



Implementation of Charging Scheme for Car Parking in Cannon Hill Park and Approval to Undertake Associated Improvement Works

Call In by the Corporate Resources and Governance O&S Committee

1 Request for “Call-In”

- 1.1 On 28th April 2016 the Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment, jointly with the Corporate Director for Place took a decision to approve the Full Business Case for the implementation of car parking charges within Cannon Hill Park, as part of an overall strategy to introduce charges across City Council parks. It was also agreed to:
- Implement an arrangement with the Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) which will establish shared responsibility for management of the car parking scheme and an income share arrangement between the City Council and the MAC.
 - Note the implementation of experimental Traffic Regulation Orders in identified surrounding roads to mitigate the impact of displacement parking on local residents.
 - Approve prudential borrowing of £0.450m, to be repaid over a period of 10 years, to implement a phased programme of improvement and infrastructure works associated with surface improvements, CCTV and lighting.
 - Authorise the Service Director of Sport, Events, Open Spaces and Wellbeing to place orders up to the value of £0.450m through existing contracts and in line with the Procurement Governance arrangements.
 - Approve the retention of surpluses from the implementation of these charges, to the extent that they exceed existing budget assumptions, for reinvestment in the parks service.
- 1.2 A request for Call-In was made to the Corporate Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee by Councillors Deirdre Alden and Andrew Hardie on 28th April 2017.
- 1.3 The Corporate Resources and Governance O&S Committee met on 17th May 2017 to consider the matter. Councillors Deirdre Alden and Ewan Mackey presented the reasons for the call-in; and



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Members heard from Councillor Lisa Trickett, Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment; Steve Hollingworth, Assistant Director Place and Ken Lyon, Head of Commercialism.

2 Issues with the Decision

2.1 The following reasons for the request for call-in:

4 – the Executive appears to have failed to consult relevant stakeholders or other interested persons before arriving at its decision;

5 – the Executive appears to have overlooked some relevant consideration in arriving at its decision;

6 – the decision has already generated particular controversy amongst those likely to be affected by it or, in the opinion of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it is likely so to do;

8 – there is a substantial lack of clarity, material inaccuracy or insufficient information provided in the report to allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to hold the Executive to account and/or add value to the work of the Council.

11 – the decision appears to give rise to significant issues in relation to a particular District.

2.2 Cllrs Alden and Mackey outlined their chief concerns including that:

- There had been no consultation with ward members outside Moseley and Kings Heath (the boundary of the ward bordered the park and the car park is actually in Edgbaston ward);
- Whilst there needed to be sustainable funding for the MAC, other avenues should be explored;
- The introduction of car parking fees will have a detrimental effect on visitor numbers and may penalise users on low incomes who may travel by car to use the facilities of the park;
- The TROs were in Moseley and Kings Heath; there were none in Edgbaston or Sparkbrook which may also feel the impact of vehicle displacement;
- There is also the possibility that visitors to the QE hospital may start to use the car park as an overflow to the main hospital car park;
- It is unclear as to how much consideration has been given to the views of residents who are opposed to the proposed changes.

2.3 The Cabinet Member outlined the rationale for the decision, and made the following points:

- The consultation focused on those roads on where previous attempts to introduce charges at Cannon Hill Park had generated complaints. This was also the rationale for focusing the Experimental TRO on those areas (Russell Road and adjacent);
- The aim is to deliver the 10% cuts to the parks budget without having a detrimental effect on parks. Consultation was carried out as part of the budget process, and one finding was the importance of ensuring income is secured without impinging on access to the open space;



- The consultation does not end with this decision; there will be meetings held to pick up on residents' concerns (which at this time have been only come from Moseley and Kings Heath ward residents);
- The decision takes on board criticism from the Public Parks Inquiry undertaken by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, where members suggested that maximising assets and charges should be considered;
- The perception of the car park as dangerous and unfit needed to be addressed to secure the long term future of the MAC and long term use of Cannon Hill Park.

- 2.4 She also apologised to Edgbaston members for not formally including them in the consultation.
- 2.5 In the discussion that followed, the main area of concern for the committee members was the lack of consultation undertaken before the decision was taken.
- 2.6 Firstly, if Edgbaston members had been consulted as they should have been, then many of these points would have been addressed at an earlier stage.
- 2.7 Members also questioned how wide the consultation had been and how many residents and park and MAC users had been engaged, noting that the consultation had only generated 13 responses. Were local residents all aware of the proposal? How were they encouraged to take part? What were the results of the consultation – how many in favour and how many against, for example? Had research been done into the users of the park and the potential impact on different categories of users?
- 2.8 In addition to the points made above, the Cabinet Member argued that there has been extensive consultation as there had been 12 signs in the park and advert in the Birmingham Mail.
- 2.9 She went on to explain that it was often difficult to engage people ahead of a change – it would only become a problem to local residents once it happened, hence the use of an Experimental TRO to allow responses to be taken on in real time and the TRO adjusted accordingly. Leaflets were sent out to the roads that were identified as most likely to be negatively affected, i.e. those immediately adjacent to the park. As part of the Experimental TRO, other roads will be considered. The MAC has consulted with those who attend their classes.
- 2.10 The consultation undertaken for this decision generated 13 responses, but there had been engagement prior to this with Birmingham Open spaces Forum and users of the MAC. The Cabinet Member was clear that the consultation has been adequate and sufficient, and the evidence has been used to take forward this decision.
- 2.11 An overall vision for the future of our parks is being designed; a park summit was held, and engaged with the greener Birmingham coalition and Wildlife Trust.
- 2.12 The issue of other revenue streams was also discussed: members questioned whether alternatives had been adequately explored, so that car park charges could be considered as part of a wider package of options.



- 2.13 The Cabinet Member outlined plans to develop an overall business plan for the parks to secure revenue streams. This will include a consultative committee to consider broader uses of the parks. Mobile catering will be trialled in Cannon Hill Park. However, in the view of the Cabinet Member, the commercialisation of the use of the park (e.g. the introduction of rides and other chargeable activities) has gone far enough.

3 The Committee Resolution

- 3.1 The Committee resolved (by a vote of 3 votes to 2) to call-in the decision for reconsideration by Cabinet, on the grounds that:
- 4 – the Executive appears to have failed to consult relevant stakeholders or other interested persons before arriving at its decision.
- 3.2 I therefore formally ask the Cabinet to reconsider its decision; in particular that Cabinet ensure that consultation with all relevant ward members (in particular Edgbaston). Members also remained unconvinced that the consultation with residents and users has been robust, and that has resulted in weak evidence base to justify the decision. Cabinet Member should ask that further consultation is undertaken to strengthen the business case.

Councillor Mohammed Aikhlaq

Chair, Corporate Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee