

**Telford & Wrekin Council Scrutiny – Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE)–
Representation From Newport Town Council (NTC)**

Introduction

I am the Town Clerk for Newport Town Council (NTC) and have been so since 2007. I have documented for Newport Town Council the increasing frustration over the lack of parking enforcement over the past 9 years. My office is in the High Street and I have spent more time dealing with parking related issues than any other matter during my 9 year tenure, with no improvement being noted (other than for one 18 month period). The adoption of CPE powers by Telford & Wrekin Council is considered the only viable way forward to have an effective parking regime in Newport (and the wider borough).

It is requested that serious and immediate action is taken to submit an application for CPE prior to 31st March 2018 (**RESOLVED by Newport Town Council at a meeting on 11 October 2017**).

Notable points to consider:

- 1) The power to enforce on road parking regulations currently lies with the Police Force.
- 2) West Mercia Police removed traffic wardens in 2008.
- 3) Since 2008 there has been little or no effective parking enforcement in Newport.
- 4) The Police Force has continually (at a senior level) express its lack of interest in undertaking its parking enforcement role.
- 5) Telford & Wrekin (T&W) Council is the only Unitary Authority within the bailiwick of West Mercia Police that does not have CPE powers.
- 6) The Town Plan (produced in 2014 by a group of residents) has Parking Enforcement high on its agenda. The Town Plan was produced as a result of over 1300 household responses and is considered to be an extremely good gauge of public opinion on the matter. 66% of respondents stated that they wished to see short stay parking on the High Street enforced. The number one aim/quick win identified in relation to Traffic and Transport matters was "the introduction of civil parking law enforcement".
- 7) NTC has written to the 3 administrations of T&W Council (led by different parties at different times) over the last 9 years and has continually met fierce resistance to moving the matter forward.
- 8) NTC even wrote directly to the Ministry of Transport to ask for permission for Newport Town Council to be granted the power of CPE (i.e. skip the local authority of T&W Council). The answer was that it is a matter for the Local Unitary Authority.
- 9) The 2 organisations capable of addressing the issue appear to have ducked the issue for nearly 9 years (other than for an 18 month period). The Police have the power and choose not to use it (I appreciate that they may well have more serious things to do with a limited resource) and T&W Council appear to have continually pushed the matter into the long grass for others to deal with later on (because parking can be dealt with as a police matter).
- 10) A trial project, delivered by Telford Police and funded by NTC with Wellington Town Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner (to share a PCSO resource) in 2015 proved to be extremely successful. It demonstrated beyond doubt to us that there is a need for an effective enforcement regime. Attempts to recreate that model within an Integrated Community Management model are proving to be fruitless.

- 11) The lack of effective parking enforcement is considered to have a significant detrimental effect on the economic viability of much of Newport's High Street activity.
- 12) Road Safety concerns, blocked access, lack of turnover of time-limited parking spaces have been (by an absolute country mile) the most reported comment to me for many years; often with extreme agitation, frustration, shouting, slamming of doors, visible distress being demonstrated.
- 13) Having met with many other Clerks/ Telford & Wrekin Parish & Town Councils there is an underswell of growing opinion that the ongoing lack of enforcement is unsustainable.
- 14) It is acknowledged that parking enforcement is often perceived as unpopular/ it's a cash cow for councils or just a case of jobs worth individuals. However, that view is often the view of those that break the law or have little regard for socially responsible behaviour. Lack of enforcement for an extended period leads to normally law abiding (socially responsible) citizens to wonder why they hunt for a legitimate parking space when they note that another individual has been parked in the same 45 minute parking bay for 2 days! They soon follow suit and begin to disregard the conventions.
- 15) The increase in the number of houses in recent a forthcoming years is causing a greater strain on the ever reducing car parking available (partly because the size of the average car is more than it was 25 years ago, each car now needs more inches). The regulation of the available space needs to be addressed in an equitable fashion. It is considered that most people most of the time will abide by signage out of sense of good citizenship. However, those generally good citizens are now wondering 'why they bother' when others just don't care/ are selfish and leads to a reduction in self-regulation.
- 16) The lack of an effective parking enforcement regime and overall parking strategy is having a negative effect on the economic outlook for the Town and providing a source of much social conflict. A significant number of students at Harper Adams University rent family housing in and around Newport, these properties are often converted so that they have additional bedroom space. This results in 3 and 4 bed family accommodation which might normally have one or 2 cars now having 4 or 5, overflow of parking onto the highway (normally the path) is inevitable. The limited time (45 mins) parking spaces in and around the High Street area are highly desirable as it provides for a regular churn that is welcomed by most retail businesses.
- 17) The item has been discussed more than any other single item by the Town Council's Community Safety Committee.
- 18) Lack of parking enforcement (and spaces) was a significant theme evidenced in the Newport Town Plan, with a significant number of responses specifically recommending more parking enforcement and others alluding to the fact (e.g. suggesting more police presence around school starting and closing times).
- 19) It is known that Telford & Wrekin Council has a parking enforcement regime (a system that monitors/enforces parking restrictions) albeit on T&W Council owned car parks. It does not seem therefore too big a step to scale that operation up to widen that remit to include on-street parking.
- 20) Taking on of CPE is seen by NTC as an opportunity to multi-skill parts of the work force that can react to a variety of challenges. Imagine a council employed law enforcement officer/ local warden who has the power to punish littering, dog fouling and parking; as they walk down the street checking for parking offences they might also notice littering and can react to the appropriate priority. The role is more versatile and it also offers an increased visible street presence that provides public reassurance.

Lee Jakeman (MILCM)
Town Clerk
For Newport Town Council

27th October 2017