



**Shropshire Parking Services
Annual Report
2009/10**



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1. INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to present the Parking Annual Report for 2009/10 in line with the requirements of the Traffic Management Act 2004. We want to let you know how Shropshire Council delivers its parking enforcement and associated services, such as the provision of parking facilities including parking permits.

In Shropshire, many of our streets were built before the level of vehicle ownership reached today's levels. In some of our market towns this creates a problem where streets are narrow and houses do not have off street parking provision. We understand that different groups; residents, businesses and visitors will have different parking needs and it is our aim to balance those needs. Whilst parking restrictions are often unpopular with motorists, keeping roads clear of illegally parked vehicles means improved safety for all road users and enables delivery vehicles, buses and the emergency services to get to their destinations more speedily.

Our traffic and parking management schemes are designed by the Council to make sure that available parking areas can be shared in a fair and transparent way. Parking enforcement is not a revenue raising scheme, no "targets" are set, and any surplus income is used in the budget of Development Services which manages services including; highways improvement schemes, car parks, street lighting and park and ride.

Whilst the majority of motorists park legally and sensibly some will ignore restrictions. Motorists who act in this way can expect our Enforcement Officers to issue a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN), more commonly known as a parking ticket. Motorists who receive a ticket can expect any PCN issued to their vehicles to be enforced. Some drivers who receive a PCN may not have intended to park illegally and on occasions they may have misunderstood the nature of the restrictions. Our appeals officers will consider challenges to notices and will take these circumstances into account.

Following the formation of Shropshire Council in April 2009 a review of parking services has taken place to ensure that a consistent level of service is provided in each of the former district council areas. The new parking strategy has taken the views of residents, businesses and other stakeholders into account and will help us to improve services across the county.

Parking Services welcomes your feedback to help improve the service we provide. If you have any questions or feedback please contact Shropshire Parking Services on 0345 678 9019 or email parkingenforcement@shropshire.gov.uk

I thank you for taking time to read our Annual Parking Report

Chris Edwards
Assistant Director – Development Services

2. OUR SERVICES

Off Street Parking and Park & Ride

The Council operates a number of car parks which provide more than 6400 parking spaces within Shropshire. Parking is mainly provided for cars and motor cycles although a number of car parks have designated parking for coaches and HGVs. The majority of car parks provide free parking but in some cases, especially high demand areas, a pay and display scheme is in operation. Details of our car parks and the latest charges are available on our website.

In addition to surface and multi-storey car parks, the Council operates four Park & Ride sites – one for Ludlow and three for Shrewsbury. These sites offer free parking for 1894 vehicles. Details of locations, times, and passenger charges can be found on our website.

On Street Parking

We provide a combination of free parking, limited waiting, pay and display bays, disabled bays or residents parking zones in Shropshire. Signage is provided to indicate local parking restrictions.

The maintenance of the parking infrastructure including pay and display machines and cash collection is controlled by the Council.

Parking Permits

Residents Permits are available for those people who live within the boundaries of a Resident Parking Zone which have been implemented around the County. In general, up to two permits per household are available, subject to proof of residence.

Visitor Scratch cards are available for residents in a Resident Parking Zone to purchase on behalf of their visitors. Scratch cards allow on street parking in residents parking zones when visiting the resident.

Bed & breakfast parking permits can be purchased by the proprietor or manager of a Hotel, Guest House, Self Catering or Holiday Let establishment, which is based in areas with limited parking. These permits are for use by guests in designated car parks.

Carer permits are available for professional carers or for relatives or friends of people living in the area for whom they are acting as a carer. At present the scheme is available in Ludlow and the Bridgnorth experimental area and may be extended to other districts following our review of services.

The Council also provides a variety of season tickets on most of its car parks for use by residents, businesses and commuters.

For more information about Shropshire parking permit zones and how to apply for a permit or season ticket please visit our website: www.shropshire.gov.uk/parking

Blue Badge Scheme

The Council receives around 5,900 blue badge applications per year (including renewals) and there are currently approximately 13,500 badges in circulation. The scheme enables people with mobility difficulties to park in locations where other drivers cannot, so that they may get closer to their ultimate destination. However, we always advise badge holders to study their Blue Badge Scheme handbook as there are certain locations where the badge does not allow parking.

