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COMMENT

Parking revenues: local authorities are having a laugh

THE correspondent who warns on this page about the impact of new parking charges in the Broadway area is right to be concerned. His anxiety is shared by many traders who are experiencing tough times, and by residents who will see their parking charges rocket.

There isn't a local authority in the land which doesn't exploit parking, and parking offences, to swell their coffers. The very idea that people must now pay for a permit to park outside their own homes has become acceptable practice.

The penalties for parking infringements are way out of kilter with the severity of the 'crime'. Many a motorist has faced a bill of hundreds of pounds after being clamped and towed for a relatively minor offence. Of course, many lazy, careless or anti-social parkers deserve what they get, but there have been countless stories of the jaw-dropping exploits of parking wardens and clamping firms operating with impunity under the sanction of a 'caring' local authority.

Some local authorities are worse than others and up until now, Haringey has had one of the better reputations as far as London is concerned. Nearby, both Westminster and Camden have regularly topped the charts for parking revenues, bringing in around £40 million a year and earning, in the process, criticism for what many see as ruthless exploitation of the motorist.

In these harsh economic times, Westminster has plans to employ 50 more wardens at a cost of some £2million. Obviously it intends to recoup the outlay, and then some.

Just down the road, Islington is abandoning its free parking scheme in the Archway area. Traders and residents liked the refreshingly innovative scheme, so what went wrong? It's difficult to escape the conclusion that the council just couldn't bear to see parking revenues dip in that area, even if the scheme greatly benefited businesses who themselves produce considerable revenues, both for the council and the country.

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Health proposals are ill-considered

WE are writing to ask MP Lynne Featherstone to defend her constituents and urge the Secretary of State for Health to withdraw the proposals in the NHS White Paper. As Equalities Minister it is her responsibility to protect people from the far-reaching damaging consequences of these ill-considered changes.

Like other people we value and depend upon good NHS care and have great respect for GPs. But we object to the management of public funds - most of the NHS budget -

being run by GP Consortia. Why abolish the public bodies that currently manage the fair distribution of NHS funds?

Being clinicians, not experienced commissioners, GPs will out-source and private companies will gain increasing control of NHS funds. And we will see more postcode lotteries in NHS care, with poorer areas losing out most.

The whole thrust of the proposals is to promote the role of the market in NHS care. This will waste money rather than make savings and will generate a two

tier health service. Local hospitals will be forced to compete and encouraged to enlarge their private work. If some go under, what will patients do?

You need only refer to the reports made by a wide range of well-informed experts. Group after group - such as: The King's Fund health charity, even right-wing think tank Civitas, Haringey LINK and other LINKs - have reported their extreme concerns. Meanwhile many people - who currently find themselves and their families in good health - have no idea of the

dangers. The adverse effects of these changes will not be felt until they do need treatment, by which time it will be too late to do anything about them.

Please would you act on their behalf and speak out against the proposals. At the very least we ask you to vote against the proposals, otherwise we shall definitely feel disenfranchised.

JANET SHAPIRO
Connaught Gardens, N10
LINDA LENNARD
Harefield Road, N8

Parking increases are another nail in coffin for traders

THE proposed increase in parking charges is yet another nail in the coffin of the borough's high streets.

In 2007 the council consulted local residents regarding pay and display 'stop and shop' schemes. The first consultation showed that 99 per cent of respondents were against the plans in Muswell Hill and 90 per cent opposed in Crouch End.

And yet the council introduced them. (This is the sort of democracy which would be recognised in Burma, China, North Korea, indeed any totalitarian state.)

In June of 2009 the council more than doubled parking charges: the 50p charge increased to £1.05 or even £1.75 in the busiest bays.

Last week's Ham&High quoted yet another proposed rise in charges. An hour's parking is likely to more than double once again: from £1.40 to £3.00.

In reality parking charges have little to do with traffic management: they have far more to do with revenue raising.

No wonder the pay and display



Cost of parking in Muswell Hill: Set to more than double.

and CPZ schemes were pushed through.

