

Cabinet Meeting: Monday, 04 November 2024

Question from: Cllr Leigh MBE

Question to: Cllr Durrans

There is a worrying trend emerging within this Council. Last year, the Conservative Group called-in the previous report on Parking Charges. Now this year's report intends to bypass future Scrutiny by proposing to delegate authority to Council Officers over any future changes to parking charges.

Parking policy is a politically sensitive matter, and we are all aware of this. Whilst I am trying to understand the rationale behind this proposal, the delegation of decision-making reflects a lack of transparency and a disregard for democratic principles. I urge you to reconsider this recommendation, as moving toward less transparency is neither in the public interest nor conducive to good governance.

Response

The parking strategies that are in development for individual towns will set the context for a borough wide approach to parking and a future review of parking charges will take account of the individual town parking strategies. However, parking is also a commercial operation with a number of private sector businesses operating at differing levels of the market. The current Cabinet approval process makes responding to changing pricing strategies of the private sector difficult and could lead to lost revenue, either through wider price increases or decreases. Delegating authority for parking price changes is an attempt to ensure that we can respond to changes in the wider market with greater expediency. However, the proposed recommendation does require discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Transport, thus ensuring that there will always be political oversight in advance of any changes being made". This approach aligns with the decision making in other Council services where there is a commercial factor to consider including charges for sports activities that compete with private gyms and in respect of charges for burials and cremations.