



# WOKINGHAM TOWN AND EVENDONS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

# DECRIMINALISATION OF PARKING IN WOKINGHAM BOROUGH MINUTES

Date: 05 November 2013

Location: Wokingham Town Council offices Room 12FF

## 1 ATTENDEES

Member Name	Role
(KR) Ken Rowlands	Wokingham Town and Evendons NAG Chairman Chairing the meeting
(SN) Steve Newton	Wokingham Town and Evendons NAG Minutes
(KB) Keith Baker	Wokingham Borough Councillor Executive - Strategic Planning and Highways
(CS) Chris Singleton	Wokingham Borough Councillor Executive - Deputy Member - Tackling Congestion
(DK) Dianne King	Wokingham Borough Councillor Ward: Evendons
(SH) Stan Hetherington	Wokingham Town Councillor
(MA) Mark Ashwell	Wokingham Town Councillor
(TS) Tony Sams	Wokingham Police Supervisor
(JS) Joyce Stoner	Wokingham Borough Officer
(SN) Andrew Harkness	Wokingham Town and Evendons NAG
(BW) Brian Willis	Norreys and Westcott NAG Secretary
(MR) Marion Robertson	Norreys and Westcott NAG Chair
(JN) John Nurse	Wokingham Times
(RC) Robin Cops	Great Langborough Residents Association
(BS) Bren Stacey	Embrook and Woosehill NAG
(PM) Peter Must	Wokingham Society

## 2 NOTES ON THE MINUTES

Please note that these minutes are not verbatim quotes from the attendees. These minutes are typed from notes taken during the meeting and paraphrased the comments made. I believe they are a true representation of the meeting and I do not intend to mislead or misrepresent any person or opinion expressed during the meeting. If any inaccuracies, errors, omissions, misrepresentations etc. are found please feel free to request a correction.



# WOKINGHAM TOWN AND EVENDONS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

### 3 GLOSSARY

Def. / Acr.	Description
NAG	Neighbourhood Action Group
TVP	Thames Valley Police
WBC	Wokingham Borough Council
TRO:	Traffic Regulation Order
CPZ:	Controlled Parking Zone

### 4 MINUTES:

**KR:** Introduced the meeting and the purpose of the meeting.

After an article in the Wokingham Times 2 years ago regarding parking in Wokingham: the Wokingham Town & Evendons NAG receiving reports from concerned residents who have purchased Annual Parking Permits not being able to park in their permit bays due to non-permit holders using the permit spaces, this has led to the residents who own permits being forced to park elsewhere and receiving parking tickets. The Wokingham Town & Evendons NAG began following up the parking problems with the council and police.

In May of this year a meeting was held between the NAG, Police and the council. At this meeting the Police reported that in the period from November to April they had issued 721 Tickets at around £30 a ticket this equates to around £21,000 in fines that has been collected, and received by Central Government. It was felt this was enough to fund a Traffic Wardens annual wage.

Originally Alistair Corrie took up the role of spokesperson for the NAG in the Council regarding Parking Enforcement. Now MA has taken over as spokesperson for the NAG.

The NAG requested a meeting with Keith Baker to discuss how to progress the issue of enforcing parking.

**MA:** Update

In June/July a letter was written to the Borough Council asking how we can help to progress decriminalisation. E.g. Town Council funds ½ a PCSO, can this PCSO be concentrated on parking?

This has led to this meeting.

**KB:** Surmised Decriminalisation.

Background:

The money collected from the 721 Tickets referenced earlier does not go to the Town or Borough Councils, or to the Police who issued the tickets: These fines go directly to Central Government.

WBC has no legal authority to enforce parking restriction. This authority currently lies with the Police.



# WOKINGHAM TOWN AND EVENDONS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

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Changing this authority requires Decriminalisation of parking offences in the Borough, which also includes review of TRO's. The TRO includes Parking Regulations and identification of the enforcement agency. I.e. WBC or Police, etc.