Any disincentives to shopping in our high streets should be rejected. One shopkeeper I spoke to in Crouch End was in despair. Footfall dropped dramatically as residents calculated not only parking charges but potential fines for overstaying or misinterpreting the, at times, confusing regulations.

It is so much easier to visit one of the local retail parks which offer no charge and risk free parking. Business rates on Green Lanes are almost on a par with Oxford Street and yet the council continues to pile on the pressure.

The distinctive nature of our high streets is surely set to disappear as independent traders throw in the towel, their premises to be replaced by chain stores, charity shops and betting offices. If you think I am exaggerating take a look at Tottenham Lane in Crouch End with its boarded-up shop fronts.

The pro council propaganda hanging from our lampposts proclaims that we are living in 'Caring Haringey'. My conclusion is that the only thing the council cares about is maximising revenue.

Unless objections are received, the increased charges will go through on the nod. If you do not want our high streets to be indistinguishable from any other in the land, my advice is to make your objections known.

BRIAN BOWLES
Redston Road, N8

Noisy dog court case brought no relief

WHILST nuisance neighbours in Beattock Rise may have been issued with the largest fine ever secured by Haringey's noise team as a result of the persistent noise created by their two large dogs, the unfortunate reality for long suffering neighbours in this street is that the tirade of noise that has for so long blighted this quiet area of Muswell Hill continues in spite of this.

In recent weeks I have received numerous complaints from stressed out neighbours who are at their wits ends with this unrelenting noise.

Haringey Council may have claimed success in this case, but unfortunately the situation remains very much unchanged.

The couple in question were notably absent from court when the fine was issued and continue to breach noise orders without consideration for local residents.

Tougher enforcement is needed as a matter of priority to ensure that residents in Beattock Rise finally get the peace and quiet they deserve.

CLLR GAIL ENGERT
Liberal Democrat Councillor
for Muswell Hill

20mph zone is best solution for safety

WE refer to a proposed Haringey Council road-calm scheme for the Bounds Green and Alexandra Wards.

Haringey Council is scheduled to issue consultation documents on November 25 for traffic-enforcement cameras, one located on Blake Road and the other near the junction of Woodfield Way and Durnsford Road to prevent access for all vehicles at peak hours; or alternatively, a 20mph zone across the neighbourhood.

Councillor Ali Demirci has clarified that Haringey Council has not established whether Transport for London funding could be provided for two cameras and, if cameras were to be installed, Haringey Council could not avoid imposing fines on local residents as well as motorists passing through the area.

We believe it is a requirement of the council that consultation documents should be fair, transparent, and clarify a variety of issues:

What route will residents be expected to take when the proposed restrictions prevent access off Durnsford Road?

Will steps be taken on the dangerous stretch of

Bounds Green Road to ensure safety for the extra cars forced to turn onto or cross it?

How much would fixed penalty charges be when vehicles breach the access?

By the council's calculations, approximately 1,300 extra vehicles would be forced through the traffic lights by Bounds Green station during the afternoon peak.

What steps will be taken to manage this and prevent longer queues on Durnsford Road than currently experienced?

This major knock-on effect will impact on more local people and businesses than those directly affected by the proposals.

There is surely a danger of major gridlock in the area.

We would personally favour a 20mph zone without cameras to hopefully reduce traffic as well as speed.

HELGA CHURCH
Woodfield Way, N11
JOHN WALLER (ARIBA)
The Drive, N11

In response to the record fine for dog noise in Beattock Rise, Muswell Hill councillor Nilgun Canver stated that this was a good result.

This must redefine the word 'result'. For us at the frontline experiencing anti-social behaviour on a daily basis, there has been no change in our situation.

CLLR Canver also states that the dogs must be taken inside and prevented from barking.

Unfortunately for us the dogs are still kept outside continually and allowed to bark all night, preventing us all from sleeping.

Why does not the council seek an injunction to remove the dogs from the premises?

MONIQUE STONE
CHRISTINE DEAN
Beattock Rise, N10