

CABINET (TRAFFIC AND PARKING) COMMITTEE

19 January 2006

BUS LANE ENFORCEMENT

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Department for Transport has recently published guidance to local authorities on how to set up and operate a bus lane enforcement system. This report considers whether investigations should be carried out on the feasibility of Winchester City Council taking on the powers to carry out bus lane enforcement, although at this stage there is no commitment to take on that function. Any system will be required to operate on a cost neutral basis, but there may be capital costs involved in setting up the system.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That investigations be carried out on the feasibility of Winchester City Council taking on the powers to carry out bus lane enforcement including a financial assessment of anticipated income and expenditure.
- 2 That a further report be prepared for this Committee before there is any commitment to take on bus lane enforcement.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 There have been discussions nationally over recent years about local authorities having the option to enforce various minor traffic management offences including bus lanes, in the same way that parking enforcement has been taken over by some local authorities including Winchester. This is primarily a result of the increasing importance attached nationally to public transport including local bus services, and a recognition that the police have been unable to allocate adequate resources in recent years to achieve a good level of adherence to traffic regulation enforcement.
- 1.2 The first stage is to allow local authorities to carry out bus lane enforcement, and the enforcement of other traffic management offences is likely to follow in 2 to 4 years. The Department for Transport has in November 2005 published provisional guidance on bus lane enforcement and this report considers the options available to the City Council.

2 Proposals

- 2.1 The new proposals are that there should be the option of civil enforcement of bus lanes, but bus lane offences will not be decriminalised so it will also still be possible for the police to enforce bus lane restrictions. The new powers will be available to Counties, Metropolitan Districts, and Unitary Authorities but not to District Councils such as Winchester City Council.
- 2.2 However Hampshire County Council has advised that it would be unlikely to take up bus lane enforcement itself, and it considers that bus lane enforcement in Hampshire should be carried out by District Councils as agents for the County Council. This recognises that the District Councils such as Winchester City Council already have the back office systems and enforcement teams in place to deal with parking enforcement, and these could be adapted to include bus lane enforcement.
- 2.3 From a technical point of view, there are various types of equipment available for carrying out bus lane enforcement. The two main options are either using existing or new CCTV equipment, or using mobile enforcement equipment which would be attended. At this stage it appears that the existing CCTV equipment would not meet the specification legally required for bus lane enforcement, and that initially an enforcement system would be based on mobile equipment. In the longer term an updated digital CCTV system may offer other options.
- 2.4 The number of designated bus lanes in Winchester is at present relatively low, but the bus-only links on Middle Brook Street (beside M&S), Station Hill, and Barfield Close could all be enforced under the new bus lane legislation, and there are

enforcement problems at all three locations. There is also initial consideration being given to significant bus lane schemes in St Georges Street, North Walls, and at Badger Farm, so the availability of enforcement could be complementary to such proposals.

- 2.5 At this stage, there is no need for Winchester City Council to make any firm commitment to take on bus lane enforcement. However there will be staff resources required to investigate the equipment options and the enforcement and appeals procedures. These investigations will be carried out jointly with Hampshire County Council, the Department for Transport, and several other local authorities which are proposing to introduce bus lane enforcement. A national Working Group is being set up to coordinate progress and Winchester City Council has been invited to join that Working Group.
- 2.6 It is therefore proposed that the City Council should express an interest in taking on bus lane enforcement, and that staff should investigate the available options and prepare a financial assessment of income and expenditure for taking on bus lane enforcement. These investigations will take several months, and no commitment will be made to take on this function without further approval from this Committee. The target will be to achieve as a minimum a cost neutral operation. However this is unlikely to include the capital costs of setting up the system and further discussions will be required with the County Council to agree who should fund the capital costs.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

3 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 3.1 Bus lanes and their enforcement are a major component of sustainable transport, and will be part of the Air Quality Action Plan to improve air quality in central Winchester.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 4.1 At this stage, the only resource implications relate to existing traffic management and parking staff time being allocated to the investigation stage of this project.
- 4.2 If it is decided to progress bus lane enforcement, the target will be to achieve a cost neutral operation funded by the income from penalty charges. Further discussions will be held with the County Council to agree who should fund the capital costs.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

1. Provisional Guidance on Bus Lane Enforcement in England outside London, published by Department for Transport, November 2005.

APPENDICES:

None.