement will continue to be proportionate and overt.

Financial Implications

17. Costs

Overall the proposals are expected to be cost neutral and will be reviewed regularly.

Proposed increased in staffing per annum	£152,000
Associated one off costs including bikes, training and uniform	£ 15,000
Expected income per annum	£160,000

Timescales

18. It is anticipated that the recommendations would be implemented in accordance with the following timescale:
 - Review of job descriptions and working hours, consultation and report to JCC for March 2017 with a view to having the same terms and conditions as proposed new employees.
 - Recruitment of the additional CEOs following JCC to start in March 2017
 - Recruitment of office staff on same timeline as recruitment of CEO's
 - Purchase of the electric bikes as soon as the proposal is agreed by Cabinet

Handling and Implications

19. As detailed in the body of the report the review of the Job Descriptions will go through the structured consultation process assisted by Human Resources.
20. A communications plan to be put in place to ensure those that live, work and visit the borough are informed of the changes.
21. The content of the report has been formulated with the input and support of the CEO Team.
22. Locations of use for the bicycles and electric bikes to be reviewed. With an increase in provision a permanent electric bike in Tenterden will be considered.

Risk Assessment

23. A saturation point on the maximum level of PCN's to be issued has been considered. However increasing the number of CEO's to the level recommended within the report will not meet this point. To ensure that the level of enforcement is fit for purpose we will review the need for staffing each and every time a post becomes vacant. The average turnover of staff within the Civil Enforcement Team is very low at only one or two per year. This is believed, in part, to be the result of the variety of work undertaken by our CEOs and the wider contribution they make to the delivery of services across the council.

Equalities Impact Assessment

24. The proposed changes are not discriminatory to any individual protected group.

Other Options Considered

25. There is an option to do nothing and keep the same level of Civil Enforcement Officers. This does not, however, support the operational need or the delivery of wider corporate and service objectives around enforcement, ensuring the free flow of traffic, the promotion of road safety and our Schools education programme.
26. The use of technology such as camera enforcement at schools has been considered. The cost of fixed enforcement cameras would be prohibitively expensive and also does not provide the flexibility to enforce when priorities change. The use of cameras is only recommended where the parking infringement it is dangerous or impractical to be undertaken by CEO's. A vehicle with a camera is extremely restrictive as the traffic volumes at the times when enforcement is required (e.g. school opening and closing times) makes movement to and from and around schools too slow to be effective. To date there has only been one trial of camera enforcement in Kent relevant to school parking enforcement and this is yet to be approved by Kent County Council as an appropriate enforcement tool.

Conclusion

27. The number of CEOs has not been reviewed in over 10 years yet the number of restrictions that need enforcing has increased ten fold and have increased in complexity.
28. The proposed changes, within this report, provide an overall review of the parking enforcement and addressing the current need and expectation within the growing Borough.

Portfolio Holder's Comments

29. The review of level of parking enforcement within the borough is long overdue and I welcome the proposals within the report to ensure that the staffing is at a level that is fit for purpose for the growth within the borough. The modes of travel that support the green agenda, the health and wellbeing of the staff along with an effective delivery of service are to be applauded.

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