Parking Enforcement

In November 2006, parking enforcement in the County of Shropshire was transferred from the Police to the local councils. On transition of the authorities forming one unitary organisation on 1 April 2009, Shropshire Council took over responsibility for the parking enforcement process. The Council directly employs the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO), formerly known as Traffic Wardens or Parking Attendants, who carry out the operational enforcement, as well as the Notice Processing staff who deal with the appeals procedure.

The Parking CEO plays a key role in the enforcement of both on and off-street parking within the County. For many motorists the CEO is the first and only point of contact with Shropshire Parking Service. The CEO will carry out a number of duties such as issues directly related to enforcement but also to be on hand for members of the public with queries relating to parking provision. In addition, the CEO will also check that parking machines are working, signs and lines are correct, reporting abandoned vehicles and other issues such as potholes, faulty streetlights, dumped rubbish (fly tipping) and anti social behaviour.

Parking Appeals

A Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) that is issued by a CEO contains details about how to pay or make a challenge against its issue. The appeal process has 3 stages and at each stage the appeals team will take a fair, transparent and consistent approach to how it is handled.

Stage 1 – Challenge: All challenges will be considered on individual merit and mitigating circumstances taken into account. For all challenges, supporting evidence in the form of written documentation should be included and must be received by the Notice Processing Office in writing, by post or via e-mail. A motorist has 28 days from issue, in which to lodge a challenge.

Stage 2 – Representation: The motorist has the right, on a challenge being refused by the Notice Processing Office, to make a second formal representation. A representation will be considered by an Appeals Officer of Shropshire Parking Service and details on how to do this is explained in the challenge rejection letter. In order to make a formal representation the registered keeper (not always the driver at the time of the alleged contravention), must wait until a Notice to Owner is issued.

Stage 3 – Appeal: If a representation is rejected by the Council, the motorist will be advised on how to make an appeal to the independent Traffic Penalty Tribunal (TPT). More information about making an appeal with the TPT can be found on their website: <http://www.trafficpenaltytribunal.gov.uk>

Parking Waivers

Waivers for temporary parking in restricted areas may be granted in certain circumstances. The usual restrictions regarding obstruction, dangerous and footway parking will still apply. Waivers can be issued for:

- Building/maintenance works where close proximity to the site is essential
- Goods deliveries which take longer than normally permitted regulations
- Hearse and chief mourners' vehicles at funerals
- Bridal and attendants' vehicles at weddings
- Other circumstances in which the Council may reasonably regard the requirement to be essential

Full details of our parking services and processes can be found on our website at: www.shropshire.gov.uk/parking.



3. CUSTOMER CHARTER

Shropshire Parking Service is committed to offering the best possible service to its customers. The following are our commitments:

Helpful

- Our Parking Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO's) will give advice on parking provision and how to park safely and within any applicable parking restrictions.
- All parking staff will address customers with respect and courtesy at all times and will expect to be treated by them in the same way.

Fair

- We will enforce the parking restrictions in a consistent and fair manner and will encourage considerate parking.
- We will use photographs of all parking offences to ensure that Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) have been correctly issued by Parking CEO's and to assist in subsequent challenges.
- We aim to monitor and arrange to replace any incorrect signs or lines on the road or in car parks to avoid confusing drivers.

Excellent

- We will fully investigate and consider all correspondence regarding a PCN issue.
- We will reply clearly and provide full information as to how and why we have reached a decision.
- We will reply to all correspondence within 10 working days of receipt.
- We aim to improve on-line access to the parking services for customers.
- We will promote safe and considerate parking through the provision of information on our website and through the media.

A full copy of our Customer Charter with rules we use when enforcing illegal parking is available on our website at: www.shropshire.gov.uk/parking.

4. BENEFITS OF PARKING CONTROL

Our parking objectives play a part in supporting the aims and priorities of the Shropshire Council Corporate Plan.

Increased traffic congestion and dangerous or illegal parking causes problems for all road users. Changing the way the regulations are enforced gives an opportunity to provide the following benefits.

- Improved road and pedestrian safety
- Reduced pollution and traffic congestion
- Improved access for public transport and cyclists
- Improved street environment for those who visit, live or work in the county.

If all motorists were to park correctly, some problems on the road would be eased. For example, parking illegally in a narrow street can mean that other vehicles, including emergency services, cannot get past.

