

26 July, 2011

Ablewell Street parking petition

Ward(s) St Matthew's

Portfolio: Councillor Ansell - Transport and Environment

Report:

The Panel will recall receiving a petition from Valerie Vaz MP at its meeting on 16 June 2011. This report sets out the response of the Executive Director for Neighbourhood Services to the petition.

Petition wording

"We the undersigned are customers who are opposed to the parking restrictions on Ablewell Street. We urge Paul Leighton of Walsall Council to allow us 30 minutes parking amnesty."

Background information

On street pay and display parking was introduced in Ablewell Street on 7 March 2011. Its introduction was part of a wider package of on street pay and display parking covering 17 streets within Walsall Town Centre.

The overall scheme was introduced to address a range of issues, but specific to Ablewell Street were:

- To encourage the use of off street car parks for extended parking requirements
- To increase the turnover of limited waiting parking spaces, giving more opportunity for motorists to park for short periods
- To address a localised traffic management/road safety problem created by frequent double parking
- To generate an additional revenue stream to contribute to the costs of providing and maintaining parking facilities

Prior to the introduction of on street pay and display, motorists frequently parked their vehicle for the maximum 2 hour allowable time period, leaving little opportunity for passing trade to park legally for short periods of time. This often resulted in motorist's double parking, creating unnecessary localised traffic congestion and road safety concerns affecting all road users.

Since the introduction of on street pay and display parking, motorists have changed their parking behaviour and now carefully consider their parking choice. Those wishing to park for extended periods are generally parking elsewhere, leaving more opportunity for short stay parking. Previous occurrences of double parking have been eradicated as motorists can now legally park within the designated parking bays.

As part of the Council budget for 2011/2012, £100,000 was identified and approved as new income resulting from the introduction of on street pay and display parking. Approximately 10% of the new income is expected to be generated from Ablewell Street pay and display parking.

The complete removal of pay and display parking from Ablewell Street would have a direct impact on the approved budget and immediately create an additional budget pressure for the Council.

The request to operate 30 minutes free parking would also create an immediate budget pressure, but importantly this would also be impractical to operate both for the Council and the motorist.

Ensuring the overall time limit applicable to the parking bay is complied with would be more difficult as currently the pay and display ticket is used as confirmation of the time parking commenced. In the absence of the pay and display ticket system, a motorist could park for more than 30 minutes free of charge as the 30 minutes would only start from the point the vehicle is identified by a parking enforcement officer. Given the patrolling patterns of the enforcement team this could result in vehicles being parked without payment far in excess of any 30 minutes free parking arrangement.

The operation of 30 minutes free parking would also be inconvenient for any motorist wishing to park for longer than the 30 minutes. Motorists would need to prematurely return to their vehicle to purchase a pay and display ticket after the 30 minutes has expired. This would quickly become an issue with motorists and businesses as the current 2 hour maximum parking restriction was specifically introduced to address the concerns of local businesses.

The current parking arrangements were designed to assist with the safe and efficient operation of the public highway, to provide more opportunity for passing trade to park legally whilst also contributing to the Council's overall budget. Any change to the existing arrangements would be counter productive to these aims.


Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel note the contents of this report.

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