

Meeting:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Date:	29 November 2005
Subject:	Parking and Enforcement Policy
Responsible Officer:	Executive Director – Urban Living
Contact Officer:	Dennis Thompson – Parking Services Manager
Portfolio Holder:	Environment and Transport
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Part 1

## **Section 1: Summary**

### **Decision Required**

The Sub-Committee is asked to note the progress on the implementation of the Best Value Review recommendations and improvement plan.

### **Reason for report**

As part of the Sub-Committee's work programme, agreed at its meeting on 10 March 2005, a report was requested on the implementation of the Audit Commission's recommendations in relation to the Best Value Review of Parking Enforcement.

### **Benefits**

The Scrutiny Sub-Committee is able to monitor the progress of the Parking Enforcement service against the Best Value Review recommendations.

## Cost of Proposals

Not applicable

## Risks

Not applicable

## Implications if recommendations rejected

Not applicable

## **Section 2: Report**

### 2.1 Brief History

2.1.1 The Council has been carrying out parking enforcement since 1994 as a result of the Road Traffic Act 1991, which transferred responsibility from the Police to the London local authorities. Subsequent legislation has enabled the enforcement of bus lanes, waiting and loading restrictions and other moving traffic contraventions using CCTV cameras.

2.1.2 A Best Value inspection of Parking Enforcement was carried out by the Audit Commission in November 2001 and in their report published in February 2002 they scored it as a “good” 2 star service with “promising” prospects for improvement.

### 2.2 Audit Commission recommendations

2.2.1 The recommendations are shown as follows, with comments and an outline of action taken.

1. *The development of a comprehensive and cohesive improvement plan, including directly linking the range of objectives and targets from various strategy documents and service plans.*

Comments and action taken: The council’s Best Value Review included an Improvement Plan and the Inspectors noted that progress had already been made on some improvements. The Improvement Plan was revised in the light of further progress and the key issues and progress on them is summarised later in this report. It was also linked directly to the service planning process in Environmental Services and to other strategy documents such as the draft Transport Local Implementation Plan (LIP), which includes a Parking and Enforcement Plan. This overall linkage is currently being further consolidated in conjunction with reorganisation and the corporate service planning and performance management process.

2. *Ensure the improvement plan has specific measurable outcomes with assigned timescales and individual responsibilities.*

Comments and action taken: The service planning process ensures that performance objectives and targets meet these requirements.

3. *Re-examine the policy on the use of discretion by parking attendants.*

Comments and action taken: The Inspectors found that although there was a clear policy on discretion by parking attendants, some were unclear about its status and it was not always adhered to. Accordingly, it needed to be clarified in order to ensure consistency in service delivery. In fact, PA discretion is very limited and generally subject to supervisor consultation and this position was clarified in refresher training. Currently, any relevant issues or concerns are dealt with in the team briefings that take place at the beginning and end of shifts.

4. *Ensure the council's policy of zero tolerance and prosecutions in relation to assaults on parking staff is rigorously enforced and publicised.*

Comments and action taken: There is zero tolerance to assaults and all staff are actively encouraged to report all incidents and assaults, however minor, to the management team. Prosecutions are pursued in every case where there is sufficient evidence and successful prosecutions have been brought on at least 4 occasions since the BVR inspection. Better team working, improved communication and training have helped to reduce assaults significantly. There are various contacts with the local Police and the working relationship with them has improved, although this is an area that needs further development.

5. *Develop and quickly implement a strategy to improve communications between the Parking Enforcement and Parking Attendant services, including the reintroduction of joint training and induction.*

Comments and action taken: Prior to the inspection the long-term absence of the PA operations manager had resulted in lower levels of communication and information and a consequent effect on morale. However, the inspectors reported that with the return of the manager morale was already improving as a result of regular team meetings and the employment of additional PAs. Team briefings are held at the beginning and end of each shift and several modules of customer service training, including dealing with violence and aggression were carried out in March/April 2005 involving all Parking Services staff and managers. A PA or PA Supervisor visits the Ticket Processing Office twice a week to help with parking queries and provide feedback to both parties.

6. *Consider a marketing and publicity strategy to explain policy and publicise developments, e.g. CCTV enforcement of bus lanes and the internet payment facility.*

Comments and action taken: Marketing and publicity remains difficult to promote in a positive way and local and national media coverage is generally negative, or even hostile. Some individual articles have appeared in the local press and Harrow People and specific initiatives, such as bus lane enforcement, parking at dropped kerbs etc. are publicised prior to implementation. However, the final approval of the LIP will provide an opportunity to prepare and publish a "Parking Charter" setting out the agreed policies and priorities for parking and enforcement.

7. *Review off-street car parks and parking policy early in the future cross-cutting "Getting Around" and "Environment" BVRs and undertake wider consultation on issues raised in the Parking Enforcement BVR.*

Comments and action taken: The planned cross-cutting reviews were superseded by changes to the Audit Commission inspection regime and the introduction of the CPA. The council's Best Value Performance Plan currently sets out the council's priorities, improvement plans and Best Value review programme. However, there has been extensive consultation through the draft LIP, which includes sections/chapters on parking and enforcement.

8. *Ensure future consultation exercises include information on service users and user groups so their views and targeted improvements can be identified.*

Comments and action taken: See 7 above. The consultation on the LIP took place between March and May 2005 and the final draft is expected to be reported to Cabinet in March 2006 and to Council in April 2006.