Overstaying the time allowed to park prevents other drivers from parking and causes more congestion as they then drive round looking for a space. This can cause shoppers to shop elsewhere, thereby affecting businesses in our market towns.

Parking on verges can harm the environment and make a residential area less attractive while parking on the pavement can damage the pavement itself and maybe crack pipes or cables underneath.

Parking control and enforcement can be unpopular when trying to balance the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors. We aim to provide the service with fair access to parking and discourage illegal parking for the benefit of all.

5. THE WAY WE OPERATE

In Shropshire, we aim to operate our parking schemes openly and transparently. All information about parking schemes and services are publicly available on our website: www.shropshire.gov.uk/parking.

We have detailed policies which help us to apply schemes fairly and consistently. These cover the situations when we will issue a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN), the tolerances that we use, if we observe a vehicle before issuing a PCN and the factors we take into account when deciding whether to cancel a ticket.

Our policies allow for leniency. We realise that motorists can be delayed when returning to their vehicle so, unlike many other parking operators, we do not issue a ticket to anyone who has paid to park until they have overstayed by at least 10 minutes.

We would prefer all motorists to park in accordance with parking regulations and therefore not have to issue a PCN. If we do issue a PCN, and the motorist makes a challenge, we will consider it in accordance with our policies. We will cancel any PCNs that have been incorrectly issued or if there are valid reasons to do so.

The enforcement of parking regulations through the issue of PCNs is not intended to be an income generating scheme for the council. Our Civil Enforcement Officers do not receive commission or bonuses and do not have targets related to the number of PCNs issued.

Surplus money from the Payment of PCNs and parking charges contributes towards the maintenance of car parks and parking areas along the highway network. It also contributes towards the part funding of bus subsidies, concessionary bus fares and transport improvement schemes.

A summary of PCNs issued, cancelled and the income received from fines and parking charges are included on pages 12 - 15 of this report.



Civil Enforcement Officers (Parking wardens)

Whilst the primary role of the officers is to enforce parking regulations a key objective for 2009/10 was to increase the visibility of the service across the county. Our focus to increase community reassurance, through officer visibility, especially in areas of high footfall has been welcomed by local residents and businesses. It has helped to build trust with the officers and provide those officers with a more varied and ambassadorial role, which helps support the community. Our dual role has helped to:

- Reduce the level of anti-social behaviour by observing and reporting incidents of nuisance back to Police and other Council departments
- Engage with young people congregating in town centre, hot spots and signposting them to community activities.
- Delivering regular patrols in high footfall areas to help deter anti-social/environmental crimes and provide a reassuring presence to help reduce the fear of crime.
- Improve the physical environment of the County by:
 - Reporting problems such as defective paving/street lamps, noise nuisance and abandoned cars to the appropriate agency.
 - Reported incidents of illegal street trading.
 - Identified areas where litter/trade waste is accumulating and report to the appropriate agency for action.
 - Improved the street environment by encouraging and advising on appropriate litter disposal and linking with environmental projects e.g. Tidy Britain Business Awards scheme, Britain in Bloom.
- Provide information and promote the key public services in Shropshire
- Helped to develop links with business, residents, young people and other public users.

Notice Processing Office

On 1 April 2009 the Notice Processing Office, which processes Challenges, Representations and Appeals was reorganised. The office now provides a wider range of services which will result in efficiency gains.

Permits - During the year the Notice Processing Office has replaced the different permit schemes that previously existed with a single parking permit system and process. The system allows us to provide a consistent scheme and offer the same level of service in each district. Customers are now able to purchase their permits from any of the following Shropshire Council headquarters; Bridgnorth (Westgate), Ludlow (Stone House), Shrewsbury (Guildhall or Shire Hall)

The new scheme was launched in December 2009 initially in Bridgnorth, Ludlow and Shrewsbury, with the aim to roll out over the rest of the county during 2010/11.

Notice Processing Office (continued)

Fixed Penalty Notices - the Notice Processing team now manages the processing of Fixed Penalty Notices issued across the county for dog fouling/control orders, litter, graffiti etc. Processes include; checking for payment, issuing of standard letters and preparing cases ready for transfer to the legal team.

Bridgnorth Resident's Parking Scheme

Following a number of concerns about inflexibility and lack of spaces available in the existing parking schemes in Bridgnorth a new experimental scheme was designed and launched in March 2010. During the trial period the views of residents and businesses will be sought before deciding if it should be formalised into a chargeable scheme.

