

CALL-IN OF PH-023-24 - Parking Tariffs & Charging Policies Implementation

1. The Decision PH-023-24 has been called-in by 5 Councillors in accordance with the constitution.

Title of decision - PH-023-24 - Parking Tariffs & Charging Policies Implementation

Decision made and reasons –

2. As a result, this decision will be considered by the Finance & Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
3. A copy of the Decision is attached at Annex A
4. Further information from the officer is provided at Annex B.
5. The reasons given by the Councillors for the call-in are set out below:

Councillor Alan Anderson

Reason: The very large increases in Hemel Hempstead would economically harm the town centre, the reduction to the free charging period in Tring would render it pointless, and the changes in the village of Kings Langley would cause even greater harm there too, both re the economic health of the High Street, and the village centre employees who do not have access to public transport.

The previous charging regime was heavily discounted across the Borough and not increased annually to assist the retail centres on a case by case basis, no justification has been provided as to why it should be the same for the whole Borough or increased annually, and no evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the retail centres have the footfall to be able to sustain these increases.

The proposed changes to the village centre in Kings Langley would be particularly damaging, as it is located at the centre of only a village, as opposed to a town, where the footfall is low and businesses are struggling to survive as it is. There are plenty of competing free parking retail outlets nearby, and the likely outcome is quite stark, even if one or two businesses survive whilst all the others fail.

One would have thought that basic risk management would require an assessment of the footfall and whether it could take the first application of parking charges, but the Administration has hitherto been determined to confuse the village with Berkhamsted and apply charges for the first time on principle, without any thought about the consequences or the health of the businesses.

Meanwhile, adopting different charging amounts for different parts of a small High Street would cause confusion, and limiting stays in the village's two off street car parks, whilst refusing to accommodate permitted longer stays, would cause considerable difficulties for the businesses employing staff who do not have access to public transport.

Councillor Alan Johnson

Reason: I would like to call in the decision as I do not feel the Portfolio Holder gave sufficient consideration to more workable options and for the following reasons:

1. The negative impact on our town centres of increasing tariffs by nearly 30% will have a damaging effect on shoppers' footfall to businesses which are facing increased costs, e.g. High Street rents, and increased competition from online companies, retail parks and free shopping supermarkets. It will also be a massive blow to shop workers, many of whom are on minimum wage and need their jobs.
2. The effect of more than doubling the minimum charge by removing the one-hour tariff in most car parks will deter locals from shopping local and encourage migration to retail parks or supermarkets offering an increasingly wide range of goods and free parking. There does not appear to have been any assessment of the impact on local communities or on local businesses who are also facing significant rent increases from private landlords.
3. In Kings Langley adopting different charging amounts for different parts of a small High Street is a recipe for frustration and confusion. Limiting stays in the village's two off-street car parks, whilst refusing to accommodate permitted longer stays, would cause considerable difficulties for the businesses employing staff who do not have access to public transport. For those who do have their own vehicle, particularly, voluntary workers, library staff, two sets of GP surgery staff, it would be sensible to have some form of parking permit or 4-hour exemption. The alternative is to have these workers leaving their jobs during the day to move their cars to narrow, residential streets.
4. The negative effect on trade by introducing charges in both Kings Langley and Tring High Streets has not been risk assessed. (A petition containing 3840 signatures was initiated by a local trader strongly opposed the charging regime in Kings Langley). Restricting parking to no more than one hour will seriously damage the footfall for the local, mostly independent shops in Kings Langley and Tring High Streets which are the life blood of these locations. Shoppers parking in these High Streets should have the choice to continue shopping or eating or meeting friends but pay for the choice they have made rather than impose an arbitrary restriction. Getting this wrong simply on the current basis of adopting the practice elsewhere in the Borough would be a disaster.
5. The reduction to a maximum stay of only 30 minutes in Hemel High Street will impact on short stay visits. This will have a significant impact on food and drink outlets and deter the opportunity to browse in the many independent shops.

Councillor Graeme Elliot

Reason: I would like to call in the decision as I do not feel the PH has given sufficient consideration to the following:

The negative impact on our town centres increasing tariffs by more than an average of 28%, which will affect our already struggling retail offering.

The effect of more than doubling the minimum charge by removing 1hr tariff in most car parks will deter residents and will affect footfall for the shops.

Councillor Terry Douris

Reason: I would like to call in the decision as I do not feel that sufficient consideration has been given to the following

1. It is important that our town centres remain attractive to shoppers when in competition with other towns. The proposals will have a negative impact on Dacorum town centres as a result of increasing tariffs by more than an average of 28%.
2. The effect of more than doubling the minimum charge by removing 1hr tariff in most car parks will deter residents from visiting. Not enough consideration has been given to the profile of customers shopping habits with short shopping visits.
3. Villages are the lifeblood of local communities. They are where people meet and shop. The proposals will have a negative effect on trade and the community by introducing charges in both Kings Langley and Tring High Streets.
4. The reduction to maximum stay of only 30 minutes in Hemel High Street will impact on short stay visits. The current charges are a positive incentive to shop in Hemel.
5. Our town centres and village shops are fighting for survival. They employ predominantly local people. These proposals, as formulated, will drive custom away, outlets will close with the corresponding loss of employment.

Councillor Julie Banks

Reason: I would like to call in the decision as I do not feel the PH has considered the following

- 1 The negative impact on our town centres by increasing tariffs – in light of the recent revision to the corporate plan, parking charge increases by more than an average of 28% will surely have an adverse impact of our retail outlets and be a final blow for shop keepers and town centre business.
- 2 For local residents and visitors to our centres, the effect of removing 1hr tariff in most car parks will deter residents from making a dash into town for a quick purchase. Has the PH noted this would be in effect doubling the charge. I have similar concerns that the reduction to maximum stay of only 30 minutes in Hemel High Street again, it will impact on short stay visits and drive people away from the High Street.

This decision will drive visitors and residents away from our high streets, where is the support for our local economy, business, and residents – how will we attract more footfall by making our centre too expensive to visit.

5. In considering a call-in the Committee has the following options available for its eventual decision:
 - To take no further action.
 - To refer the decision back to *Cabinet*/the decision maker asking for *its/their* reconsideration.
 - To refer the matter on to Full Council for its reconsideration.

The Constitution explains these options in the Rules of Procedure (Part 4: Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, paragraph 14), stating:

(d) If, having considered the decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is still concerned about it, it may refer it back to the decision making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns or refer the matter to full Council. The decision maker shall then reconsider the decision within 4 weeks amending the decision or not, before adopting a final decision.

(e) If following an objection to the decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee does not refer the matter back to the decision making person or body, the decision shall take effect on the date of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

(f) If the matter was referred by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to full Council and the Council does not object to the decision which has been made, then no further action is necessary and the decision will be effective in accordance with the provisions below. However, if the Council does object, it has no power to overturn or change a Cabinet decision unless it is contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to or not wholly consistent with the budget. Unless that is the case, the Council will refer any decision to which it objects back to the decision making person or body, together with the Council's views on the decision. That decision making body or person shall choose whether or not to amend the decision before reaching a final decision and implementing it. Where the decision was taken by the Cabinet as a whole or a committee of it, the decision will be reconsidered at its next meeting. Where the decision was made by an individual, the individual will reconsider within 4 weeks of the Council request.