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# **Management Committee COST 342**

## **Parking Policy Measures and their Effects on Mobility and the Economy**

**Subject:** UK Case Studies

**COST 342/18-UK Rev. 1**

## **The Special Parking Area in Oxford{PRIVATE }**

## **THE SPECIAL PARKING AREA IN THE CITY OF OXFORD**

**{PRIVATE }** Oxfordshire County Council, concerned about the levels of traffic within the City of Oxford, was eager to introduce a Special Parking Area (SPA) as part of its overall transport management strategy. The Council received authorisation to introduce a provincial SPA within the City of Oxford in February 1997 (the first provincial SPA having been introduced in the District of Winchester in the previous May). Following consultation with Thames Valley Police and Oxford City Council, the County Council decided that its first SPA should cover the whole of the City of Oxford and also the neighbouring parish of North Hinksey. This would eliminate any difference in enforcement standards between adjacent urban areas, which might cause problems with displaced vehicles.

Agreement was reached with the City Council to exclude the city's public car parks from the SPA application because of the Compulsory Competitive Tendering requirements.

The City of Oxford (Figure 1) forms one of the five administrative Districts of the County of Oxfordshire and covers 4,560 hectares, with a population of about 135,000, including over 20,000 resident students. The heart of the District is the old city of Oxford, of which a large part is designated as a conservation area. The famous university colleges, impressive architecture and riverside setting attract well over a million tourists every year, about half of them from abroad. The University of Oxford is the foremost employer in the area, followed by the Rover Group, based at Cowley, and the County Council.

The adjoining parish of North Hinksey does not lie within the District of the City of Oxford, but is actually one of the sixty nine parishes of the District of the Vale of the White Horse. However, its proximity to Oxford led to its inclusion in the proposals for the SPA, for the reasons given above.

**Figure 1 The City of Oxford, showing the location of the four park & ride car parks. Scale approximately 2 cm: 1 km.**

## **{PRIVATE }THE CITY TRANSPORT PLAN{tc \l 2 "0.2 THE CITY TRANSPORT PLAN"}**

Oxford's traffic problems are severe, even though a quarter of city centre commuters cycle to work. The Oxford Integrated Transport Package, included in the County Council's 1994/95 Transport Policy and Programme (Oxfordshire County Council, 1996), contained details of about ninety individual measures which were to be progressively introduced over a period of six years, with the primary objective of improving the environment within central Oxford. The importance of making the proposed changes in the correct sequence was emphasised: for instance, parking spaces in the city centre should not be removed

before adequate additional capacity had been provided in the park & ride car parks on the periphery of the city. The package was fully supported by both the County and City Councils and was also judged to enjoy considerable public support. It was expected to cost over sixteen million pounds, and its key features were to be as follows:

- Improving the attraction of public transport
- Expanding the park & ride system
- Reducing city centre parking
- Restraining private motor vehicle trips into the city centre
- Improving facilities for cyclists and pedestrians
- Introducing traffic management measures to encourage alternative transport modes and counter the effects of diverted traffic

As a step towards establishing comprehensive parking control throughout the city, a complete review of the residential parking areas was undertaken during 1995/96, and preparations were made for the County Council to assume responsibility for parking regulation enforcement during 1996/97. The existing Controlled Parking Zones were extended and the District was divided into ten residential parking zones to permit effective and appropriate enforcement measures to be implemented in each area.

The County Council stated that it was an important principle of local authority enforcement that the system should be self-financing. The Council proposed to achieve this objective through the imposition and retention of penalty charges for infringement of the regulations, and by the introduction of permit charges for residential and business parking, and for parking space for some other defined purposes. It was intended and recognised that the introduction of more stringent parking controls would displace commuters parking in the suburbs, and that alternative means of travel should be in place for them.

The Council considered its estimate of annual income to be conservative and was therefore optimistic that it would realise an annual credit balance from the operation of the SPA. Estimates showed an expected total PCN issue of about 22,000 a year, but Rant (1999) indicates that this figure was subsequently revised and put at thirty to thirty five thousand.

**{PRIVATE }**

## **PARKING PROVISION WITHIN THE CITY{tc \l 2 "0.3 PARKING PROVISION WITHIN THE CITY"}**

At the time of TRL's study, there were six city centre car parks operated by the City Council and long stay parking was available at the railway station, providing a total of 2,290 off-street parking spaces. A further car park, with a capacity of 200, was made available on Saturdays. In addition, there was on-street pay & display parking within the city centre. There was also estimated to be over 7,000 private non-residential parking spaces.

