

# **Report to the Housing Scrutiny Panel**



# SCRUTINY

**Date of meeting: 27 January 2011**

**Portfolio: Housing – Councillor D Stallan**



**Subject: Review of Parking Enforcement Measures on Housing Estates**

**Responsible Officer: Roger Wilson (01992–564419).**

**Democratic Services Officer: Mark Jenkins (01992–564067).**

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## **Recommendations:**

- 1. That as part of its Work Programme, the Housing Scrutiny Panel reviews the approach to parking enforcement on housing estates, and makes any recommendations to the Housing Portfolio Holder; and**
- 2. That the existing policy of carrying out parking enforcement measures on an ad hoc basis on housing-owned land continues indefinitely.**

## **Report:**

1. At its meeting on 23 March 2009, the Housing Scrutiny Panel considered a report on options to resolve the increasing problems with parking and increased congestion on housing estates. The Panel agreed that parking enforcement measures be carried out on housing estates on an ad hoc basis. The Panel further agreed that the position is reviewed in January 2011 as part of its Work Programme, hence the need for this report.

2. In order to ease parking problems on housing estates, at an earlier meeting the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Panel agreed that the following recommendations be made to the Cabinet.

- That the maximum amount of grassed verge to be removed in order to construct a vehicular crossover to allow residents to park their vehicle/s in their front garden be increased from 6 metres to 12 metres in length; and
- That the additional £300,000 budget available in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme from 2009/2010 be made available to fund further off-street parking schemes and be match funded from the General Fund.

3. At its meeting on 1 September 2008 (Minute 60 refers), the Cabinet agreed both of the above recommendations. However, on the recommendation of the Housing Portfolio Holder, it was further agreed that, for any proposed crossover in excess of 6 metres, a consultation exercise involving local residents and Ward Members be undertaken prior to approval and construction.

## **Parking enforcement on Housing Estates**

4. On 23 March 2009, the Housing Scrutiny Panel considered a report on the increase in complaints from the public about unauthorised parking; these include increased telephone calls, letters and occasionally petitions.

5. The complaints were about two main issues. Firstly, residents were unhappy that more vehicles were being parked on grass verges causing damage to the open green spaces, which are costly to repair and can be dangerous to pedestrians and children playing. When, in response, enforcement action is taken by the Council, in the form of installing bollards, jockey rails or shrub planting, other residents complain about having nowhere to park, with cars being displaced into already heavily congested side streets.

6. In addition to receiving complaints from the public, officers were receiving enquiries from Members. Some Members were asking that enforcement action be taken to prevent vehicles from parking on the grassed verges, with other Members asking officers not to take action as it will displace vehicles and cause problems in side streets.

7. The Housing Scrutiny Panel asked officers in 2009 to draft a policy on the approach to be taken on unauthorised parking on housing-owned land. The draft policy was considered by the Panel and its comments were incorporated. However, at that time, the Housing Portfolio Holder, the (officer) Corporate Executive Forum and both Area Housing Managers had concerns that the proposed policy may be difficult to enforce and therefore it was considered not to be an option.

8. The Tenants and Leaseholder's Federation were also consulted and agreed by a majority of 5 in favour and 2 against (at that time) that unauthorised parking on housing-owned grass verges should generally not be permitted across the District.

9. The Housing Portfolio Holder requested that other councils be contacted and asked about their policies. A summary of the responses given at that time is attached as an appendix to the report.

10. In addition to the proposal of a parking enforcement policy, the Panel considered the following three options:

#### **Option One – Unauthorised parking is fully enforced**

11. If all unauthorised parking on estates was fully enforced, a programme of works could be undertaken on housing-owned grass verges, either installing jockey rails, bollards or the planting of shrubs, which would be costly. Although this would solve the problems of damage being caused to the grassed areas, due to the large numbers of vehicles being parked on grass verges, this would cause further congestion in side streets.

#### **Option Two – Postponement of parking enforcement in identified priority areas**

12. Any parking enforcement could be postponed in identified priority areas, where off-street parking schemes have been agreed, until the schemes have been constructed, or residents have had the opportunity to construct a new vehicular crossover (particularly under the new 12 metre rule). However, Members would need to consider the action to be taken in areas which are of less priority.

#### **Option Three – Carry out enforcement measures on an ad hoc basis**

13. Carrying out enforcement measures on an ad hoc basis is the current practice of housing management. Jockey rails or shrubs are installed at sites where the problem is particularly bad and the most complaints are received following a local consultation exercise. If this option was continued, all Ward Members are consulted prior to any enforcement measures being undertaken.

14. The Panel agreed in March 2009, that accordance with Option Three, enforcement measures be undertaken on an ad hoc basis where problems are particularly bad, following consultation with local residents and Ward Members.

## **Parking issues since March 2009**

### ***Off-street parking schemes***

15. The current position regarding off-street parking is set out as an appendix to the report. Table 1 shows those schemes which have been given high priority by the Cabinet. Those at Colebrook Lane, Loughton (24 bays) School Lane Abbess Roding (9 bays) and Hillcroft Loughton (38 bays) have very recently received Planning approval and are likely to be completed by the end of the 2011 calendar year. Whereas, Chester Close, Harvey Gardens and Audley Gardens all in Loughton, are currently being designed and should be completed by April 2012. The available funding for schemes in Table 2 will not be known until the Tenders for schemes in Table 1 are evaluated. As the Tenders are due in towards the end of January the Panel will be updated on the latest position at the meeting.

### ***Parking enforcement***

16. Following consultation exercises, enforcement measures have been undertaken in two areas across the District being Valley Hill Close, Loughton and Shelly Close, Ongar. Although no Step One complaints have been received (and enquiries from Members have reduced), concerns continue to be raised about areas around the Debden Underground station in Loughton, due to commuters parking on grass verges in order to avoid parking charges. Consideration is being given to undertaking a consultation exercise on enforcement measures in Torrington Drive, Loughton to stop commuters parking on the grass verge opposite the flats.

17. Members may also be interested to know that during the period there have been 6 appeals against refusals of permission for vehicular crossovers one of which was upheld.

18. It is suggested that the existing policy of carrying out parking enforcement measures on an ad hoc basis on housing-owned land continues.

### **Consultation**

19. The Tenants and Leaseholders Federation were consulted on the report at their meeting on 12 January 2011 and agreed the recommendations.

## APPENDIX

### Summary of responses on the approach taken by other Council's on parking enforcement received in March 2009.

Authority	Response
Harlow District Council	Do experience problems with parking on estate greens. Ad hoc approach taken some letters sent some vehicles stickered and jockey rails installed at some locations. No formal policy.
Brentwood Borough Council	Same approach as Harlow District Council.
Uttlesford District Council	Same approach as Harlow although no parking signs are installed and off street parking schemes have been constructed. They have a Corporate enforcement team who take action against residents who illegally park. No formal policy.
Welwyn and Hatfield District Council	Bollards and jockey rails are installed at some locations and they have a bye law which prohibits parking on Council land which is difficult to enforce. No formal policy.
Stevenage Borough Council	Have a parking strategy being trialed across half the Borough including a local traffic order prohibiting parking on Council greens which is enforced by parking attendants. Where there are major parking problems parking schemes are being constructed prior to traffic orders being put in place.