

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

27 February 2006

**Report of the Director of Planning & Transportation
and the Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation**

Part 1- Public

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken
by the Cabinet Member)**

1 PARKING ACTION PLAN – ANNUAL REVIEW

Summary

Progress on the Borough Council's Parking Action Plan is reviewed in this report. There remain a number of significant locations to be tackled under the banner of local parking plans but progress on the broad schedule of sites in the general plan has been good. The back-log of schemes has been all but tackled and an end to the phased programmes is in sight. The programme has been adjusted to match staff resources with the remaining commitments and the Board is invited to endorse it.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The Parking Action Plan was adopted in the summer of 2002 with the aim of tackling a considerable volume of requests for solutions to parking problems at many locations throughout the borough. The council called for regular reviews of the Plan to provide the opportunity of keeping it fresh and well focused on the priorities that are important to Members and the local community. This is the third review, the second one having been reported to the Planning & Engineering Advisory Board in July 2004.
- 1.1.2 The original Action Plan of June 2002 was brought together from a variety of sources including feedback from Scrutiny Committee, a survey of Members and requests received from residents, businesses and Parishes. The adopted Plan was divided into two separate strands, the first of which was a phased programme aimed at dealing with as many of the problem sites as possible within the level of staff resources the Council has to carry out this work. Not all the sites could be accommodated in the phased programme and those left over were recorded on a holding list so that they could be reconsidered at the review.
- 1.1.3 The second section of the Plan recognised that there were local concentrations of problem sites that merited more concerted action aimed at providing integrated

solutions to a diverse range of local parking issues. The Plan provided for Local Parking Projects in the Borough and these were scheduled as follows:

Location	Assessment Year	Implementation
West Malling	2003	2003/04
Tonbridge	2004/05	2005/06
Hadlow	2005	2006/07
Borough Green	2005	2006/07

1.2 A Review of Progress

- 1.2.1 During this review period, Phase 3 of the original general programme was completed. A schedule of locations is contained in **Annex 1**.
- 1.2.2 The **West Malling Local Parking Plan** was substantially complete in 2003/04. A further phase of works incorporating improved parking and associated facilities in the Ryarsh Lane car park will be undertaken in 2006/07 following the Council's recent acquisition of the freehold. In parallel, we will be undertaking a review of the full West Malling Local Parking Plan in the light of user feedback and, where necessary, the arrangements will be fine tuned.
- 1.2.3 **Tonbridge Local Parking Plan** was adopted during the autumn of 2005 and is now being introduced incrementally across the town centre. Implementing the provisions of the plan in this way is an essential and inevitable consequence of the large scale of the project and the need for care and accuracy on the detail at each stage of the process. There has also been a great deal of attention to involving Members and the local community throughout the project and this has had the benefit of ensuring a good degree of consensus is reached within each Zone before any implementation takes place.
- 1.2.4 Each scheme is created as an experimental Order valid up to a maximum of 18 months duration. This allows for the operation of the Order to be evaluated and the effect of the changes assessed. Consideration of written representations received during the first 6 months of the start of the scheme is carried out at the end of the experimental period. At this stage schemes can be confirmed, altered or abandoned. **Annex 2** contains the programme for implementing each of the zones.
- 1.2.5 **Consolidation Order** - as reported to the recent meeting of the Car Parking Advisory Board, work has been going on, in parallel with the more obvious on-street work, to renew the system of regulations used to manage parking in the Borough. This is a highly technical area of work but one which is nonetheless critical to the smooth operation of the parking service.

- 1.2.6 Highway authorities generally introduce new waiting restrictions adding them onto an existing “master” Order. These become numbered Variations on that main Order. Good practice is for the Order and its growing family of Variations to be “consolidated” at regular intervals say every four or five years, depending on the number of variations.
- 1.2.7 Producing an up-to-date Consolidated Order for this Borough has been a significant but essential task. The drafting and checking work has continued through the autumn and winter months and we expect to be advertising the new Order shortly. When the new order is constituted it will be valuable for a number of reasons. It will enhance the quality of our response to the Adjudicator if we are challenged on the validity of a penalty charge notice. Making new waiting restrictions will be more straightforward. Answering day to day questions from local people on extent and detail of specific waiting restrictions can be done more readily. Finally, it is an essential step in the next stage of our plans for service enhancement which is to computerise the administration and display of waiting restrictions using a programme called Parkmap so that the information is more readily available to staff and the public.
- 1.2.8 **Parking Operational Protocol** - We continue to believe that the best way to ensure an effective and responsive parking service for the benefit of residents and businesses in the Borough is to have management control of as much of the process as possible. The ending of the Kent Highways Partnership could have diluted that control by removing order making to the KCC divisional office at Gravesend. That has not yet happened and we are working to an operational protocol drafted before the end of the KHP. This is attached as **Annex 3** and as far as this Borough is concerned it does appear to be providing for a continued effective and responsive parking service.
- 1.2.9 **Car Park Enhancement Programme** - To complete the picture, it is worth mentioning the proposal for a rolling programme of car park enhancements contained in the current review of the Capital Plan. Subject to Council approving the reviewed Capital Plan, this will become a firm allocation and design work is currently underway in anticipation of that approval with a view to carrying out work on site during the summer months.