However, the aim of the city transport strategy was to discourage motorists from driving into the city centre and to this end, an extensive park & ride facility had been established. There were, at that time, four park & ride car parks at the periphery of the city, offering a total of nearly four thousand spaces, with a fifth car park at the planning stage. Frequent bus services traverse the city between each pair of car parks, taking approximately fifteen minutes to reach the city centre, depending upon the level of traffic congestion. There have been problems in maintaining adequate security at these outlying car parks, where parking durations are typically long and owners are unlikely to return between scheduled bus arrival times. Because of these problems, a flat-rate parking charge was introduced in the park & ride car parks in order to pay for enhanced security measures.

### **{PRIVATE }Residents' permits{tc \l 3 "0.3.1 Residents' permits"}**

Before the County Council assumed responsibility for on-street enforcement from Thames Valley Police, a public consultation and information exercise was undertaken, to ensure that residents and motorists who parked regularly within the City, both legally and illegally, would be aware of the impact that the change in enforcement responsibility would have. The proposals included plans to charge for on-street residential parking permits within designated zones, upon which a substantial part of the Council's expected income depended. In a separate scheme in Abingdon, people were already paying a higher charge for permits than was proposed in Oxford. Nevertheless, Oxford residents reacted adversely towards the plans, causing local councillors to reverse their decision to introduce permit charges. It was hoped that the public might be more willing to pay for the benefits of enhanced enforcement once the SPA was fully established.

Residents parking zones were designated within the city centre and in St Clement's and Headington, where parking space at the kerbside was available to permit holders who must be both normally resident within the zone and the registered keeper of the permitted vehicle. Residents were generally allowed two permits per dwelling and also twenty five days' worth of visitors' permits in six months at no charge, providing they satisfied the conditions of eligibility. The scheme also included special provisions for multiple occupation.

## **{PRIVATE }ENFORCEMENT IN THE CITY OF OXFORD{tc \l 2 "0.4 ENFORCEMENT IN THE CITY OF OXFORD"}**

### **{PRIVATE }Parking attendants{tc \l 3 "0.4.1 Parking attendants"}**

The County Council was required by Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) regulations to invite bids to assume the enforcement responsibilities formerly carried out by the police and by traffic wardens, and to award a contract for the work to the most suitable candidate. The traffic wardens based in Oxford did not transfer to the County Council, but were re-deployed within the Thames Valley Police Service, because Oxford attracts a substantial number of public events and visiting dignitaries, which require special traffic handling and security arrangements.

Oxfordshire County Council contracted the administration and enforcement of the SPA, on a five year contract, to Control Plus, who were initially expected to employ about twenty to twenty five parking attendants, covering two daily shifts between 07.00 and 23.00 throughout the week. In fact, the lack of residents' permit income required the number of parking attendants to be reduced and the original proposals for the enforcement strategy were modified accordingly.

The County Council had formerly contracted the enforcement of 350 on-street parking spaces within central Oxford to Sureway Parking Ltd, but this work was incorporated into the new contract under the SPA. In addition to issuing PCNs and transferring the details to a central database, Control Plus were also expected to pursue the processing of the penalty notices up to and including the issue of warrants and instruction of bailiffs.

### **Penalty Charge Notices{tc \l 3 "0.4.2 Penalty Charge Notices"}**

The Council did not expect to recover the charges on more than two thirds of the PCNs issued, which would result in an annual total of nearly 22,000 penalty notices paid, out of a total issue of 29,000.

### **{PRIVATE }Wheel clamping and vehicle removal{tc \l 3 "0.4.3 Wheel clamping and vehicle removal"}**

The County Council applied for authorisation to undertake both wheel clamping and vehicle removal, but it did not envisage using the clamping powers initially. Vehicle removal was expected to be used occasionally in instances of serious contravention of yellow line restrictions, persistent non-compliance, or in cases of obstruction. In fact, about 150 removals were carried out in the first year after decriminalisation.

## **{PRIVATE }PROCESSING OF PENALTY CHARGE NOTICES{tc \l 2 "0.5 PROCESSING OF PENALTY CHARGE NOTICES"}**

Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) are normally printed by handheld computers, with details of the date, the vehicle, the location and the offence being entered. Duplicates are not normally printed, but may be produced later, if required, in the event that a case goes to adjudication. In order to be considered valid, PCNs must be either handed directly to the driver of the vehicle, or fixed securely to the vehicle. They may not be issued by any other method of delivery, at present.