KB has been working on presenting and getting Decriminalisation through the WBC for 7 Years to date.

Once it is passed by WBC, the process to Decriminalise takes around 2 years: Reviewing all the TRO's that have ever been issued. This equates to 1000's. The TRO's will need to have the legal authority changed. Note: There is a single individual who currently does this in the UK. Once this has been completed the TRO's have to go to the Secretary of State for approval and sign off.

Council approval needs financial viability: There is a myth that if authority is passed to WBC, who can then collect the fines, that it will pay for itself and WBC will make a profit on parking fines. This is not true. Few councils in the UK make money from parking fines, with the exception of towns of high tourism. E.g. Windsor and Maidenhead Council does not draw even on the cost to enforce parking vs the income it generates. However in Windsor Town the fines do cover the cost of enforcing the parking regulations.

The costs of enforcing the parking regulations includes fixed costs such as, Staff, Uniforms, Tools, Tickets, Pensions, etc.

It is expected that in Year 1 there may be a profit due to the surprise of change and people become used to actually getting caught out breaking the regulations. Once people become aware that the regulations are being enforced the rate of infringement is expected to drop and in Year 2 there will be less of an income that may not cover costs.

Note: Government control the fines you can impose. WBC would not be able to put the fines up to cover costs.

As income is reduced, costs have to be cut. The main cost and saving is in the staff. If you cut the staff, there are less wardens to enforce the regulations and issue tickets, so income drops again, and more cuts. This becomes a vicious circle.

So WBC owning Parking Enforcement is not self-funding. This leaves the question how do we fund Parking Enforcement? Possibly Council Tax. Increases in this are also limited by Central Government, so cuts would have to be made elsewhere.

99% of Councils use on street parking to subsidise costs, off street parking costs can also be increased to help.

All of this is why KB has had a 7 year battle, the biggest is how to subsidise the cost and getting the council to agree the costs and fund decriminalisation and subsequent parking enforcement.

There is a working group setup to look into this which include people who are both for and against Decriminalisation. This group met today (5<sup>th</sup> November) and is under the Congestion Committee.

Currently KB is preparing his 5<sup>th</sup> attempt to get Decriminalisation through. KB will take his time to get it right and undeniable so as to not have to go through this again.



# WOKINGHAM TOWN AND EVENDONS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

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**KR:** Question to KB

How to we present this to our NAG's and residents?

**KB:**

Make the point that decriminalisation will not be making money for WBC.

There is a strong will to progress this, but we need the councillors' agreement.

Lobby your WBC Councillors to let them know it is the will of the residents.

**MA:** Question to the Police

How do the Police feel about this?

**TS:**

This year the Police have issued 1500 tickets which is around £50,000 raised that has all gone to Central Government. This has been done with maybe 2% of the officers' time and not 24hrs a day and not on Sundays.

E.g. there is a high risk event happening at the time of the meeting and no officer will be looking at parking enforcement. The Police have to prioritise their time and parking is not a high risk to the public and therefore a lower priority for the Police.

**DK:** Clarification request

What location are we talking about for the figures quoted? Borough wide or town?

Confirmed the figures refer to the town only.

**SH:** Question to KB

What is the cost of Decriminalisation and expected subsidy?

**KB:**

Start-up cost is estimated at £200,000 for WBC.

There is mention of a CPZ (Controlled Parking Zone). This is decriminalising an area in a borough. However the Secretary of State has not signed off on a CPZ in 5-6 Years. WBC will not be looking into this option. However there is the possibility of the Town Council funding extra Traffic Wardens to concentrate on the Town to assist in costs and protect the towns' interests. E.g. divert the current towns funding of ½ a PCSO to a traffic warden who can concentrate on parking and not be directed by the Police priorities.

It is difficult to estimate the subsidy required, but it could be between £25,000 and £100,000 per year.

There is the option to expand the car park attendants' role.



