

CABINET (SPECIAL)

MINUTES

18 NOVEMBER 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	

* Denotes Member present
† Denotes apologies received

711. Apologies for Absence

Received from Councillor Manji Kara, Portfolio Holder for Community and Culture.

712. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members.

RESOLVED ITEMS

713. **Parking Review: 20 Minutes Free Parking Initiative - Referral by Call-in Sub-Committee**

Cabinet received a report of the Director of Legal and Governance Services setting out the decision of the Call-In Sub-Committee meeting held on 5 November 2013 following the receipt and consideration of a Call-in Notice in relation to the Cabinet decision of 17 October 2013 on the 'Parking Review: 20 Minutes Free Parking Initiative'.

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Environment referred to the decision of the Call-in Sub-Committee, including the discussion at that meeting. The Leader was of the view that it was unlikely that Cabinet would be minded to amend its original decision. Her preference was for a cross-party group to be set up to identify how a borough-wide free parking scheme, which was an admirable aspiration, could be implemented. She added that it was essential that similar schemes in other boroughs were explored, in particular the scheme in operation in the Borough of Hillingdon, in order to ensure that a suitable scheme for Harrow was considered and implemented across the borough and for the right reasons and supported by the correct technology. The Leader acknowledged that a borough-wide free parking scheme for Harrow could prove to be unviable and a drain on the Council's finances, however all options ought to be explored in the interests of all residents and businesses in Harrow.

The Leader stated that the discussion at the Call-In Sub-Committee had also helped to identify ideas, including how other boroughs dealt with parking issues. A cross-party group would help progress these ideas with a view to identifying a positive scheme and which all parties would be able to sign up to. A scheme that was supported by all was the best way forward for Harrow's residents and businesses. A scheme that was linked into a Library/Leisure Card and which offered discounts might be a better way forward and needed to be investigated.

The Leader urged Members of the Opposition to participate in the proposed cross-party group so that ideas could be discussed and explored. She referred to the Call-in grounds and made the following comments:

- with regard to 'inadequate consultation', there was no requirement for any consultation, including if the scheme were to be rolled out. No consultation had been taken at the outset of the Scheme under the former administration(s). However, she acknowledged that consultation was a key aspect of any proposal and suggested that it would be prudent to carry out consultation at various stages for any trials for future proposals for free parking. She added that any scheme implemented should be borough-wide so that all residents and businesses could enjoy the benefits of free parking;
- with regard to 'action was not proportionate to the desired outcome', detailed legal and financial implications were a key aspect of any report

and decision-making and her administration would not expect anything less. It was also important to appreciate that the money that would be spent belonged to the residents and it was important that any spend provided value for money which was a crucial aspect of any decision-making. The Leader stressed that there was a need to have due regard to the financial and legal consequences of any decisions taken;

- the Scheme, if implemented, would require an additional £25,000 to cover maintenance costs and it was important to take this aspect into consideration. In relation to the Penalty Charge Notice (PCNs), the income expected had been taken into account in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). It was important to appreciate all aspects of the costs associated with the Scheme in order to ensure its viability, as revenue pressures would be created by the Scheme;
- she was supportive of the principle of free parking provided it was viable. The Scheme in question was unviable and the increase in footfall was negligible. There were better ways of increasing trade for businesses and she cited the splendid work undertaken previously by the Business Development team and the former Portfolio Holder as one such example which had helped to rejuvenate the North Harrow area;
- she would look at alternatives that would link free parking with a Card with a view to increasing the footfall in all the shopping areas. She acknowledged that there were problems associated with the Hillingdon Card/Scheme and that it had not been a panacea. Harrow Council would need to make adjustments to the Hillingdon Card/Scheme in order to make it successful, such as linking it with discounts at Harrow based businesses;
- a desired outcome was a parking scheme that was beneficial to residents and businesses, as taxpayers. It was therefore important to explore ideas and to cost a scheme that offered the best solution and met the needs of Harrow.

The non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members responded as follows:

- the stance taken by the Leader and her administration on this matter was disappointing. The Call-In Sub-Committee had upheld the case that residents and businesses had not been consulted and once again a decision would be taken without any consultation;
- whilst consultation might not have been required, it was good practice to listen to the views of residents and businesses and that the business representatives in the audience had not been given a voice or allowed to present the benefits of free parking to them. The decision could not be considered to be a fair one for Harrow's business community and for an administration whose priority included a fairer Harrow.

