

Civil Parking Enforcement: Strategy

Report of the Head of Highways and Traffic Management

1. Summary

This report provides an update on the Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) strategy to reduce the operational deficit of the service.

2. Background

A CPE update report (HTM/12/1) was presented to Place Scrutiny Committee on 16 January 2012, which provided statistical information and gave a picture of enforcement by each of the district council partners. Members requested that a further report be brought to this committee detailing the strategy that officer propose to address the operational deficit the service was currently sustaining.

3. Proposals

3.1 Action Plan

As detailed in the Cabinet report EEC/09/170/HQ, July 2009, it was recognised then that something would have to be done to meet the challenge of driving further efficiency savings out of the service. In response a four year Action Plan was drafted, designed to take advantage of areas where it appeared obvious that efficiencies could be made. The recommendations within the action plan agreed in 2009 were divided into short and long term goals, these were:-

Short term goals (within one year)

1. Agency Agreement review
2. Establish a suitable training contract to deliver consistent, quality.
3. Evidence of internal audits of each service, including processes and financial records are reviewed at officer level to ensure transparency.
4. Establish where good practice is evident and promote its use across all services.
5. Further development of safe lone working practises to allow efficient use of resources
6. Investigation of a change to Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) conditions to allow annualised hours.
7. Investigate and implement mobile working practices.
8. Authorise and action the recruitment of staff as identified in the individual reports for each District.
9. Review the work currently undertaken by the Devon County Council CPE Team.

Each of the above goals were investigated and implemented where possible, with the exception of the following. The agency agreement review took place; however, no changes to the agreement were introduced due to other priorities taking precedence. Discussions with the Districts regarding the CEO conditions took place; however, it was felt that this change to conditions would be difficult to implement.

Long term goals (within four years)

1. Investigate and implement the full integration of services across district boundaries by establishing a single 'brand' for parking services and enforcement, allowing greater flexibility of resources and a consistent service for all Devon motorists.
2. Implement a single management structure of the parking service.
3. Plan and establish a single back office for the processing of PCNs to aid consistency and efficiency.
4. Investigate further integration by enabling back office to issue licences and process other enforcement activities on the highway, utilising existing systems and supporting the network management duty, for example residents' permits, skips & scaffold licenses and environmental enforcement.

Although these goals were likely to realise the most benefits, none of the above long term goals have been achieved. In discussions to date, the District Councils have made it clear that they do not see the benefits of integrating their enforcement and parking services, in respect of their off-street car park service. Therefore, County Council officers have not been able to progress integration of the service. There is nothing in the current agency agreement that permits the County Council to implement changes to the current service delivery, without agreement of the Districts. Unless we can convince our District Council partners that this is a priority for them, no change is likely to occur without the County Council driving this through.

3.2 Review of the CPE service

The CPE service is a high profile service and in view of the above the County Council Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee have both requested a comprehensive review of the service. Therefore, in order to manage financial and reputational risk, the opportunity is now being taken to carry out a comprehensive, independent review of the CPE service. The review will be carried out by an independent specialist consultant with the appropriate experience and expertise in this field.

It is intended that this review investigates all aspects of the service. The key objectives are:

- i. **Operation Cost:** To identify what improvements are required to the service in order to reduce significantly the current operational deficit of £600K to £700K per annum.
- ii. **Reputation:** To provide assurance that the service is being delivered fairly and transparently, in accordance with current legislation and industry regulations and standards and, if required, identify what improvement measures are necessary.

The project will include (but not be limited to) review of the following elements:

Operational Cost

- Review overall efficiency of operational management of service by DCC;
- Review overall efficiency of operational management of service by district partners;
- Compare the relative performance, in terms of cost, of the DCC CPE service with other Councils and identify good practice;
- Compare relative performance of districts with each other in terms of cost and identify good practice;
- Assess validity of district agency costs;

- Review efficiency of existing back office arrangements;
- Identify alternative potential options for back office provision – what arrangements exist elsewhere nationally?
- Review costs associated with maintaining CPE Assets, e.g. signs, lines, TROs, ParkMap, payment machines etc.
- Review equipment and services costs; can costs be reduced? .e.g. uniforms, pay & display machines, cash collection etc.
- Review the suitability of the Agency Agreement with the district partners;
- Any other issues that may lead to a reduction in operational cost of the service.