### **{PRIVATE }Penalty Charge Notice payment{tc \l 3 "0.5.1 Penalty Charge Notice payment"}**

The payment system is designed to make payment easy and to encourage prompt settlement, with a 50% discount if payment is made within fourteen days of the issue of the notice. The opportunity to settle at the discounted rate does not apply where a PCN is referred to the Parking Appeals Service for determination. Payment may be made by cash, cheque or credit card and in the case of credit card settlements, the local authority may take the opportunity of checking for any outstanding penalties owing and issue a reminder to the defaulter. The full charge for most notices issued is £40.

**{PRIVATE }Payment within fourteen days{tc \l 4 "0.5.1.1 Payment within fourteen days"}** A motorist submitting payment within fourteen days of the date of issue of a PCN is entitled to pay only £20. Under the terms of the Road Traffic Act 1991, a motorist wishing to challenge the issue of a PCN is not obliged to make representations to the local authority until 28 days after the PCN was issued.

**{PRIVATE }Payment after fourteen days{tc \l 4 "0.5.1.2 Payment after fourteen days"}** Motorists failing to make payment within fourteen days of the date of issue of a PCN are required to pay the full charge of £40 and have a further fourteen days in which to do so.

**{PRIVATE }Unpaid charges{tc \l 4 "0.5.1.3 Unpaid charges"}** If no payment has been received within four weeks of the issue of the PCN, details of the vehicle on which the PCN was served are sent to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), with a request for the identity of the registered keeper. On receipt of this information, the Council sends a Notice to Owner (NtO), seeking details of the person who was in charge of the vehicle at the time of PCN issue. The vehicle keeper has 28 days in which to respond to this Notice, failing which, a Charge Certificate is issued.

Failure to pay at this stage results in authority being sought from the Parking Enforcement Centre of the County Court for the issue of a Court Order. If the matter remains unresolved, authority is subsequently sought from the County Court to issue a Warrant of Execution, which is served on the vehicle keeper by a certificated bailiff.

**{PRIVATE }Representations and appeals{tc \l 3 "0.5.2 Representations and appeals"}**

The formal period for submitting a written appeal against a PCN commences four weeks after the date of issue, although a motorist need not wait that long before appealing. During this time, the level of penalty payable remains fixed while the appeal is processed.

The appeal is addressed, in the first instance, to the local authority responsible for the issue of the PCN. If the appeal is rejected, the motorist then has recourse, either by post or in person, to the adjudication service operated by the Parking Adjudication Service of the Transport Committee for London (TCfL). The adjudicator's decision is final and cannot be taken to a higher court, unless it can be shown that the adjudicator acted unlawfully. If the adjudicator rejects the motorist's representation, the penalty owing at the time of the appeal becomes due and unsuccessful appellants attending in person are encouraged to pay before leaving the adjudicator's offices.

Oxfordshire County Council reached agreement with the TCfL to make use of its adjudication service for an initial period of two years. This was to be done in conjunction with Winchester City Council, which pending the establishment of a regional adjudication service, was similarly dependent on assistance from London. Premises in Oxford were to be provided for adjudicatory hearings.

## **{PRIVATE }SURVEYS{tc \l 1 "4. SURVEYS"}**

As part of a study of the effectiveness of local authority enforcement, funded by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, the Transport Research Laboratory monitored parking activity, parking behaviour and enforcement levels in the SPA, before and after the transfer of enforcement powers. The study was undertaken in conjunction with the Council and with the Police. The investigations included the monitoring of parking activity, using TRL's PARC software (Binning and Smith, 1991) and questionnaire surveys of motorists parking vehicles on-street and in Council-operated car parks, both shortly before the introduction of the SPA and again, one year later. TRL was responsible for the execution of the surveys, which were augmented with complementary data on ticket issues and enforcement activity supplied by the other parties.

The principal findings from the surveys of parking activity and parking attitudes were as follows:

### **{PRIVATE }PARKING ACTIVITY{tc \l 2 "4.1 PARKING ACTIVITY"}**

#### **{PRIVATE }On-street{tc \l 3 "4.1.1 On-street"}**

- In the city centre, under local authority enforcement, the average double yellow line parking duration fell by two thirds, although the number of parking acts increased. There was little change in double yellow line parking in the suburbs.
- In permit holders' bays, activity fell by a third, while average duration increased by two thirds and occupancy increased by 10%, indicating an increased proportion of residential parking.
- In city centre limited waiting bays, an improvement in compliance caused a greater likelihood of vacant spaces being available to motorists, despite increased use of the bays.
- Illegal parking on a taxi rank increased so that vehicles other than licensed taxis accounted for nearly one fifth of parking on the rank.
- People parking at the roadside did not report any more difficulty in finding parking spaces, but the change in enforcement meant that they were not able to park as close to their destinations.

