

Committee OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY	Date 6th February, 2007	Classification Unrestricted	Report No.	Agenda Item No. 6.2
Report of: ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE		Title: REPORT "CALLED IN" – REVIEW OF PARKING SERVICES' FEES & CHARGES (CAB 105/067).		
Originating Officer(s): Angus Dixon		Ward(s) affected: All		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The attached report of the Corporate Director Environment and Culture, Alex Cosgrave, and Head of Parking Services, John Chilton, was considered by the Cabinet on 10th January, 2007 but has been "Called In" for further consideration by Councillors Mamun Rashid, Dulal Uddin, MA Munim, Waiseul Islam and Fozol Miah in accordance with the provisions of Part 4 of the Council's Constitution.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Committee consider the contents of the attached report, review the Cabinet's provisional decisions arising and decide whether to accept them or refer the matter back to Cabinet with proposals, together with reasons.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Brief description of "background paper"

**Cabinet report (CAB 105/067)
dated 10th January, 2007**

Name and telephone number of holder
and address where open to inspection

**Angus Dixon
020 7364 4850**

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The attached report of the Corporate Director Environment and Culture, Alex Cosgrave, and Head of Parking Services, John Chilton, was initially considered by Cabinet on 10th January, 2007. It however has been "Called In" for further consideration by Councillors Mamun Rashid, Dulal Uddin, MA Munim, Waiseul Islam and Fozol Miah in accordance with the provisions of Part 4 of the Council's Constitution.

3.2 The Cabinet after considering the attached report provisionally agreed:-

1. That, subject to (a) and (b) below, the levels of fees and charges for parking and parking related services, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report (CAB 105/067), to be effective from 1st April 2007, be approved by way of publishing a Notice of Variation of Charges: -
 - (a) That the charge from 01/04/07 for a 2nd resident's parking permit per household, for a conventionally fuelled vehicle, be £100 and the charge for a 3rd resident's parking permit per household, for a conventionally fuelled vehicle, be £250.
 - (b) Corporate Director Environment and Culture requested to ensure clarity in any information disseminated in relation to weekend use of Resident Visitor Scratchcards.
2. That subject to (a) and (b) below the Corporate Director Environment and Culture undertake further consultation, by way of Statutory Public Notice, before making the necessary Traffic Management Orders to introduce an emissions based charging structure for parking permits, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report (CAB 105/067): -
 - (a) That the proposed permit charge for a vehicle in Tax Group D [vehicle excise duty grouping linked to vehicle emissions] be £70 and the charges for the remaining tax groups be adjusted, as appropriate, by the Corporate Director Environment and Culture.
 - (b) Corporate Director Environment and Culture requested to ensure that the charging structure in Appendix 3 is consistent with the body of the report.
3. That it be noted that any objections arising from the consultation referred to in resolution 2. above will be reported back to Cabinet for consideration in conjunction with the proposals.

4. THE "CALL IN" REQUISITION

4.1 The reasons advanced in the "Call In" requisition are set out below:-

The proposals made rest on the assertion that increasing the price of parking is an effective means of controlling demand (3.3). There is no evidence to support this claim. The lack of effective strategies or commitment to reducing environmental damage (as evidenced in proposed cutting of LBTH's only dedicated sustainability

officer) reinforce the suspicion that the primary purpose of these changes is to increase income for the parking and associated services. There are no proposals to recycle increased parking revenue into better public transport, school, shopping and community transport or other environmental initiatives.

Our borough already has among the lowest car ownership per head of any in Britain, and issues more parking permits than we have on-street parking spaces.

Many residents would support genuine measures to improve the environment but will be dismayed and angered at manipulation of such concerns to push up charges and plug budget gaps.

Clarification of causes for the £1.7m projected deficit on the Parking Account is required before endorsing increases in charges which are regressive and ignore the huge disparity in incomes in Tower Hamlets, with average household incomes below £15,000.

Removing pensioners' entitlement to free scratchcards (for parking) is unacceptable, in light of the fixed incomes and 9%+ real rate of inflation pensioners face, compounded by recent excessive service charge increases and proposed removal of, and means tested charging for home care.

No data or information has been provided on the number of pensioners who will be affected, rather than the number of scratchcard books issued. The report assumes that many pensioners are in receipt of an income equal to other groups, but no research evidence on affected pensioners' income levels is provided. The report does not provide a clear and comprehensive definition of 'carers' who will continue to receive free scratchcards. We are endangering the social level of contact isolated vulnerable elders have with direct or extended family and friends due to charges for parking. This risks isolation and depression amongst our elderly citizens to whom we all owe a duty of care.

Evidence of consultation and consideration of impact is required before increasing charges for doctors' permits by 250% (£150 to £525) and for market traders and market car parks. Both provide key services which we should support and encourage.

There is no evidence of research into the impact of increased charges for residents' second permits (+75%, from £60 to £100) and of increased permit charges by vehicle size and emissions. We need clarification of how these will impact on low-income households and affect access to employment and training. Tower Hamlets is the fourth deprived of all London Boroughs therefore, LB of Richmond is not an appropriate comparison socially or economically.

5. ALTERNATIVE COURSE OF ACTION

5.1 In accordance with the Committee's procedures, the "Call In" Members have provided an alternative course of action for consideration:-

"Councillors make the following recommendations:

Further consultation and a further report:

1. giving consideration to impact on traders, doctors, and low income households
2. setting out how parking revenue might be used to improve alternative transport and access arrangements and genuine measures to reduce pollution
3. clarifying causes of projected parking deficit and more equitable means of addressing this
4. Clarification to the number of persons over the age of 60 years who are in receipt of welfare benefits who will not be able to afford charges for scratchcard books so that pensioners on welfare benefits continue to receive scratchcard books free of charge.
5. Withdraw item 6.0 of the report as the proposed charges will make Tower Hamlets the most expensive Borough for parking permits of all Boroughs indicated in Appendix 2. Our neighbouring borough of Newham, a more realistic comparison than Richmond, only charges £15 for a parking permit, this should be the comparison.

6. CONSIDERATION OF THE “CALL IN”

6.1 The following procedure is to be followed for consideration of the “Call In”.

- (a) Presentation of the “Call In” by one of the “Call In” Members followed by questions.
- (b) Response from the Lead Member/officers followed by questions.
- (c) General debate followed by decision.

N.B. – In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Protocols and Guidance adopted by the Committee at its meeting on 6 June, 2006, the “Call In” Members are not allowed to participate in the general debate.

6.2 It is open to the Committee to either resolve to take no action which would have the effect of endorsing the original Cabinet decisions, or the Committee could refer the matter back to the Cabinet for further consideration setting out the nature of its concerns and possibly recommending an alternative course of action.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1 That the Committee consider the contents of the attached report, review the Cabinet’s provisional decisions arising and decide whether to accept them or refer the matter back to Cabinet with proposals, together with reasons.