

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

Meeting:	CABINET
Date:	16 th December 2003
Subject:	Reduction of Car Parking Charges in North Harrow
Key decision:	No
Responsible Chief Officer:	Director of Professional Services – Urban Living
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	Environment and Transportation
Status:	Part 1
Ward:	Headstone North and Headstone South
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – copy of petition (front page)

1. Summary/ Reason for urgency (if applicable)

- 1.1 This report considers the reduction of car parking charges in North Harrow in response to a petition from traders, businesses and residents about the serious retailing position following the introduction of charges and the closure of the Safeway supermarket.
- 1.2 Any changes to parking charges have to be advertised giving a minimum notice period of 21 days before they can be brought into effect. In view of the serious concerns of the petitioners it is considered that any agreed changes should be implemented with a minimum of delay.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Cabinet:

- i) Notes the petition submitted by a deputation of traders and residents of North Harrow
- ii) Considers the options for reductions in parking charges shown in paragraph 6.8
- iii) Notes the arrangements that are in hand to provide additional car park direction signs and to investigate traffic management issues.

REASON: To address the concerns raised by the petitioners.

3. **Consultation with Ward Councillors**

- 3.1 Councillors Janet Mote, Silver and Stephenson attended the meeting with the deputation. A copy of this report has been sent to all Ward Councillors.

4. **Policy Context (including Relevant Previous Decisions)**

- 4.1 The introduction of controlled parking zones are national, regional and borough policy in order to protect the local environment and encourage more sustainable forms of transport. Charges were introduced in North Harrow following the consultation and advertising of the traffic orders approved by Traffic and Road Safety Panel in September 2000.

5. **Relevance to Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1 The restriction of long stay parking and the provision and efficient use of short stay parking will enhance the environment and promote the vitality of the centre by encouraging a turnover of available parking spaces.

6. **Background Information and options considered**

Current position

- 6.1 Following consultation and advertising of the traffic orders, charges were introduced in the car parks and on-street parking bays in September 2003.
- 6.2 There are 149 spaces in the car parks (125 pay & display; 8 disabled and 15 business) and 28 on-street pay & display bays. Charges apply between 8.00am and 6.30pm, Monday to Friday in the car parks and Monday to Saturday in the on-street bays. The tariff in the car parks is 30p/hour; £3 over 4 hours. The on-street tariff is 30p/ ½ hour; £10 over 6 hours.
- 6.3 Current usage of the car parks is about 35%-40% of capacity. This generally reflects the previous long stay use by commuters when about 60 spaces were reserved for short stay parking by being closed until 10.00am. About 50% of those parking currently are staying for over 4 hours. Usage of the on-street bays is about 50%, based on the number of vehicles paying to park, in addition to which there is parking by Blue Badge holders, vehicles loading etc.
- 6.4 The current income from the car parks is approximately £600 per week, £31,000 per annum, which is in line with the budget estimate. This does not include £6000 per annum from business permits, which should be unaffected. Income from the on-street bays is approximately £460 per week, £23,000 per annum, also in line with the budget estimate.

Reduction in charges

- 6.5 A deputation from local traders and residents met with Councillors Janet Mote, O'Dell, Burchell, Stephenson, and Silver on 4th December 2003 to express concern about the serious retail trading position in North Harrow following the introduction of the charges and the recent closure of the Safeway supermarket. The deputation handed in a petition, the principal requested being the introduction of a free period of parking and improved signage to the car parks. A copy of the front page of the petition is attached as appendix 1.
- 6.6 The introduction of a free period of parking is not recommended. This is based on experience of a similar situation in Stanmore in 1995 following the closure of Safeway, its only major retail outlet, and the serious retail position that resulted, when traders and residents successfully petitioned the Council to introduce a 2 hour free period. However, surveys before and after the tariff change showed that there had been no noticeable increase in car park usage. Enforcement problems were also encountered, despite extensive additional signing drawing attention to the need to obtain a P&D ticket from the free period. There was also evidence that long stay parkers replaced free tickets to extend their parking.
- 6.7 There are, of course, a number of options for varying tariffs and charging periods but it is difficult to predict the effect on driver behaviour and income. It is recommended to keep to simple tariff structures and to maintain the hierarchy between on-street and off-street charges.
- 6.8 The following reductions in charges are proposed for consideration, together with the budget implications:
- 6.8.1 Bisley House and Cambridge Road car parks: Reduce from 30p/hour to 10p/hour up to 4 hours, with £3 for over 4 hours as at present. Income is estimated at £21,000 per annum, which is a reduction of £10,000 against the current budget.
- 6.8.2 On-street parking bays: Reduce from 30p/ ½ hour to 10p/ ½ hour, with £10 for over 6 hours as at present. Income is estimated at £7500 per annum, which is a reduction of £15,500 against the current budget.
- 6.9 Only a limited number of parking surveys have been carried out since the meeting with the deputation and these have indicated the level of usage shown in para. 6.3. Further surveys will be carried out to monitor usage following any tariff change and re-opening of the supermarket.
- 6.10 Parking charges can be varied by giving a minimum of 21 days notice in the Harrow Observer and on site. Allowing for preparation of the notices limited publication over the Christmas period, any changes agreed at this meeting could be implemented with effect from 2nd February 2004.
- 6.11 Arrangements are currently in hand to erect additional car park direction signs and this is expected to be completed in January. The cost is being met from the current car park maintenance budget.

6.12 The issues of traffic flow and cycle lane safety and usage are being investigated, along with a review of waiting and loading restrictions in the area. Other environmental improvements will be considered in conjunction with the roll out of the New Harrow Project. With regard to the pigeon nuisance, London Underground has advised that they will be replacing the extent of netting that existed prior to the recent bridge strengthening works.

7. **Consultation**

7.1 Ward Councillors Janet Mote, Stephenson and Silver attended the meeting with the deputation.

8. **Finance Observations**

8.1 The total budget for car parking across the borough is £2.5m in 2003-2004. It is anticipated that as new controlled parking zones are introduced the income achieved will increase, and that this would cover the projected reduction in income at North Harrow resulting from the proposed changes.

9. **Legal Observations**

9.1 The level of parking charges must be set for traffic management reasons, such as to ration available space and ensure there is a rapid turnover of parking places, rather than to maximise revenue. This is because section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 does not include the maximisation of revenue from parking charges as one of the relevant considerations to be taken into account in securing safe, expeditious and convenient movement of traffic.

10. **Conclusion**

10.1 The effect of parking charges should be reconsidered in view of the serious retail trading position following the closure of the Safeway supermarket.

11. **Background Papers**

11.1 None

12. **Author**

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