# WOKINGHAM TOWN AND EVENDONS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

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**DK: Question**

Last time this was discussed DK had mixed feelings. We don't want to put people of shopping in Wokingham Borough. What about the possibility of free parking for a limited time and being hard on people who exceed this?

**KB:**

The stats on parking in the Town has shown an increase of 4% parking duration each year, i.e. 15 Minutes is not enough time. If the first hour was free it would cost WBC £300,000 a year.

**RC: Noted**

It is difficult to enforce partial parking, i.e. 15 Minutes free, therefore no is no parking enforcement for such a situation.

**RC: Clarification**

This should be about parking enforcement and how we can best enforce parking, not just about Decriminalisation. E.g. In 2009 Langborough Road parking was getting out of hand and as the road is also a cut through this caused serious problems. The Residents organised a 'blitz' on parking with the Police. This was publicised heavily. After this exercise Langborough Road parking is now free of illegal parking.

**TS:**

We suspect the parking problem in Langborough Road was caused by residents if it has cleared as a result of a 'blitz'. E.g. Rose Street has a constant problem due to business and visitors. A 'blitz' would not educate people not caught on the day and who visit occasionally.

**KB:**

Blitz would be a WBC Activity, so there is no difference in behaviour only who.

The 15 Min free parking is no different to off street parking control, it's not perfect but it does work. Car Park attendants who do the job all day every day get good and noticing cars and how long they have been around.

Note: KB Will not sign of on any new parking restrictions unless the Police (enforcing agency) do not object. I.e. passively assume responsibility for enforcing it. It is because of this control and pragmatism that a lot of requests do not get approved. This includes speed restrictions.

**RC: Question to KB & CS**

Have you given up on Decriminalisation? Some of the language and history sounds like you might be giving up on being able to enforce parking restrictions.



# WOKINGHAM TOWN AND EVENDONS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

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**KB:**

KB is still fighting battles and has not given up, there is still a strong will from many to proceed.

One problem has been that in the past is that Decriminalisation and Parking (Car Parks, On Street Parking etc.) has been bundled as one. KB has finally won the battle to split these two issues and address them on their own merits.

The final hurdle is to get everyone to agree to Decriminalisation.

**CS:**

We can't claim we have universal commitment but there is support from the council officers, but some councillors are still unconvinced.

**RC:** Clarification request.

What is the Priority for KB/CS? I.e. why?

**KB:**

To give what the residents want.

Not to ease congestion, because that increases speed, parked cars act as a natural traffic calming. Wargrave is an example of this.

**PM:** Clarification

What we should be focusing on in the parking strategy. I.e. increase enforcement. However as the Police are the only ones with the authority to enforce parking and they naturally have other priorities, Decriminalisation is the only option available.

**KB:** Note

Decriminalisation has been approved to go to consultation.

**AH:** Point

Removing Free Parking in Rose Street will affect Residents, surely they are entitled to park near their home.

**RC:**

Nobody is entitled to park near their home, they need a permit in Rose Street.

**MR:** Comment

The Police do as much as they can and Traffic Enforcement is better. However they are in desperate need of enforcement in her area.



# WOKINGHAM TOWN AND EVENDONS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

---

**BS:** Question for KB

We know the problem is going to get worse due to extra housing etc., how many wardens do you estimate will be required.

**KB:**

The proposal refers to a budget of £150,000 per year. This covers 3 – 4 people, infrastructure, fixed costs etc. It has not been decided on the format of the wardens, e.g. Full Time, Part time, expanded car park attendants etc.

**BS:** Question

Is £150,000 a lot per year in the budget?

**KB:**

That all depends on your point of view. E.g. for a youth centre that was closed because they can't raise £100,000 from the council: This is a lot.

**BS:** Question

Is Decriminalisation and Parking Enforcement advantageous?

**KB:**

Yes but there is a social cost to consider also. E.g. Cuts to services for the elderly, schools etc.