#### **{PRIVATE }Car parks{tc \l 3 "4.1.2 Car parks"}**

- Motorists using car parks reported slightly more difficulty in finding vacant spaces, but they were not constrained to park further from their destinations than before the introduction of the SPA.
- Vehicle movements in some city centre car parks increased, with the largest increases being in longer duration parking.

### **{PRIVATE }PARKING ATTITUDES{tc \l 2 "4.2 PARKING ATTITUDES"}**

- Convenience was the main factor governing the choice of parking location, both for motorists parking at the roadside and in car parks. An increased proportion of those using car parks after the introduction of the SPA also considered the availability of space and permitted time to be important, while the expense did not seem to deter many people.
- Car park users indicated greater respect for double yellow lines than motorists parking at the roadside and this respect increased after the introduction of the SPA.
- Many people seemed confused about the implications of parking on single yellow lines.
- People parking at the roadside indicated that time limited waiting was the regulation where they had noticed the greatest change in enforcement.
- In the city centre, substantially fewer motorists were prepared to park illegally on-street under the new system of enforcement, but there was an element of persistent non-compliance.
- The proportion of on-street survey respondents receiving a parking penalty during the previous year nearly doubled after decriminalisation. Similar information obtained from car park respondents suggested that some drivers who had received tickets at the roadside might have changed their parking habits as a consequence.
- The results of the questionnaire survey suggested that city centre car park respondents were increasingly reluctant to drive into the city centre after decriminalisation.
- About a tenth of motorists parking in city centre car parks and on suburban streets commented that they had not noticed a difference since decriminalisation. Only half as many city centre on-street parkers agreed.

## **{PRIVATE }ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS{tc \l 1 "6. ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS"}**

### **{PRIVATE }ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL{tc \l 2 "6.1 ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL"}**

Before the introduction of the Special Parking Area, Thames Valley Police deployed traffic wardens and (to a limited extent) police officers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices, while Council car park attendants were responsible for the issue of Excess Charge Notices and some Notices of Intended Prosecution. After the transfer of responsibility for enforcement, Council parking attendants issued Penalty Charge Notices on street.

The original enforcement contract specified working hours which required a team of twenty five enforcement staff, of whom twenty would be deployed each day. The numbers of parking attendants were reviewed after a few months and the

team strength reduced to seventeen, which caused the enforcement hours to be curtailed. By the end of 1997, parking attendants were operating from 07.00 until 19.00, with some coverage up until 22.00 in particular areas, with enforcement duties being extended into further residential areas.

## **{PRIVATE }ISSUE OF PENALTY NOTICES{tc \l 2 "6.2 ISSUE OF PENALTY NOTICES"}**

The County Council originally estimated that about 30,000 PCNs would be issued during the first year of the SPA. However, about 44,000 PCNs were issued during the rest of that calendar year and the total for the twelve months following decriminalisation was over 48,000. About 17% of PCNs were issued in on-street pay & display areas and 83% in other street locations over the year. Over eight per cent of the PCNs were issued to vehicles with foreign and diplomatic registrations.

A lower number of PCNs were issued over a period coinciding with the academic summer holidays. Enforcement of city centre pay & display parking during evenings, Sundays and Bank Holidays began at the beginning of October 1997, which had a noticeable effect on the number of PCNs issued in those areas.

## **{PRIVATE }PAYMENT OF PENALTY CHARGE NOTICES{tc \l 2 "6.3 PAYMENT OF PENALTY CHARGE NOTICES"}**

The Council has achieved a payment rate of approximately 75% on PCNs, despite the difficulty of obtaining accurate details of vehicle keepers, even with the full co-operation of DVLA. Over sixty per cent of the PCNs have been paid at the discounted rate (that is, about 86% of those settled, have been at the £20 level).

The enforcement contract awarded by the Council required an overall cancellation limit of 15% of tickets issued, with no more than 3% of cancellations being due to parking attendant error. The overall rate was just under 13% of total issues, but the number of cancellations due to parking attendant error was very low, at around a half of one per cent.

