

Appendix B

2015 Parking Strategy Comments of the Scrutiny Committee – 8th October 2015

Introduction

The 2015 Parking Strategy was considered by the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 8th October 2015. The Lead Member, Environment, Councillor Southwood introduced the 2015 Parking Strategy and accompanying report which was due to be considered by the Cabinet at the meeting on 16 November 2015. Councillor Southwood indicated that the strategy brought together current policy to bring clarity to issues and be a reference document. The report asked for reconfirmation of the hierarchy of priorities for on street parking, a policy for the service and the priorities going forward, particularly, Councillor Southwood reminded, given the council's current financial position. Gavin Moore (Head of Parking and Lighting) added that many changes had been made since the 2006 Parking Enforcement Plan and the strategy was an opportunity to identify future direction.

The Committee noted that the '2015 Parking Strategy' did not bring forward any new policies with regard to parking in the borough but was a summation of existing policy into a single document. The objective in producing the Parking Strategy was to provide a coherent statement of existing council policy on which to develop new policy direction.

Comments of the Scrutiny Committee

Given that context, the Committee commented on the very different parking issues in the north and south of the borough. In the northern wards there are unregulated parking areas, often with sufficient on-street spaces in many areas and numerous tube and stations with access to more central London. This is causing park-and-commute stress near stations. However elsewhere in the centre and south of the borough the principal problem is parking stress caused by insufficient roadside supply of parking spaces for the existing parking demand. There is little prospect of being able to expand the supply of parking spaces and the principal lever for reducing and controlling demand is through pricing.

The Committee was further conscious of the tensions between traders desiring customer parking, and parking for their own vehicles and those of their staff, and the demands of residents whether living above shops or nearby. Finding answers to these tensions may be difficult.

There are also schools where the school run is causing acute pressures across the borough, and more vigorous efforts should be made to deter school run traffic. Work with local schools to develop alternative travel plans and ensuring that parents observe the parking restrictions around schools is critical.

With regard to the principles which underpin the on-street "Priority Hierarchy" the committee would like the Cabinet to consider whether the statements are right to use the word "need" when in some cases the more appropriate word would be "demand" (those referring to disabled persons' parking needs being the exception). The Committee considered whether the needs of public sector essential workers and in particular the requirements of local business operational parking needs should not be higher in the hierarchy list, than local residents' parking demands. Supporting local businesses through flexible parking schemes which encourage short term local shopping should be given a higher priority than it was felt was given at present. The Committee certainly felt that long term commuter on-street parking demand was a low priority; if there is insufficient off-street parking for commuters, the on-street parking spaces should not primarily be for them.

In terms of the overall Policy Objectives these appear sound

As to 'Future Development of the Parking Strategy' the Committee felt that parking enforcement officers' principal role is to ensure traffic flows smoothly, especially on bus routes and on shopping parades where illegal parking can interfere with customer parking opportunities. The deployment of enforcement officers should not be directed by where revenue maximisation is easiest, especially on what are often quiet residential roads.

The Committee were conscious of the need to have borough boundary policies that do not attract parking by drivers who pick the cheaper side of the boundary to park, e.g. at the Brent/Ealing border, or Brent/Camden border. If forced to prioritise upon which elements should officer time be spent, the Committee did not particularly favour work on greater involvement of residents in managing on-street parking provision in their locality but accept that the issues relating to parking provision close to places of worship, particularly during specific formal events and ceremonies require work, with due sensitivity.

Whilst there may be long-term benefits in working on 'opportunities for greater channel shift', the current population of Brent and visitors to Brent would probably prefer methodology to be kept simple. It seems unlikely that linking parking policies to economic priorities in specific locations, if expressed by pricing, will have much positive benefit, but in other ways, perhaps hours of operation there might be scope.

The Committee felt that given a resident's parking permit is paid for, it should be possible to adjust the hours of operation and boundaries of parking zones in a less cumbersome and costly way than as at present, even allowing for the need to meet required consultation processes. There should be greater scope to vary the times of operation within the day for CPZ's to enable better, more flexible use of the parking and this should be considered.