

## Scrutiny & Overview Committee

Meeting held on Monday, 2 September 2019 at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Katharine Street, Croydon CR0 1NX

### MINUTES

- Present:** Councillors Sean Fitzsimons (Chair), Robert Ward (Vice-Chair), Leila Ben-Hassel (Deputy Chair), Jerry Fitzpatrick, Stuart Millson (reserve for Jeet Bains) and Joy Prince
- Also Present:** Councillors Muhammed Ali, Simon Hoar and Stuart King
- Apologies:** Councillor Jeet Bains

### PART A

20/19 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

21/19 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

22/19 **Call-In: Objections to Emission-Based Parking Charges and Diesel Surcharges for Permits**

Councillor Simon Hoar introduced the Call-In item, outlining the reason why the key decision to introduce emissions based parking charges and diesel surcharges had been called in. It was confirmed that the reason for the call-in related to whether the emissions based parking policy would disproportionately affect vulnerable residents and those least able to fund a new car and as such it was requested that the charging structure be reconsidered.

The Chair explained the process for considering a call-in confirming that the Committee needed to agree whether to review the decision and if it decided to proceed confirm how much time it wished to allocate for discussion of the item. The Committee agreed that it would review the decision and allocated 80 minutes for consideration of the item.

The Chair went on to explain that there were three outcomes that the Committee could reach as a result of the review. These were:-

1. That no further action was necessary and the decision could be implemented as originally intended.
2. To refer the decision back to the decision maker for reconsideration, outlining the nature of the Committee's concerns

3. To refer the decision to Council, if the Committee considered that the decision taken was outside of the Budget and Policy Framework.

The Chair highlighted that as the reason for the call-in did not raise the possibility that the decision was taken outside of the Budget and Policy Framework, it was unlikely that option 3 would be used in this instance.

The Executive Director for Place, Shifa Mustafa, who had taken the original decision in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport & Regeneration (job share) Councillor Stuart King, addressed the reasons for the call-in highlighting that it was agreed that there was a need to deal with air quality in the borough. During the creation of the policy consideration had been given to the equalities implications of its introduction and it had been concluded that at present the poor air quality in the borough was having a disproportionate impact on residents with protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act. As such through introducing an emissions based charging policy that contributed towards improving air quality, there would be benefits for all residents, including those with protected characteristics.

It was also confirmed that access to permits would remain the same as under the present policy and it was likely that access to car parking spaces would improve through the new approach. The increased cost for a permit remained low in comparison to the cost of purchasing a car and the highest charges would only apply to a very small number of residents on a lower income.

The Committee was given the opportunity to question the decision maker, the Cabinet Member and other officers had been involved in the creation of the emissions based policy. From the questions asked, the following was noted:-

- It was confirmed that demographical data had not been asked for as part of the consultation.
- Demographic information on permit holders was also not available.
- It was confirmed that an Equalities Impact Assessment had been carried out for the original overarching Parking Policy which included the introduction of an Emissions Based Parking Policy as part of its actions.
- It was advised that it was difficult to predict how behaviour would change as a result of the Emissions Based Parking Policy, but air quality would be monitored as part of the overarching Air Pollution Policy, which in turn was based on wider regional and national plans, such as the Mayor of London's London Plan.
- There was not a specific target for improving air quality linked to the Emissions Based Parking Policy, but there was an overarching target to improve air quality in the borough by 5% by 2021.
- There was not a target in place for introducing behavioural change for drivers arising from the policy.

- It was confirmed that the banding used for the permits was based upon government guidance.
- It was confirmed that 27% of permits were used for a second car in a household and only 30 permits were used for a third car.
- It was confirmed that the introduction of the new scheme would be phased, with the new permit charges applied at the point of their annual renewal.
- It was confirmed that any surplus raised by the parking scheme would be used to fund Freedom Bus Passes in Croydon.

Some Members questioned the level of impact of the policy upon air quality, with a view taken that the impact would be limited. In response it was highlighted that the Emissions Based Parking Policy was only one part of a wider Air Pollution Policy which along with a range of other initiatives, such as the School Streets Scheme and Cycle Plan would contribute cumulatively towards improving air quality.

It was highlighted that the number of high polluting vehicles on the roads nationally was decreasing and as such one measure of success could be whether the number of high polluting vehicles coming off the road in Croydon was higher than the national average.

As controlled parking zones (CPZ) had been in operation in the borough for over 20 years, it suggested that census data on car ownership over this time did seem to indicate that CPZ's influenced behaviour with the number of cars lessening.

In response to a question about other options considered during the development of the policy it was confirmed that other options had been considered, but it was concluded that this one would be the best way to improve air quality. It was also a policy that had been introduced by other London authorities and the DVLA who used an emissions based banding for Car Tax. It was hoped that in the future there would be other technology based solutions available to help improve air quality.

It was questioned whether the response rate to the consultation had been lower than for a normal CPZ. In response it was highlighted that in addition to statutory consultees all permit holders had also been consulted. Given that all permit holders were consulted, a significant number of negative responses was expected, but when weighed against the fact that there was on average 205 deaths per year in the borough that could be linked to air quality it was decided that the potential benefits outweigh the negative response. This was particularly the case for the most economically poor who were disproportionately affected by poor air quality.

In response to a question whether there could eventually be a borough wide CPZ it was highlighted that CPZs only existed in areas where they had been requested by residents. There were also other initiatives such as the School

Streets Scheme and the Cycle Plan that would have an impact across the borough.

As it was highlighted that not all pre-2001 cars were the most polluting vehicles, it was questioned whether residents with lower polluting vehicles could qualify for lower cost permits. In response it was advised that if a resident could prove that they had a lower pollution vehicle they would be offered the lower cost permit.

The confirmation that the range of initiatives being delivered by the Council would be supported by the lobbying of both wider regional and national government for greater action to be taken on air quality was welcomed by the Committee.

Following the questioning of the officers and the Cabinet Member the Committee considered the outcome of the call-in request. There was general agreement amongst the Committee that reducing air pollution in the borough should be a priority, but some Members remained unconvinced that the Emissions Based Parking Charges would make a significant difference to air quality and the £300 cost of a permit for the highest banding could have a significant impact for those on lower incomes.

Other Members took the view that the policy would as part of a range of initiatives designed to improve air quality, have a positive impact on vulnerable residents given the health risks associated with poor air quality. Although in isolation the policy would mean that some residents paid more for parking, the wider benefit to vulnerable residents was of greater importance and the increased charge was not disproportionate. As such there was no grounds for referring the decision back to the decision maker for reconsideration.

It was also suggested that the possibility of allowing permits to be paid for in instalments, may help to mitigate against the increased cost for low income households, with it agreed that this would be made as a separate recommendation for the Cabinet Member.

Following a vote (4 in favour, 2 against) the Committee **resolved** that no further action was required and the decision could be implemented as originally intended.

### **Conclusion**

Following discussion of the report, the Committee concluded that it may help to mitigate against the increased cost for a parking permit if a system could be put in place to allow for payment in instalments.

### **Recommendation**

The Committee resolved to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Regeneration that the possibility of allowing payment for parking permits in instalments be explored.

23/19 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

**Signed:**

**Date:**

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