9. *Ensure the transfer of the parking attendant service from Harrow Contract Services to the Environmental Services department, identified in the BVR, is quickly implemented.*

Comments and action taken: PA operations were amalgamated into the Parking Services section in October 2003 and were fully integrated under one management by April 2004. This has resulted in clearer responsibility and accountability and has improved motivation, performance and quality of service. However, some changes will result from the reorganisation of UL Area Services and from the introduction of First Contact.

## 2.3 Improvement plan and progress

- 2.3.1 As referred to earlier, the council's BVR included an Improvement Plan and revisions were made to it in the light of a number of local and external factors that affected progress and timescales. The improvement plan items, progress and current status are summarised as follows.

- 2.3.2 The following improvements have been implemented:

1. CCTV camera enforcement: There was some slippage in the TfL programme and for technical reasons, and enforcement went live in August 2004. This has been extended to enforcement of waiting and loading restrictions in Wealdstone and from the end of November will be extended to enforcement of certain moving traffic contraventions.
2. Compliance monitoring: A compliance study was carried out in January 2003 in Harrow Town Centre, Rayners Lane, Pinner and Wealdstone and was used to determine whether any changes to enforcement priorities were required.

3. Revision of percentage bands for PCN issue: The level of yellow line enforcement was increased to a minimum of 50% in order to accord better with traffic management priorities.
4. Improve the effectiveness of pay & display enforcement: The purpose was to ensure careful inspection by PAs and thereby reduce the representations by motorists. This has been achieved through improved supervision, performance monitoring of individual PAs and, more recently, the use of digital cameras to record evidence.
5. Appointment of customer service manager, improved communication and training: A customer service manager was appointed in September 2001. However, the long term absence of a TPO manager has resulted in the allocation of additional responsibilities to the customer service manager, thereby delaying progress on introducing *Plain English* standards and applying for Crystal Mark awards. It is hoped that additional capacity following reorganisation will enable this to be progressed. Training of TPO staff continues to take place in-house at present as NVQ standards are still being developed nationally.
6. Accommodation improvements: Some improvements have been made to the working environment and it is anticipated that the TPO will move to newly refurbished accommodation early in 2006.
7. Performance management: A wide range of performance indicators and statistical information is available and this is now being incorporated into service planning and the corporate performance management process.
8. Consultation: Although the planned cross-cutting reviews were superseded by subsequent changes to the Best Value review programme, there has been extensive consultation through the draft Transport Local Implementation Plan, which includes sections/chapters on parking and enforcement.

2.3.3 The following improvements are still under review for the reasons shown:

1. Training: There was some delay in establishing national NVQ standards for PAs and standards for supervisors and administrative staff are still being developed. At present there is still a lack of accredited training establishments to enable this to be rolled out to any significant extent. Training will continue to be carried out in-house in the meantime, until NVQ training is available and we are able to establish an in-house NVQ assessor.
2. Vehicle removals: There had been an agreement in principle to a partnership with the LB Brent for the removal of persistent evaders' vehicles. However, this was deferred due to the potential demand for London-wide removal capacity and pound space required to meet the demand for TfL's congestion charging enforcement and also ALG's Operation Scrapit for the removal of abandoned vehicle and untaxed vehicles. More recent discussions with LB Ealing are current delayed due to the recent departure of their parking manager, but it is hoped to resume these in the near future. However, this operation would incur a net additional cost that would be difficult to contain within existing budgets.

3. Response times to representations: The response time for dealing with formal Representations is not met consistently, due to the overall resources available and the current capacity is not sufficient to achieve a desired improvement on the present target of 35 days. However, it is anticipated that capacity gains from the Urban Living reorganisation and from the BTP and First Contact will improve the position significantly.
4. Maximise the recovery rate of penalty charge notices: The recovery rate is the percentage of all PCNs issued for which some payment is received. It is apparent from benchmarking, changing trends and operational experience of higher PCN issue that the scope for increasing within the upper quartile is limited due to some factors beyond an authority's control, e.g. persistent evaders and foreign vehicles. However, more recent improvements in service quality and more robust evidence from cameras should help maximise the recovery rate.

## 2.4 Transport Local Implementation Plan (LIP)

- 2.4.1 As referred to earlier in this report, the LIP sets out the council's policies and programmes for improving traffic management, parking and enforcement, road safety, travel awareness and highway maintenance.
- 2.4.2 Chapter 7 of the LIP includes parking and enforcement policies and chapter 10 sets out a Harrow Parking and Enforcement Plan. The plan sets out the council's policies and strategies for dealing with all aspects of parking and enforcement of parking in Harrow and it is envisaged that it will be regularly updated.
- 2.4.3 Consultation on the LIP took place between March and May 2005. The results of the consultation, including the detailed response from Transport for London, are currently being considered in detail and the final draft of the LIP is expected to be reported to Cabinet in March 2006 and to Council in April 2006.

## 2.5 Options considered

Not applicable.

## 2.6 Consultation

Not applicable to this report.

## 2.7 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

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2.8 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

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Name (print) .....

2.9 Equalities Impact

Not applicable.

**Section 3: Supporting Information/Background Documents**

Appendices: None

List other background papers that are available on request:

- Audit Commission inspection report
- Draft LIP