- some consultation was better than no consultation, and that the administration was aware that other free parking models, including the free parking scheme in Hillingdon, had already been examined by officers;
- it was important to ascertain and balance the increase in footfall with the business turnover, as an increase in turnover of £6,000 would make a considerable difference to small businesses and allow them to survive. With the festive season approaching, free parking would be a bonus for all. A free parking scheme linked to a Harrow Card had previously been examined and proved to be too expensive to implement;
- budget pressures of implementing the Scheme were in the region of £60,000 and that the Scheme ought to be implemented until March 2014 to allow an incoming administration to take a longer term view thereafter;
- consultation had taken place in 2011/12 and the residents had supported free parking. The Scheme was the culmination of discussions at Commissioning Panels and the financial information in the report showed that the Scheme was on track. The figures in the report showed that the Scheme was financially viable and accorded with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) until at least 2014;
- the objection was the use of the PCNs issue as a reason for not going ahead with the Scheme. The Hillingdon Card was flawed. It was important that the new administration listened to the democratic process, as residents had highlighted the provision of free parking as one of their three key priorities.

In response, the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holders for Communications, Performance and Resources and Business and Enterprise stated that a trial did not require consultation. Moreover, giving a voice to one section of the community and not any others would be unfair and inappropriate for any listening Council. Consultation had to be meaningful and what discredited the notion of consultation was when a scheme that was unworkable was consulted on resulting in an implementation of a scheme that the consultation did not support. Such a course of action also discredited the whole notion of people being able to influence decisions. Additionally, a footfall increase of 2% in one area would easily be negated by the cost of the Scheme to the tax payers of the borough. It was important to understand the implications of decisions and for a Call-In Sub-Committee to argue its case on 'insufficient consideration of financial information' could be seen as perverse as the Sub-Committee wanted less financial detail to be considered. There was also a potential to link a new scheme to My Harrow Account.

The Leader of the Council stated that insufficient money had been allocated in the budget to allow the Council to look at the benefits of a Harrow Card. The Scheme under consideration would cost £1m to implement and it was important to take a view on how this money could be spent better elsewhere.

She explained that to roll out a Scheme which was unworkable would mean spending good money after bad. She added that whilst she applauded the proposal for free parking, the Scheme was unworkable and she was passionate about looking at alternative proposals.

The Deputy Leader added that it was important to put in place a scheme that was workable and that it was the variety of shops that attracted shoppers to an area. Free parking was considered as a bonus. There was a need to aspire to a gold standard scheme and the one in Hillingdon could be explored further and linked to discounts in shops and restaurants, including the provision of other activities and choices that would make the areas attractive for shoppers and visitors thereby helping to regenerate areas. All parties were urged to work together to achieve a workable free parking scheme that would benefit residents and businesses in the borough.

RESOLVED: That, having reconsidered the decision of the Cabinet meeting held on 17 October 2013, set out at Appendix 3 to the report in relation to Parking Review: 20 Minutes Free Parking Initiative, as a result of the decision of the Call-in Sub-Committee, the original decision of Cabinet be confirmed.

Reason for Decision: To reconsider the decision within 10 clear working days of a referral by the Call-In Sub-Committee, in accordance with Committee Procedure Rule 46.8.3. To ensure that a consistent parking charges policy was implemented.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: To amend the decision made by Cabinet on 17 October 2013.

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

[Call-in does not apply]

714. Motion referred to Executive - 20 Minutes Free Parking

Cabinet received a Motion, which had been referred by Council in relation to the 20 minutes free parking. Council had considered and debated the Motion and a summary of the comments had been submitted for Cabinet's consideration.

RESOLVED: That the Motion be noted.

Reason for Decision: To consider alongside the referral by the Call-In Sub-Committee.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: None.

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

[Call-in does not apply].

715. Petition referred to Executive - Cambridge Road Car Park

Cabinet received a petition, which had been referred by Council in relation to the Cambridge Road Car Park. It was noted that the Council, in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, had considered and debated the petition and a summary of the comments had been submitted for Cabinet's consideration.

RESOLVED: That the petition be noted.

Reason for Decision: To consider alongside the referral by the Call-In Sub-Committee.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: None.

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

[Call-in does not apply].

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 7.45 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR SUSAN HALL
Chairman