Parking Strategy

During the year Shropshire Council has reviewed its parking strategy following the transfer of off street parking from district and borough councils. The new strategy is designed to bring in a consistent approach replacing a number of different policies and practices across the county.

The strategy puts forward a coherent approach to parking, whilst reflecting the local issues in market towns. It looks at the principles to be used for setting parking charges across the county, Park & Ride provision, residents parking zones policy, season tickets, waivers, enforcement and signage.

The draft strategy was presented to the council's cabinet in June 2010 before consultation with Town Councils, local interest groups and the general public.

7. PARKING STATISTICS

The following tables provide the key parking statistics for 2009/10.

Table 1 - Income and Expenditure 2009/10

Staffing	On Street	Off Street	Total
Number of CEO's	13.1	0.9	14
Number of Notice Processing Staff			5
Parking Tickets Issued			
Number of PCNs issued	7,931	2,137	10,068
% of PCNs Cancelled	17%	22%	19%
Enforcement and Parking Income			
Income from PCNs	£213,440	£44,795	£258,235
Off Street Parking Income	-	£3,639,830	£3,639,830
On Street Parking Income	£429,479	-	£429,479
Parking Tickets Paid at Discount Rate			
Number of tickets paid at Discount			6,301
Enforcement Expenditure			
Enforcement employee costs	£325,578	£21,891	£347,469
Enforcement other costs	£59,234	£3,983	£63,217
Back Office all costs	£124,260	£8,355	£132,615
Surplus			
Net surplus			£2,656,018

At the time of reporting the payment rate of non cancelled PCNs is 87%. The remaining PCNs are at various stages of recovery either registered with the Traffic Enforcement Centre or with the Council's appointed Bailiffs. Therefore the income and cancellation figures are subject to a variation.

Table 2 – Penalty Charge Notices Issued

PCNs Issued	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	29,540	20,142	10,068

The number of PCNs issued during 2009/10 has reduced by 50% from the previous year. Shropshire Council has adopted a policy of leniency and discretion by encouraging CEO's to take an ambassadorial and educational role by advising motorists of parking regulations, whilst reserving the right to issue a PCN where regulations have been ignored. Generally throughout the country the public are becoming more compliant towards parking contraventions and this has also resulted in a reduction of the number of PCNs issued.

Table 3 – PCN Issue by Contravention Type 2009/10

Off Street Parking

PCNs issued	Total	Spoiled	Test	Issued
Parked after payment expired	850	87	2	761
Parked without clearly displaying a pay and display ticket	1,271	67	0	1,204
Parked in a permit bay without valid permit	18	1	0	17
Parked beyond the bay markings	13	1	0	12
Parked in a disabled person's parking space without clearly displaying a valid disabled person's badge	115	6	0	109
Wrong class of vehicle	17	1	0	16
Parked without clearly displaying 2 valid pay and display tickets (vehicle with trailer)	1	0	0	1
Warnings issued				
Parked after payment expired	1	0	0	1
Parked without clearly displaying a pay and display ticket	5	0	0	5
Parked in a permit bay without valid permit	3	0	0	3
Parked beyond the bay markings	3	0	0	3
Parked in a disabled person's parking space without clearly displaying a valid disabled person's badge	5	3	0	2
Wrong class of vehicle	3	0	0	3
Total Off Street	2,305	166	2	2,137

On Street Parking

PCNs issued	Total	Spoiled	Test	Issued
Parked in a restricted street	1,847	119	0	1,728
Loading in restricted street	633	83	2	548
Parked after payment expired	295	27	0	268
Parked without clearly displaying a pay and display ticket	514	25	0	489
Parked in a residents'/ shared parking bay without clearly displaying valid ticket etc.	295	22	0	273
Parked in permit space without valid permit	97	10	0	87
Parked in a residents'/shared parking place with invalid permit etc	184	15	0	169
Parked in a suspended bay	2	0	0	2
Re-parked in the same place where no return is permitted within a displayed time	44	44	0	0
Wrong class of vehicle	15	0	0	15
Not parked correctly within the markings of the bay or space	10	0	0	10
Parked in a loading place	1,277	89	0	1,188