## **{PRIVATE }REPRESENTATIONS AND APPEALS{tc \l 2 "6.4 REPRESENTATIONS AND APPEALS"}**

By January 1998, only about 150 cases had been referred to adjudication, although numerous representations had been handled by the Council. Co-operation with the TCfL was very successful, although the relatively little use made of the adjudication service made the arrangement an expensive exercise. This was resolved with the termination of the London agreement and the establishment of a national adjudication service.

The original objective was to respond to all correspondence on the day of receipt. In fact, the notice processing team succeeds in providing a response to 90% of letters on the same day and deals with the remainder on the following day. However, many more letters were sent by the Notice Processing Office than were received.

## **{PRIVATE }INCOME GENERATED{tc \l 2 "6.5 INCOME GENERATED"}**

Income from the public car parks in Oxford remained with the City Council. The County Council accrued parking revenue from levying penalty charges and from the control of on-street parking spaces with pay & display machines. On-street pay & display income amounted to close to £1 million in the first year of the SPA, which was approximately 15% more than estimated.

The County Council derived over £830K from penalty payments, which exceeded the original estimate by over 50% and compensated for the lack of expected income from the sale of residents' permits. **{PRIVATE }**

## **PUBLIC AND LOCAL AUTHORITY REACTIONS{tc \l 1 "7. PUBLIC AND LOCAL AUTHORITY REACTIONS"}**

### **PUBLIC RESPONSE{tc \l 2 "7.1 PUBLIC RESPONSE"}**

News articles and letters to the editor of the local newspaper over the period of introduction of the SPA indicated that although the changes were not very well received, they were not the main focus of concern among local residents. Letters on the subject were almost exclusively negative in tone and averaged about one a fortnight, but were outnumbered by letters about cyclists in the city, which seemed to arouse much greater feeling.

About half of the letters were generally critical of the parking control and enforcement operations, but a quarter specifically referred to the enforcement periods and their effect on social and leisure activities, and churchgoing. Some people, whose activities had been curtailed by the imposition of evening on-street parking controls, expressed a reluctance to use city centre car parks or the park & ride service on grounds of anxiety about personal safety.

During the same monitoring period, the newspaper carried about 25% more news articles about parking than letters on the subject. Nearly half of these involved the park & ride services, about 20% concerned private non-residential parking and about 12% were about car parks and tariffs. Very few specifically related to the SPA or its effects. There was one report of a violent assault on a police officer in an incident of parking on zig-zag lines, but no comparable references to local authority parking attendants.

### **LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSE{tc \l 2 "7.2 LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSE"}**

The County Council was generally satisfied with the way the first year of the SPA has proceeded. After an initial period of relative public disquiet and inadequate communication between the public and the Council, the public appeared to have accepted the change. However, ticket issues have exceeded the Council's expectations, indicating that motorists needed time to adapt to the increased number of enforcement personnel deployed. PCN

recovery rates were encouragingly high, with the majority being paid at the discounted rate, and the number of cases going to adjudication was few.

## **THE LOCAL ECONOMY{tc \l 1 "8. DISCUSSION"}**

Oxford has a City Centre Management Working Party that oversees the development and the management of the city centre. Part of its remit includes the collection of data that can be used to monitor, amongst other things, how the city centre is fairing economically.

Data collected over the past five years shows that:

- There has been a steady increase in usage of buses to and around the City Centre;
- Footfall increased by 11.9% between 1998 and 1999 although pedestrianisation may have influenced this figure;
- Unemployment in Oxford has decreased each year from > 10% in November 1993 to 3.1% in November 2000;
- Unoccupied floor space in Oxford decreased from 325,000 sq. ft. in 1996 to 128,000 sq.ft. in 2000;
- Retail vacancy rates have decreased;
- Prime retail rents have increased over the last five years.

Whilst these trends cannot be completely attributed to the introduction of decriminalised parking enforcement it is clear that the city has continued to prosper despite the introduction of a SPA.

## **DISCUSSION{tc \l 1 "8. DISCUSSION"}**

The introduction of the first provincial SPA in Winchester involved the Council in many unfamiliar procedures and responsibilities. It was also the then Parking Committee for London's first venture into conducting adjudicatory procedures outside of London.

In introducing the second SPA, Oxfordshire County Council therefore did not need to break as much new ground and was in a position to draw upon Winchester's experience. However, as every local authority and its administrative area are different, so the effects of decriminalised parking enforcement may be different, according to the local authority's operation of its policies, the habits of the residents and the characteristics of the area. However, certain results emerged from this study which were in agreement with trends observed in the TRL study of the Winchester SPA and these are discussed below.

