

DRAFT MINUTE EXTRACT

CABINET MINUTES

17 OCTOBER 2013

Chairman: * Councillor Susan Hall

Councillors:	* Kam Chana	* Janet Mote
	* Tony Ferrari	* Paul Osborn
	* Stephen Greek	* Simon Williams
	* Manji Kara	* Stephen Wright
	* Barry Macleod-Cullinane	

Non Executive Non Voting Councillors:	* Graham Henson	* David Perry
	* Thaya Idaikkadar	

In attendance: (Councillors)	Mano Dharmarajah	Minute 698
	Asad Omar	Minute 698
	William Stoodley	Minute 698

* Denotes Member present

RESOLVED ITEMS

710. Key Decision - Parking Review - 20 Minutes Free Parking Initiative

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environment introduced the report, which set out the background to the Rayners Lane 20 minutes free parking trial and provided options for Cabinet's consideration on the future use of free parking periods in the borough.

The Portfolio Holder invited questions from Members and, having been asked that her administration was unlikely to expand the trial borough-wide, responded as follows:

- that the expansion of the businesses in North Harrow had been as a result of the excellent work carried out by the Head of Economic Development and Research (Minute 706 refers);
- the majority of shoppers required more than 20 minutes to do their shopping. The trial in Rayners Lane had increased the footfall by a small amount only and that unlike the previous administration, it was important that her administration did not rush into implementing a scheme which had not been fully researched;
- her administration would be looking to implement a fully researched scheme and she cited the example of a scheme that had been implemented in Hillingdon which had taken up to two years to implement. The Hillingdon Scheme had been linked to the Oyster Card and allowed a driver to park for one 20 minute session unlike the one in Rayners Lane. She explained that the trial in Rayners Lane had been open to abuse, as the same driver had been able to use the free parking by printing out a ticket at 20 minute intervals. The cost of the scheme, £1m, was considerable and unsustainable.

A non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Member referred to the contradictions within the report and asked what consultations had been carried out prior to formulating the report. He was of the view that free parking had brought economic viability for businesses. The Portfolio Holder reiterated that the 1-hour free parking in North Harrow had not revitalised the businesses which had declined in numbers and that it had been the splendid work carried out by the Head of Economic Development and Research that had helped to rejuvenate this area. A number of measures needed to be explored to bring about vitality to an area and free parking in itself was not an attraction.

In relation to the consultation, the Portfolio Holder replied that specific consultation had not been carried out but that the trial had provided sufficient information that this scheme was not right for implementation borough-wide bearing in mind that it would have unacceptable cost implications. She reiterated that her administration supported free parking scheme(s) but this scheme was not the right one for the borough.

The same non-voting non-Executive Member was of the view that the arguments used for non implementation of the scheme had been based on the reduction of income from the issue of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs).

The Portfolio Holder refuted this as chart 7 of the report did not support this argument, as it showed a variable result week-on-week and it was difficult to gauge a pattern. She added that the negligible impact of the scheme on footfall, as well as the cost of implementation and subsequent maintenance, including the implications for local taxpayers, were the key reasons for her administration's lack of support for this particular scheme being rolled-out borough-wide.

In response to questions about the risk register, comparisons with previous years issue of PCNs, lack of available parking spaces during the 20 minutes trial in Rayners Lane, the cost to the trader in loss of revenue, the Portfolio Holder remarked that a Risk Register ought to have been prepared by the previous administration prior to the trial, that there were issues with the entire scheme and not with the PCNs issued and that the administration would not be rushed in to a scheme that did not provide best value for residents and which required capital investment.

Another non-voting non-Executive Member referred to the public sector equality duty and questioned if a decision could be taken in the light of the lack of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA). In response, the Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise stated that paragraph 2.50 of the report made reference to the rollout of a borough-wide scheme which would require a Traffic Order to be made. However, if the decision was against a rollout, no statutory process was required. The same non-voting non-Executive Member said the EqIAs ought to be updated in light of the comments made. The Portfolio Holder stated that it was important to understand why this particular scheme would not work for Harrow.

The non-voting non-Executive Members were of the view that the administration was not listening to the business community and the people of Harrow. One of them mentioned the work done by Mary Portas, a retail expert, in which she had highlighted the importance of free parking for town and district centres. Moreover, Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, had suggested that parking on double yellow lines for 15 minutes ought to be allowed in the quest to revitalise town centres/ businesses. The Portfolio Holder vehemently denied that residents and businesses were being ignored and re-iterated that it was essential that an efficient scheme was implemented as the proposed one was costly.

The Deputy Leader of the Council clarified that PCNs were not issued to generate revenue. It was important that the borough's roads were safe to drive through. Parking on double-yellow lines would put other drivers and pedestrians at risk. He cited the example of the Westfield Shopping Centre in West London which charged shoppers to park and that it was the variety of shops available that attracted shoppers. An effective and fair scheme was needed for Harrow, as the proposal did not achieve its stated purpose. Moreover businesses would go elsewhere if Harrow did not have the right model. With the current scheme, a violation of 20 minute free parking was difficult to measure.

The Portfolio Holder for Communications, Performance and Resources stated that the surveys carried out in 2012 under the Labour administration had

shown that free parking was not a key driver for both businesses and residents. It was also important to note that the petition for free parking in Pinner was not supportive of this proposal. A poor scheme would have serious implications. In addition, it was important that the Section 151 Officer set out the financial implications of any decision whether it be a material factor or not in any decision taken.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Regeneration that agreeing a scheme that was unsustainable financially would reduce the finances available for other service areas. The Portfolio Holder for Business and Enterprise reported that a 'shadow' survey in Rayners Lane had shown that free parking was not a key priority for the businesses. They had cited cleaner streets/pavements, safer areas and traffic as their priorities. A non-voting non-Executive Member referred to the previously received petition on the removal of free parking in North Harrow (Cambridge Road car park), arising from the 2011 to 2013 Parking Review, that had been signed by more than 2,000 people, and drew attention to the mentions of PCN income in the report, questioning the focus of the administration.

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environment stressed that her administration was not against free parking but it could not support a scheme that was not working as intended and was financially untenable. The administration could only support a scheme that was cost effective, efficient and properly supportive of local businesses.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the review of the Rayners Lane free parking trial, as set out in the report, be noted;
- (2) having considered the implications of on-street free parking borough-wide and reviewed the options available, the following preferred option be agreed: Do not implement 20 minutes free parking in the borough and remove the Rayners Lane trial of 20 minutes free parking.

Reason for Decision: To ensure that a consistent parking charges policy was implemented.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: As set out in the report.

Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member / Dispensation Granted: None.