On Street Parking - continued

Vehicle parked more than 50cm from kerb and not within a designated parking place	3	3	0	0
Parked longer than permitted	1,532	137	0	1,395
Parked in a designated disabled person's parking place without clearly displaying a valid disabled person's badge	955	89	1	865
Parked on a taxi rank	96	28	0	68
Parked on a restricted bus stop or stand	262	41	0	221
Stopped on a pedestrian crossing/zig-zags	87	23	0	64

Warnings issued	Total	Spoiled	Test	Issued
Parked in a restricted street	138	1	0	137
Loading in restricted street	57	1	0	56
Parked after payment expired	11	0	0	11
Parked without clearly displaying a pay and display ticket	26	0	0	26
Parked in a residents'/ shared parking bay without clearly displaying valid ticket etc	16	0	0	16
Parked in permit space without valid permit	5	0	0	5
Parked in a residents'/shared parking place with invalid permit etc	10	0	0	10
Parked in a loading gap	1	0	0	1
Re-parked in the same place where no return is permitted within a displayed time	7	0	0	7
Wrong class of vehicle	1	0	0	1
Not parked correctly	4	0	0	4
Parked in a loading place	68	0	0	68
Parked longer than permitted	122	0	0	122
Parked in a designated disabled person's parking place without clearly displaying a valid disabled person's badge	54	1	0	53
Parked on a taxi rank	3	0	0	3
Parked on a restricted bus stop or stand	20	2	0	18
Stopped on a pedestrian crossing/zig-zags	4	1	0	3
Total On Street	8,695	761	3	7,931
Total All	11,000	927	5	10,068

Notes: Spoiled tickets are usually the result of a motorist returning to a vehicle whilst the ticket is being issued. Warning notices are issued as part of the advisory and educational role to inform motorists that a parking contravention has occurred but that the CEO has decided not to issue a PCN on that occasion.

Table 4 – Cancellations 2009/10

Warning notices and spoiled tickets are the main reasons that a PCN may be cancelled or written off.

During the year the Notice Processing Office received a total of 2,492 challenges and representations regarding the issue of notices. The following table lists the main reasons PCNs are cancelled through the appeals process.

Cancellation Type	Total
Blue Badge – typically a valid badge is incorrectly displayed	318
Valid ticket – typically the ticket expiry time is not visible	220
Overstay – typically a pay and display ticket has expired but the motorist has a valid reason for late return to the vehicle	97
DVLA no trace of keeper details	94
General reason	65
Valid Permit – typically the permit is not displayed	61
Valid Residents Permit – typically the permit is incorrectly displayed	37

Table 5 - Traffic Penalty Tribunal appeals 2009/10

After consideration of a challenge the keeper is entitled to make an appeal at the independent Traffic Penalty Tribunal. The following table shows the number of appeals and outcomes.

Outcome of appeals lodged for Adjudication	Total
Not Contested by the Council	17
Appeals Allowed by the Adjudicator	4
Appeals Rejected by the Adjudicator	24
Awaiting Outcome by the Adjudicator	4

It should be noted that new evidence is often brought to light at the TPT stage of appeal that the council was not made aware of during the first stages of the appeals process. This can increase the likelihood that the Council will be unable to contest a case. Similarly, Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) irregularities can be highlighted at this stage. In cases not contested by the Council, the Adjudicator will decide that the appeal is allowed.

8. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CEO – Civil Enforcement Officer – formerly known as a Traffic Warden or Parking Attendant and is authorised to issue a PCN where a breach of the parking regulations has occurred.

PCN – Penalty Charge Notice: formerly known as a parking ticket. This is issued by a CEO when a breach of parking regulations has been observed.

TPT – Traffic Penalty Tribunal: an independent adjudicator who will decide if an appeal is valid. An appeal can be made if a challenge and representation has been rejected by the council.

TEC - Traffic Enforcement Centre – in the event that a payment has not been made within the statutory period, the Council may register any outstanding amount as a debt with the TEC. The TEC is a County Court that deals with unpaid parking fines in England and Wales. Once registered, if the penalty charge is not paid or a witness statement made, the Council will request a warrant of recovery. Once a warrant has been authorised by the TEC, the Council will employ bailiffs to recover the debt.

TRO – Traffic Regulation Order: is the legal instrument by which highway authorities implement most traffic management controls on their roads.