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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 8 DECEMBER 2020

(7.15 pm - 9.50 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Aidan Mundy (in the Chair),
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Laxmi Attawar,
Councillor Mike Brunt, Councillor David Dean,
Councillor Nick Draper, Councillor Anthony Fairclough and
Councillor Geraldine Stanford

Jason Andrews (Environmental Health Pollution Manager),
Cathryn James (Interim Assistant Director, Public Protection),
Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration) and Ben
Stephens (Head of Parking Services)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

4 EMISSIONS BASED CHARGING (Agenda Item 4)

The Director of Environment and Regeneration introduced the report on the emissions based charging proposals.

In response to Panel Members questions the Director of Environment and Regeneration and the Environmental Health Manager provided responses;

- We received 1600 responses to the consultation which is a small proportion of motorists in the borough. We are seeking to balance the views of residents alongside the overriding policy objectives.
- The difference is that season tickets for those motorists who visit locations which isn't entirely comparable to resident's permits which are used 365 days a year near their home. We are also seeking to nudge behaviours towards active/sustainable travel.
- It's too early to tell how successful Emissions Based Charging has been in other boroughs and difficult to separate from other initiatives such as ULEZ.
- Currently there are 33 Air Quality monitoring stations that break legal limits, these are mainly around busy town centres. All the data is publically available on the Merton website.

- 50 carer permits issued per month.
- ACTION: Head of Parking Services to feedback on how many other London Boroughs have EBC consultations in the pipeline.

The Chair invited representations from public speakers;

Dr Mfanwy Morgan – Residents Association of West Wimbledon:

- The consultation survey showed ¾ of respondents disagreed with the proposal.
- Owners of older cars will need to pay £500 plus a national emission rate of £275 – This is a totally inappropriate increase. Those in lower incomes groups will struggle.
- Emission does not always correlate with AQ's. Cars do not pollute when parked. Not considering mileage only gives a partial view.
- Nudge theory assumes free choice however choices are often constrained by finances. Older people and lower incomes groups adversely affected.

Chris Larkman - Apostles Residents Association:

- Agree with environmental aspects and happy to pay more for privilege of running a car. But the reason the consultation hits so hard against proposals is simply the unfairness of it.
- The feelings are – If you have a driveway, you pay nothing. Others are hard done by. If everyone was paying that would be equal.
- Please look at visitor parking. Differential charges will make it impossible for builders, friends with diesel cars etc.
- Town centres have been hit really hard with the impacts of Covid, please look at 20 minutes free parking so town centres have some hope to survive.

In response to Panel Members questions the Director of Environment and Regeneration and the Parking Services Manager provided responses;

- The uptake of e-vouchers is growing and there are no immediate plans to phase out scratch cards.
- There has been significant investment in the electric vehicle infrastructure which provides an incentive for residents to shift to a lower polluting vehicle.
- We receive a huge amount of feedback through the parking teams and the boroughs community forums which we utilise. We are more than happy to take that further and wider.

The Panel moved to discuss recommendations;

Councillor Daniel Holden raised a motion that recommended to Cabinet “This panel calls upon the Cabinet to abandon it’s proposed ‘Emissions Based Parking Charges’, due to the fact it discriminates against a small subsection of the population, of which

whom the majority affected are in Raynes Park and Wimbledon”. This was seconded by Councillor David Dean. There were three votes in favour and five against. Motion fell.

Councillor Daniel Holden raised a motion that recommended to Cabinet “This panel requests the Cabinet to delay the implementation of the proposed ‘Emissions Based Parking Charges’ for 12 months (to begin no earlier than January 2022) to allow for sufficient time to alter the proposals to allow for suitable mitigations for the elderly and poorer residents of Merton to be worked up and incorporated prior to rollout of the policy. This is to lessen the impact that a sudden change in charging regime would have on these specific groups of residents in particular”. The motion was seconded. There were three votes in favour and five against. Motion fell.

A motion proposing that Cabinet reconsiders the policy in its application to visitors e-permits and scratch cards (as summarised at paras 5.13–5.15 of the report), as the ‘mechanism’ envisaged to reduce the use of higher polluting vehicles (charging a resident based on the vehicle their visitor arrives in) seems diffuse and potentially ineffective. The motion was seconded. There were three votes in favour and five against. Motion fell.

A motion requesting that Cabinet consider a low mileage/low use discount or rebate, on the basis that it is the driving of vehicles that reduces air quality and increases carbon emissions. This would encourage less driving, and would particularly mitigate the impact of higher parking costs for those on low/fixed incomes who can’t afford to switch to newer and more environmentally friendly vehicles. The motion was seconded by Councillor Daniel Holden. There were two votes for, four votes against and two abstentions. Motion fell.

The Panel requests that, noting para 8.5 of the report, that Cabinet instead keep under review the assumptions made on the estimates of parking revenue raised, and that any increase in parking revenue be reported separately so that it can be more accurately be understood what additional surplus is linked to emissions based charging, with the aim that these monies be reinvested directly into the following measures: for the purposes of environmental improvement (as permitted under the 1984 Act); described at paras 7.3–7.11 of the report as well as others to financially incentivise residents to give up permits; and to support complementary sustainable transport schemes. There were three votes for and five against. Motion fell.

The Panel RESOLVED (six votes, two abstentions) to make the following reference to Cabinet;

“The Sustainable Communities Panel recommends that on implementation;
User feedback is collected;

This feedback be made visible to the Sustainable Communities Panel at every meeting for a period of two years. Feedback should be provided at a high level with the ability to request further detail if needed

After that period, that Cabinet utilise this feedback to test further improvements and/or enhancements to the parking scheme.

Furthermore the Panel RESOLVED (eight votes for, none against) that The Panel calls on Cabinet to review the impact of Emissions Based Charging on air quality in the borough and that this policy also be reviewed after a two year period. Additionally, the Panel RESOLVED (eight votes for, none against) Request that Cabinet further expand upon their current reporting to show how the surplus money raised from parking revenue has been spent.

5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 5)

This item was not taken.

6 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 6)

The work programme was agreed.