

OPPOSITION BUSINESS PAPER – COUNCIL 4 JULY 2012

Opposition Priority Business: The need to review the imposition of Sunday parking charges and for a free 20 minute parking period on street at all times.

Given choice most people wish to have free parking. That is an unquestionable fact of life that we have to accept whether we like it or not.

In the context of the current debate the correlation between free unlimited parking in shopping centres and the volume of retail spend is well established. Various research over recent years including that undertaken on behalf of the last Labour government and more recently by Mary Portas has come to that conclusion. Retailers of course know it to be the case and this accounts for the overwhelming desire on the part of the retail industry when entering into new developments to seek to have control over parking, either through outright ownership or arrangements with local authorities.

The duration of any such free parking provided by retailers will often depend on the nature of the shopping – food shopping alone does not require as long as shopping for non food comparison goods hence freestanding supermarkets will tend to have a 2 hour free period after which the retailer will impose a charge, while non food shopping centres will encourage almost unlimited free parking.

The economy of the town centre is Enfield is undoubtedly in decline – this is attributable to the current extended downturn in the national economy and this behoves the council to do what it can to assist retail in these circumstances, because by assisting retail in this way, they are doing what they have a duty to do - which is to promote economic success in their area.

It follows that imposing charges, where none existed before, in times of economic recession is the height of folly and demonstrates a real lack of any understanding of the impact of parking policy on a local economy; or at its simplest of the link between shopping and the convenience of parking.

We must also not forget the impact of Sunday parking on vast numbers of churchgoers in the borough particularly in the Enfield town area.

All of this is borne out by the anger of shoppers, churchgoers and businesses alike resulting in a petition which will be given to the mayor during the course of this debate which contains over **7500 signatures!** The largest petition that we have seen in Enfield in 26 years. The administration has seriously underestimated the strength of feeling of this issue.

The reality is that people living in Enfield do have a choice – they can choose to drive within half an hour in opposite directions – to Brent Cross or to Brookfield Farm where there are thousands of free parking places at all times and a huge selection of quality shopping; within 15 minutes most can reach the A10 retail park for a very good selection of food and non-food shops.

They do not have to pay the charges that this Labour administration has chosen to impose on Sundays, nor the higher rate charges that it has imposed through the week throughout the borough.

While we have referred extensively to Enfield Town, the fact of the matter is that our shopping districts require some help, although those outside of Enfield Town are not affected by Sunday parking charges. Small businesses in local shopping districts rely on the ability of shoppers to be able to stop to buy newspapers, confectionary, deposit dry cleaning, call at cash machines etc. The ability to do this is diminished by an on street charging regime that effectively requires every minute to be paid for, for fear of incurring hugely inflated penalty charges. What is required is a short period of free on street parking in all shopping districts where on street parking control exists, sufficient to allow potential customers to park their cars and effect the necessary transactions in local shops. This we believe would provide a significant boost to small local traders.

Recommendations

- (1) that the decision of the Cabinet and subsequently the Cabinet Member for Environment to impose charges on Sunday parking be immediately reversed
 - (2) that the council introduces across the borough free parking for a period of up to 20 minutes where on street parking controls exist.
- However if the Council is not minded to make these decisions now:
- (3) that the Council refers the decision of the Cabinet and subsequently the Cabinet Member for Environment to impose charges on Sunday parking to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - (4) that the Council refers the question of the introduction across the borough of free parking for a period of up to 20 minutes where on street parking controls exist to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - (5) that a full report be prepared for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by officers that explores fully the costs and benefits of the above two options;
 - (6) that the Conservative opposition be permitted to present the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.