Oxfordshire County Council officers expressed their overall satisfaction with the introduction of decriminalised parking regulation enforcement and its

subsequent progress. The failure to impose charges for residents' parking was disappointing but did not prove to be a serious setback. In general, the public accepted the change and the level of non-compliance provided a useful income stream without being deleterious to the city's traffic movements.

## **PARKING ACTIVITY{tc \l 2 "8.1 PARKING ACTIVITY"}**

In keeping with the findings of the TRL study in Winchester, the Oxford study showed that, in the main, there was an increase in the level of compliance with on-street parking regulations following decriminalisation. Turnover increased and average parking durations, in many cases, reduced. There was some evidence to show that the longer term on-street parker transferred to car parks and that the shorter duration parker found it easier to park on-street.

The questionnaire survey results gave some indication that it became a little more difficult for motorists to locate vacant car park spaces after decriminalisation. The likelihood of this was confirmed by the analysis of vehicle movements in city centre car parks, which showed an increase, probably accompanied by increased occupancy. However, this did not appear to have prevented the large majority of motorists finding a car park space within about five minutes.

## **PARKING BEHAVIOUR{tc \l 2 "8.2 PARKING BEHAVIOUR"}**

Parking behaviour is affected by the perceived level of parking regulation enforcement. A high profile operation, whether very visually evident on the streets, or having its reputation passed by word of mouth, is likely to reduce illegal parking. In Oxford, it was apparent that motorists parking on-street were parking further from their destinations after decriminalisation. As had been observed in Winchester, motorists in Oxford generally perceived an increased likelihood of their receiving a penalty notice for a non-compliant parking act and this was likely to have discouraged many from parking conveniently nearer, on yellow lines, for instance. More motorists acknowledged that they had received a penalty notice during the first year of the SPA's operation than in the year before the SPA was introduced.

## **{PRIVATE }PUBLIC RESPONSE{tc \l 2 "8.3 PUBLIC RESPONSE"}**

Despite adverse reactions during the consultative process, which caused the introduction of charges for residents' parking permits to be deferred indefinitely, the level of public interest expressed within the local press was relatively low. There were other transport related issues which generated greater press interest and more readers' letters. An initially poor level of communication between the Council and the public, for instance, concerning the enforcement of parking regulations during heavily attended public events, caused some bad feeling. However, improvements in the handling of such situations led to better public relations.

## **{PRIVATE }INCOME GENERATED{tc \l 2 "8.4 INCOME GENERATED"}**

Oxfordshire County Council's original projection of income and expenditure included a significant revenue contribution from levying residents' parking permit charges. The refusal of the public to accept the principal of charging must have been received with initial dismay by the Council and must have cast serious doubt over the likelihood of the Council's being able to balance its SPA account. The Winchester experience indicated that, whilst penalty income covered the annual costs of enforcement, it would take longer to recover the scheme's start-up costs. However, it was not possible to make this comparison for Oxford. Despite the lack of residents' permit income, Oxfordshire Council was able to generate income in excess of running costs, mainly as a result of achieving a high rate of PCN issue. In Oxford, the car parks remained the responsibility of the City Council and the County Council received no financial benefit, even if one of the effects of its enforcement activities was to lead motorists to use the car parks in preference to parking on the streets.

The County Council's estimate made no mention of start-up costs for the operation. Nevertheless, the indications from the SPA were that the income generated from levying penalties was sufficient to meet the running costs of enforcement. The police were unable to provide enforcement statistics for the period immediately before the introduction of the SPA. However, it is believed that the number of penalty notices issued after decriminalisation increased substantially. The number of PCNs issued in the first year exceeded estimates by almost 50%, leading to the estimate of penalty income also being exceeded. Substantial improvements in compliance, while socially desirable, would mean that the costs of enforcement would have to be met from another source, but attempts to lower enforcement levels in order to reduce costs might result in increased non-compliance and a consequent increase in income. With time, the most economical level of enforcement activity will be found by experience of the local public response.

## **ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF CITY CENTRE**

Data collected over the past five years shows that:

- There has been a steady increase in usage of buses to and around the City Centre;

- Footfall increased by 11.9% between 1998 and 1999 although pedestrianisation may have influenced this figure;
- Unemployment in Oxford has decreased each year from > 10% in November 1993 to 3.1% in November 2000;
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