

REPORT FOR GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE.

At its meeting on 18th June 2015, the Governance Committee were informed by the East Kent Audit Partnership of the Reasonable Assurance level given in a recent audit into Car Parking and Penalty Charge Notices. The Committee resolved that an update be given detailing how improvements have been implemented with regard to Car Parking and PCNs to the committee at its meeting on 22nd September 2015.

Seven points were reported to the Committee where the Auditor felt there was room for improvement, and these will be itemised together with an explanation on progress:

- The overpaid penalty charge notices should be reviewed periodically and appropriate action taken to clear the credit balance from the parking system: it is estimated that less than 30 PCNs are over paid annually, and in this audited year that equates to 0.2%. Overpayments are the result of errors made by the person paying either on line or over the telephone via the call centre. Where such overpayments are identified by the Parking Administration Team, if the details of the person making the overpayment are known, then a refund of the overpaid amount will be made. Where the details are not known but can be matched to a PCN, then a note is made in the event that the motorist contacts DDC. Where the person making the overpayment cannot be traced, then this shows as a credit and is dealt with as such by the Finance Department.
- General housekeeping needs to be carried out on the parking system to ensure that all tickets are current and appropriate action has been taken on them: this is now undertaken on a daily basis.
- A procedure needs to be implemented for reporting written off notices to the Section 151 Officer in order to comply with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules: arrangements are now in place for a report to be sent to the Finance Department on a monthly basis showing:
 - Number and value of PCNs written off that month; and
 - As a separate item, the number and value of PCNs authorised to be cancelled.

This will ensure compliance with the relevant Procedural rules.

- The reconciliation of the car park income is not currently being undertaken in a timely manner to identify any possible misappropriations: in a previous audit, the Auditor recommended the introduction of a system devised by them to identify such possibilities. This has been done. In light of this latest comment, the reconciliation takes place in a more timely fashion supervised by the Head of Community Safety, CCTV and Parking. It should be noted that the reconciliation process will always be at least two weeks behind whilst the relevant paperwork on which the system relies is collated. We are also reviewing staff responsibilities with a view to another team member additionally taking on this function instead of one person being solely responsible.

- The maintenance contract for the pay and display machines is out of date and payments are not being made via the contract register: this is being reviewed. The Pay and Display machines are at the end of their working life and a report is shortly to be submitted to Cabinet on this issue.
- The processes and procedures followed by the Parking Administration team need to be fully reviewed as some of them are cumbersome and historic and could be undertaken more efficiently: for some time now an internal review has been taking place and the processes and procedures have been modernised and made more efficient. In addition, savings have been realised and the system is virtually paperless.
- All officers within the Parking Administration Team should be generic and be able to cover all aspects of the service instead of their specific areas: this has been the case for some considerable time now. Two members of staff who were full time now “job share” and undertake each other’s work. All staff need to have a full understanding of all aspects of the Team’s work as they are required to cover each other’s work in the event of leave, sickness, and other absences. Currently, the Team Leader is on long term sick; prior to this, plans were made to cover her work during this absence without bringing in staff, and this has been made possible by all members of the team being able to cover each other.

Christopher Allen.

Head of Community Safety, CCTV and Parking.

8th September 2015.