1.3 Next Steps

- 1.3.1 During February, preparatory work will start on **Phase 4 of the Action Plan** with a view to implementing the work by the end of April. Phase 4 is listed at **Annex 4**. In parallel with work on Phase 4, it has become clear that the local concentration of parking difficulties in Snodland merits a more integrated treatment under a local parking plan. Therefore, solutions will be assessed on a town-wide basis. Similarly, at Blue Bell Hill there is the need to address the difficulties being created by commuter parking on local residential roads and a robust response is justified because alternative arrangements are available in the car park built by the Borough Council last year.

- 1.3.2 The **Local Parking Projects for Hadlow and Borough Green** are programmed to start this year. List C assessments have been undertaken and, subject to approval of the budget, funding will be available for these two projects.

1.4 Parking Action Plan – Future Phases

- 1.4.1 There remains a steady stream of requests for solutions to parking problems at locations borough-wide. The benefit of several years concerted effort through the Parking Action Plan is that we are no longer simply adding these requests to a holding list. The end of the large back-log that we confronted in the summer of 2002 is in sight and Phase 4 will effectively put an end to the holding list. Consequently, we are now conducting preliminary investigations and assessing new requests as they arrive to identify those where, with some further work, we might be able to propose solutions acceptable to the local community and those where there is no real practical way of resolving the problems. In that way we help avoid building up unrealistic expectations for schemes and proposals that are obvious “non-runners” but concentrate our energies instead in those that will yield a satisfactory result.
- 1.4.2 The Board is invited to consider the list of proposed sites in Phase 4 of the Parking Action Plan and also to consider based on local knowledge whether there are further locations Members consider need to be included. If there are such additional sites, these can be added to Phase 4 or considered as part of the next phase of work, depending on when the request is received and the volume compared with our resources.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 Enforcement powers derive from the 1991 Road Traffic Act delegated to this council under an agency agreement with the Traffic Authority, Kent County Council. Any required waiting restrictions will be processed and sealed by Kent County Council to the requirements of the 1984 Road Traffic Regulations Act and associated procedural regulations by Kent County Council.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 Phase four of the Action Plan already has provision within the Capital Plan. Subject to approval in the current budgetary cycle, the proposals for Borough Green and Hadlow will have an allocation in the revised Capital Plan.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 The main risk relates to the council’s response to challenges on the penalty charge notices issued for parking contraventions. Signing, lining and the underlying traffic regulation order have to be accurate, consistent and accord with the relevant legislation. As far as the Parking Action Plan is concerned this risk is being mitigated through rationalising and simplifying the paper-work by producing a Consolidated Order. We are supporting this with regular links to the KCC

highway inspectors to ensure that any utility works affecting lines is quickly and accurately rectified and that our parking attendants remain vigilant to the state of lines so that we can intervene with maintenance as soon as necessary to ensure the restrictions remain enforceable.

1.8 Conclusion

1.8.1 Once work on the Tonbridge Local Parking Plan is completed during the spring of this year, the focus will move to Borough Green, Hadlow, Snodland and Blue Bell Hill. At the same time, we shall be moving forward on the fourth phase of the general programme. As things currently stand, it could be the last of such phased programmes because we have now worked our way all our schedules, including the holding list of unscheduled schemes. Setting aside the four specific locations just mentioned, what this means is that we have effectively eliminated the huge backlog of service requests that confronted us in the summer of 2002 and, in the process, have introduced a variety of parking management measures at over two hundred individual problem sites. We are therefore nearing the time when we shall be able to respond to parking problems as they arise and not simply log them on a holding list to be assessed in the future.

1.8.2 In summary, the parking programme consists of the following elements:

- Develop parking plans for Borough Green and Hadlow.
- Assess and address the reported parking problems of Blue Bell Hill and Snodland on an area basis.
- Implement Phase 4 of the Parking Action Plan.
- Extend Ryarsh Lane car park to create extra parking spaces.

1.9 Recommendation

1.9.1 That the revised Parking Action Plan **BE ENDORSED**.

Background papers:

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Nil

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