

**R**ecent debate in the *West End Extra* has focused on the role of Westminster's parking attendants, and while I acknowledge parking enforcement isn't always popular, most people accept the need for parking rules and attendants, who play a vital role in managing the enormous pressures on our roads.

Over half a million vehicles come into Westminster's 8.5 square miles every day and, since the introduction of council parking wardens in the 1960s, their role has evolved to meet the changing needs of our residents, businesses and visitors.

New government guidance that came into place in March 2008 heralded the demise of what we knew as the parking attendant and the creation of the new Civil Enforcement Officer (CEO), with a new uniform and a wider role, including acting as the first point of contact for the public, helping with directions and providing other useful information.

We also have dedicated CEOs in Church Street and some busy market areas to offer additional support to local traders and businesses to help manage specific

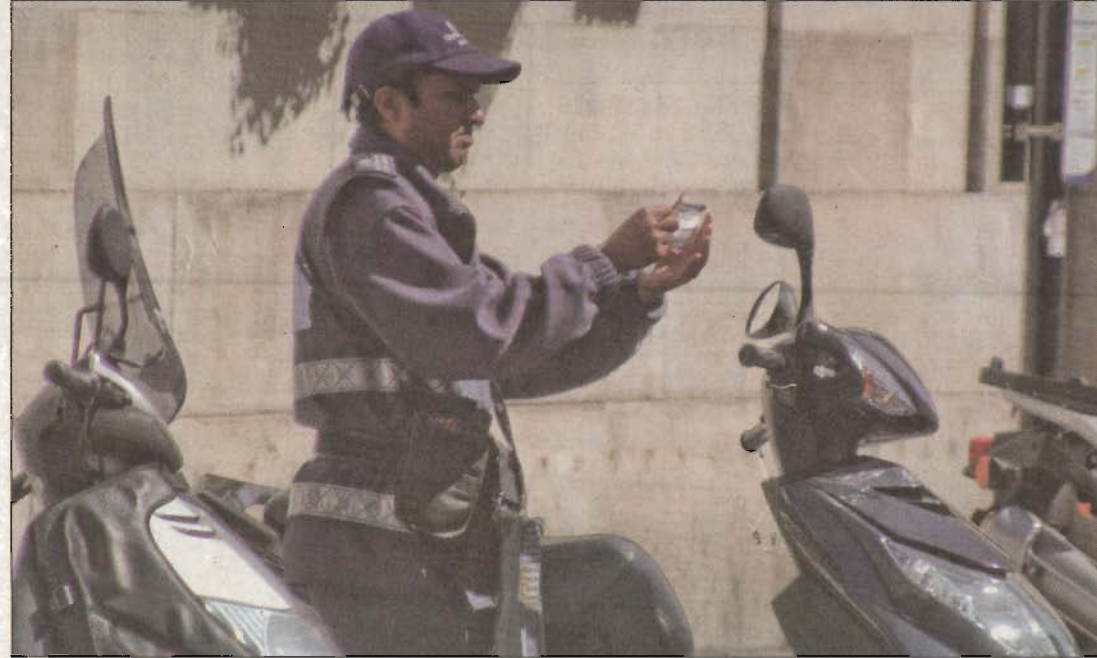
# Our wardens are firm but fair



**Misconceptions about parking staff abound, says Cllr Danny Chalkley – and no, they do not work to targets**

problems such as customer parking, loading and unloading.

Despite carrying out essential duties to keep Westminster moving, the working life of a CEO continues to vary from challenging and difficult to – in the worst case – dangerous, with some CEOs subjected to physical assaults, threats of violence and verbal abuse simply for doing their job.



Parking wardens should not have to live in fear of abuse from a small minority of motorists or passers-by and we are doing everything in our power to ensure they have the confidence and skills to handle the most difficult situations.

To this end we have introduced specialist conflict resolution classes and equipped all of our parking wardens

with GPS positioning devices which feature panic buttons so they can alert the police if they need urgent help.

We also conduct informative customer service seminars and mystery shopping exercises to ensure CEOs are carrying out their duties correctly and to an excellent standard.

Nonetheless, there still remains the misconception that

CEOs work to targets and are paid bonuses for the number of tickets they issue. This is categorically not the case and has not been for five years.

In addition, any money raised through parking is ploughed straight back into major transport projects including funding concessionary fares for schoolchildren and the taxi card service for our

clamping and removal of vehicles and worked with businesses and delivery companies to increase the loading time allowed for lorries and HGVs in the city, which has resulted in a 40 per cent drop in tickets issued.

Our variable parking tariff in Queensway car park enables motorists to park for as little as 20 pence per hour, while our new variable parking scheme in the West End has seen a decrease in parking charges by 17 per cent during off-peak hours.

However, we are not complacent and we want to ensure that when enforcement is necessary we are getting it right first time, and if we do get it wrong, that we are using commonsense and putting it right quickly.

We are committed to working with all our parking staff and contractors to help make parking in Westminster cheaper, safer and easier and will continue to ensure we deliver a parking service that is firm, fair and excellent.

■ *Cllr Danny Chalkley is Westminster's cabinet member for environment and transport*

older residents.

Our ultimate aim is to make life easier, safer and more convenient for motorists.

In recent years there has been a decreasing trend in the number of tickets issued in Westminster, with a 20 per cent drop in the number of tickets issued last year compared to the year before. We have also scrapped the unpopular use of