Note: The Government Grant that subsidises the Council Tax is dropping every year. In 2 years it is expected to be <50%.

KB had to leave at this point to re-join a meeting he had left to attend this one.

Thanks were expressed from the group.

**CS:**

Finance is important and the social aspect is also important. E.g. parking around train stations is bad, there can be cars parked there for 2 weeks at a time as people use the trains to travel to airports. This impacts the local area and residents. Therefore there is an impact on not enforcing parking properly.

Also the town is investing the regeneration project which will be impacted by not decriminalising WBC.

Note: As of 1<sup>st</sup> May 92% of councils have Decriminalised, we are not trailblazing here, in fact we are trailing the rest of the country.

**BS:** Question to all

Is everyone in favour of Decriminalising WBC?



# WOKINGHAM TOWN AND EVENDONS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

---

**SH:** Question

What are the problems for people? This is not a problem for the majority of WBC areas. The average resident is not interested.

**CS:**

The problem is that there is nowhere to park.

**KR:** Pointed out:

If you go around the areas that have 30 Min free parking you will find that people are using the space for in excess of 2 hours, without enforcement.

**DK:** On 'Is everyone in favour of Decriminalising WBC?'

Concerned about a loss of the income if parking is enforced and residents wise up and stop infringing.

Support is not widespread and the balance of cost v income does not stack up.

She will base her decision to support on residents view.

**KR:**

Note that Parking Wardens will be able to move around the borough to where the problems are. If one area wises up and stops infringing the wardens can move to other areas.

**RC:** Question

If we don't decriminalise, how can we enforce parking regulations. This comes back to the Police. Are the Police not enforcing because they don't get the money and are therefore not interested.

**PM:**

The police have other Priorities based on public safety.

**TS:** Noted

If you take away parking from the Police, the police will have more time and resource free to address speeding, which is a concern for NAGs and Residents Associations.

**KR:**

The side effect of Decriminalisation is that the Police can do more.

**TS:** Noted

In the last 10 Months the police using 2-5% of their time ticketing issued approx. £50,000 of tickets.

If 92% of councils have decriminalised, why? It must benefit them. Look at the bigger picture, what can be achieved?





# WOKINGHAM TOWN AND EVENDONS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

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**RC:** Noted

In 2009 the Wokingham Times reported that in a period Wokingham collected £50,000 in fines, Bracknell £100,000 and Reading £1,600,000.

**TS:** Noted

Working on the figures mentioned today: 2 – 4 wardens would only have to issue 110 tickets a week each to break even.

**RC:** Noted

If the Police can't perform the enforcement of parking we have to decriminalise.

**CS:** Stated

We are at early stages of the whole process. We could be talking about 4 full time wardens, Car Park attendants doing the job etc.

**KR:**

4 wardens would cover all over the borough and bring in revenue. In the long term this has to be favourable.

**SN:** Noted

There are technological options that should be investigated to help.

**All:**

This would be too expensive to set up.

**CS:** Noted

Re-iterated that there is a commitment to drive this forward. The financials are the current sticking point.

**DK:** Thanked the meeting

The meeting has been very helpful and informative. She needs all the facts in front of her to make a decision. This has been helpful.

**KR:** Question to MA

Is MA willing to continue as the NAG's spokesperson on this subject and help us keep in the loop?

**MA**

Yes

**DK:** Clarification

What is the group involved here? E.g. Town, Borough, single NAG?



# WOKINGHAM TOWN AND EVENDONS

## NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION GROUP

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**KR:**

There are 4 NAGS from the Town area involved in this meeting. This has not gone further afield yet.

KR will present a report to the NAG Chairman's' meeting in January which covers the whole borough.

**CS:** Reminds the meeting

This will take 2 years to action. They are looking at trying to run tasks in parallel to shorten the timescale.

**RC:** Residents Associations need to be involved also.

**KR:** They were invited, but only RC turned up.

### 4.1 MEETING CLOSED

Time: 8:55 p.m.