Reputation

- Review the effectiveness of DCC's Traffic Regulation Order making process, including compliance with legislation;
- Review how appeals are processed and managed, is there scope for improvement, including using online appeals and the outsourcing of first stage appeals?
- Review customer service: Assess compliance with Traffic Penalty Tribunal best practice;
- Compare the relative performance, in terms of quality, of the DCC CPE service with other Councils and identify good practice;
- Compare relative performance of districts with each other in terms of quality, in particular in dealing with customers and the appeals process, and identify good practice;
- Review maintenance of CPE Assets: can the approach to maintaining signs and lines be improved?
- Review online services: Can more be provided to assist customers online in particular in the managing of appeals and the purchase and management of parking permits and dispensations?
- Review CPE documentation and in particular that used in the PCN process: Is the information on the various stationery clear to customers, in line with national best practice and legally compliant? e.g. wording on Penalty Charge Notices, 'Notice to Owner' documents etc.
- Review the compliance of the CPE service with the Department for Transport document "*Operational Guidance to Local Authorities: Parking Policy and Enforcement*", and other national guidance and legislation.
- Any other issues that may assist in protecting the reputation of the CPE service.

The expected output of this project is an independent comprehensive review of the Devon CPE service that identifies areas of good practice and areas requiring improvement and which provides detailed recommendations.

In regard to operational costs there should be a specific recommendation relating to the future operation of the agency agreement with the district partners that will enable operational costs to be reduced. The recommendation should detail the scale of the reduction that should be achievable and over what timescale.

In regard to reputation there should be a series of specific recommendations that describe what measures should be put in place to provide ongoing reassurance that the service is being delivered fairly and transparently and in accordance with current legislation and best practice.

The project report will provide options and recommended actions, for DCC to reflect upon, relating to the future delivery of the service that can be put in place over the following 12 – 18 months. It is anticipated that the consultants will be procured in the next few weeks and the project carried out before the end of December.

It is proposed that a Project Team is established with appropriate governance, including Council Members. The Team will consist of officers from DCC, within the Traffic Management Team, and the consultancy employed, and be managed by the Head of Highways and Traffic Management.

To ensure correct governance of the project, the Team will report to a small group of Council Members on an agreed regular basis. It is proposed that this will include the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, the Chair of Place Scrutiny Committee and one or two other Members as appropriate. A report will be presented to Members on a monthly basis with meetings as required and agreed.

4. Financial Considerations

The proposed project is to review the CPE service and identify areas of improvement to reduce the operational deficit and provide Council assurances, as outlined above.

The service has entered its fifth year of operation and to date has consistently run at a deficit. This deficit is in the order of £600K to £700K per annum. It is believed that there are opportunities to significantly reduce this deficit. The purpose of this review is therefore to identify these opportunities for reducing costs, with the savings that are likely to accrue covering the cost of the review. The review will be funded from the On-Street Account.

5. Sustainability Considerations

CPE in Devon is designed to support the County Council strategy for tackling congestion and network management duty which relates to making best use of the existing network, improving traffic flows and reducing traffic delays.

Better parking management through CPE can help deliver these objectives and also improve road safety and the environment of Devon.

6. Carbon Impact Considerations

Effective management of parking is designed to make best use of the existing network, improving traffic flows to reduce traffic congestions, which should have a positive impact on carbon emissions from vehicles.

7. Equality Considerations

CPE is a service currently undertaken by Devon County Council. This report relates to improving the existing service and details of the review to be carried out. Therefore, it does not change the equality consideration previously reported.

8. Legal Considerations

The review will help ensure that the Council is meeting its legal obligations in regard to CPE.

9. Risk Management Considerations

The proposal has been assessed and all necessary safeguards or actions have been taken to safeguard the Council's position.

10. Public Health Impact

There are no known impacts on public health.

11. Conclusion

When Scrutiny Committee considered the last report on the CPE service in January, it recognised that little progress had been made in the previous year to reduce the operational deficit reported. This has also been recognised by the Council's Cabinet and, in response, it is proposed that a comprehensive, independent review of the CPE service is carried out.

The review will be carried out by an independent consultant with the appropriate experience and expertise in the field of parking enforcement. The project will be overseen by officers and Members, including the Chair of Scrutiny Committee, with a further report presented to this committee early next year, detailing the recommendations coming from the review and the proposed timetable for actioning these recommendations.

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Electoral Divisions: All

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Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
1. Nil		