

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

CABINET – 19 FEBRUARY 2015

**REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
20 JANUARY 2015**

Reference from Cabinet - 16 October 2014 - Petition On Cambridge Road Car Park

A Member introduced the petition, which had the support of all the Headstone North ward councillors, and described the impact of car park charges on local businesses and residents. She stated that local business owners had reported a significant loss in business. A promised free hour of parking had not materialised with the failure of a major supermarket to locate in the area, and this fact, together with the loss of banking facilities, suggested that a 'local' designation was more appropriate. She proposed that a pilot scheme be introduced at a cheaper rate, to be evaluated and monitored over a suitable period.

The Service Manager, Traffic & Highway Network Management, described the 5 planning area designations (4 of which existed in Harrow) and explained that the rationale for aligning the parking charges structure to the planning designations had been to set charges consistently to reflect the retail provision and demand in an area. Amending a planning designation would require changes to a number of statutory documents and would be difficult to justify.

The Service Manager, Traffic & Highway Network Management, described the 5 planning area designations (4 of which existed in Harrow) and explained that the rationale for aligning the parking charges structure to the planning designations had been to set charges consistently to reflect the retail provision and demand in an area. Amending a planning designation would require changes to a number of statutory documents and would be difficult to justify.

The Portfolio Holder for Business, Planning and Regeneration, concurred with the Service Manager, adding that there were criteria governing the designations, and it was not an easy matter to change these. It would also be necessary to consider the impact on neighbouring areas of any proposed changes. He commented that a case could be made for a trial programme to support regeneration.

Members considered whether aligning parking policy to planning area designations allowed sufficient flexibility to respond to community and business needs, and what measures were available to address residents' and traders' concerns. The Service Manager noted that the worst rates for shop vacancies had occurred during a period of free parking. He explained that there was little evidence that concessionary parking charges supported local businesses, and that improvements in vacancy rates in recent years had resulted from targeted initiatives by the Economic Development team. He believed that linking charges to the planning designations was a fair system as it treated similar retail centres equally, and noted that prior to the reform of the charges structure there had been over 30 different charging schemes. He advised careful consideration for determining how one local centre might take priority over another of a similar type.

The Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise reminded the committee that the proposed change would need the agreement of the Portfolio Holder for Environment, and observed that it would be wise to monitor demand and vacancy rates for another quarter before introducing the change.

A Member stated that the proposal for a trial period at a lower rate, to be monitored and evaluated over a defined period, had cross-party support.

The Chair concluded that it would be appropriate to suggest to Cabinet that consideration be given to the introduction of a lower charge for the first hour for a trial period.

RESOLVED: That the following conclusion be referred to Cabinet:

That consideration be given to the introduction of a lower charge for the first hour of parking in the Cambridge Road Car Park for a trial period, and that economic activity and shop vacancy rates be monitored during this period.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Background Documents:

Draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 20 January 2015

Contact Officer:

Una Sullivan, Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

Tel: 020 8424 1785

Email: una.sullivan@harrow.gov.uk