

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Committee Room 3B - Town Hall
14 August 2012 (6.30 – 7.10 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Damian White (Chairman), Linda Hawthorn (Vice-Chair), Wendy Brice-Thompson, Osman Dervish, Paul McGeary, Ray Morgon, Linda Trew and Melvin Wallace (In place of Garry Pain)

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor Garry Pain (Councillor Wallace substituting).

Councillor Keith Darvill was also present.

Officers present:

Cynthia Griffin, Group Director, Culture & Community
Simon Parkinson, Head of Culture and Leisure Services
Alexandra Watson, Business Unit Manager, Parking

11 DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no interests disclosed.

12 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman explained the arrangements in case of fire or other emergency requiring the evacuation of the building.

13 REQUISITION OF EXECUTIVE DECISION - CAR PARKING CHARGES IN PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Officers explained that a number of alternatives options, as explained in the Cabinet report, had been considered but rejected as they did not meet the dual aims of encouraging more genuine use of the car parks by public users and achieving the agreed MTFS savings.

While there was a barrier in place at Upminster Park, the staff and maintenance costs associated with this meant it was not suitable to be introduced at other parks.

There had been no written complaints over the last two years concerning commuter parking in parks but parks staff had received a number of verbal complaints about this issue. The problem was particularly acute in Lodge Farm Park. Councillor Hawthorn responded however that she had not received any complaints over this issue during her ward work.

It was accepted that there was a typographical error in the Executive Decision which should have shown the saving to be achieved as £40,000. The estimated income from introducing charges at the three parks was £55,000 and the deduction of predicted maintenance costs of £15,000 gave the projected saving of £40,000. It was explained that the collection of money from the meters and enforcement at the car park sites could be met from existing car park resources and patrols. This would be covered by a Service Level Agreement between Parking and Culture & Leisure. The precise impact on the service would not be known until the scheme started but it was reiterated that both the car parks and enforcement teams had indicated they would be able to cope with the introduction of the three additional chargeable car parks.

The introduction of a new Parking IT system would also reduce the workload from the new car parks. This would allow officers to tell from a computer which meters were full and would hence reduce the number of wasted journeys. The service was constantly seeking efficiencies and improved back office IT would help with this.

The estimated income figure had been calculated by assessing the number of spaces available, current usage levels and the estimated hourly use. A resistance had been built in for people who would stop using the car parks once charges were introduced. This had been set at 40% for Upminster Park.

There was not a major issue with carrying out enforcement during school holidays as the service always ensured a full compliment of staff was available.

Officers explained that Upminster Park had been included in the proposals as it did also suffer from commuters and shoppers parking there. There was also a revenue implication of the inclusion but this was not the only reason. A Member felt however that there was no problem at the park with commuters parking there and that it was mainly users of the park and the New Windmill Hall who would be affected by the imposition of parking charges. Other Members felt that the low level of the charges (20p for two hours) would not put people off using the park.

The position in adjacent roads would be monitored by the parking service. It was expected there would be some displacement of parking but it was not

anticipated that this would cause too many problems. Recommendations would be made to the Highways Advisory Committee if necessary should the parking problems in adjacent roads prove more severe than anticipated. Access for emergency vehicles would also be monitored. The implications of the changes for users of the New Windmill Hall and the bowls club in Upminster had also been taken into account by the Lead Member.

On Saturdays, problems caused by commuter and shopper parking were worse during the morning so it had been agreed to not levy the charges on Saturday afternoons in order to assist users of local sports clubs. Charges could not be waived all day on Saturdays due for example to the number of Romford shoppers parking in Lodge Farm Park. Some respondents such as local cricket clubs had indicated they would prefer if the parking charges were not applied on Saturday afternoons only. Officers confirmed that tariff boards would be put in each car park, clearly indicating when charges would apply including the dates of relevant sporting seasons.

It was felt that the introduction of charges would increase the overall number of genuine park users using the car parks. Officers would seek to obtain figures from Streetcare to check if usage of the car parks had in fact increased.

It was explained that changes to the borough-wide parking tariffs could only be made via Cabinet and these charges were currently subject to a five-year assurance level. Officers would check when this assurance period was due to run out. Members felt that parking charges in parks in other parts of the country were in general much higher than in Havering.

The Committee voted **NOT** to uphold the requisition by a majority of five to three. Councillors Hawthorn, McGeary and Morgon voted in favour of upholding the requisition. Councillors Brice-Thompson, Dervish, Trew, Wallace and White voted against upholding the requisition.

Chairman