



## TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 August 2012

**Subject Heading:**

Car Parking Charges in Parks and Open Spaces – call in of Executive Decision

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**Policy context:**

MTFS Savings

In accordance with paragraph 17 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Rules, a requisition signed by two Members representing more than one Group (Councillors Keith Darvill and Clarence Barrett) has called in the decision of the Cabinet Members dated 11 July 2012. The text of the requisition appears at the end of this report.

### **CABINET MEMBERS DECISION**

The decision to implement car parking charges in Lodge Farm Park, Cottons Park and Upminster Park, as from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, or as soon as possible thereafter. The charges that will be applied are the same as those affecting the Romford Town Centre car parks and will apply at broadly the same times (the exception being Saturday afternoons when the charges will not apply during the relevant sports seasons, other than at the Main Road car park in Lodge Farm park).

(Note: The full Executive Decision, including appendix, is shown at the end of this report).

**Reasons for decision:**

To ensure that genuine park users are given greater access to the car parks considered in this report, in the context of the Council's existing charges for town centre car parks and to make the required MTFS efficiency savings of £20k in the Parks and Open Spaces service as from 2012/13, and a further £25k in 2013/14.

## **Other options considered and rejected:**

A number of options were put forward by those people and organisations who objected to the introduction of the car parking charges, as set out in appendix 1 to the report considered by Highways Advisory Committee on 29 March 2012 and a subsequent supplementary report which included objections that had not been included in the original HAC report. All of these options were fully considered but have been rejected because they will not achieve the dual aims of encouraging more genuine use of the car parks by public users and achieving the agreed MTFS savings.

Other car parks were considered but ruled out because they were not located in or very close to town centres and they do not suffer from commuter parking (and other parking not related to park use) to the same degree as the three selected parks.

## **REASONS FOR REQUISITION**

1. The ED fails to explain or explore the alternative options put forward by stakeholders nor why they are all rejected
2. How many complaints have been received by the Council in the last two years regarding commuter parking in respect of these parks?
3. The ED fails to explain why the existing barrier operated system at Upminster Park is unsuitable in dealing with commuter parking.
4. The ED states that the saving in 2013/14 is £45,000 (i.e. £20,000 from 2012/13 and a further £25,000 from 2013/14). The agreed saving was for £40,000 from 2013/14 onwards as set out in the HAC report of 20th March and agreed by Budget Council on 22nd February 2012.
5. The ED does not explain how the saving is made up (income & expenditure).
6. Can it be confirmed that Upminster Park is only included as part of the proposal in order to raise enough money to support the overall running cost of the scheme? Can the estimated operating costs please be set out?
7. The ED does not explain or explore how adjacent roads will be affected by the imposition of charges, particularly those with 8:30am to 9:30am restrictions already in place.
8. The ED does not explain or explore the implications for New Windmill Hall and Bowls Club users.
9. The relief of charges from 1pm onwards on Saturdays still penalises sport users on Saturday mornings. To be fair, why can't the exemption be extended throughout the day on Saturdays?

10. The relief of charges from 1pm onwards on Saturdays applies to the 'relevant sports season'. This is ambiguous and can lead to misunderstandings by all users. Could the relief of charges from 1pm on Saturdays be extended throughout the year to avoid confusion?

11. How does this proposal fit in with encouraging 'genuine' users into our parks and open spaces as it effectively charges people to use the park?

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Committee considers the requisition of the Executive Decision and determine whether to uphold it.**