

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
(ORDINARY MEETING)
WEDNESDAY 27 NOVEMBER
PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON THE THEME

1. QUESTION FROM PRIYA PRAKASH TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING

Traditional high streets in Southwark need more custom, while motorists flock to hypermarkets. Setting utilisation targets for parking machines would benefit high streets.

Should the council have a target utilisation rate for paid high-street parking, which can be found by calculating the percentage utilisation based on takings for each machine?

RESPONSE

Setting utilisation rate targets for parking spaces with the aim of increasing the use of available parking will mean that more car journeys are made to our town centres, this would be contrary to our current policy of setting parking tariffs upon the basis of the need to manage local parking demand and our overall transport policies which are to encourage walking/cycling and public transport.

A recent report commissioned by London Councils (1) on the relevance of parking in the success of urban centres found that the three key issues around revitalising high streets were:

1. **A good mix of shops and services and a quality environment are some of the most important factors in attracting visitors to town centres.** Simply changing parking or accessibility is very unlikely to make a town centre more attractive.
2. **Shopkeepers consistently overestimate the share of their customers coming by car. In some cases, this is by a factor of as much as 400%.** In London, as well as other cities, the share of those accessing urban centres on foot or by public transport is much greater. Walking is the most important mode for accessing local town centres.
3. **Car drivers spend more on a single trip; walkers and bus users spend more over a week or a month.** In 2011, in London town centres, walkers spent £147 more per month than those travelling by car. Compared with 2004, spending by public transport users and walkers has risen whilst spending by car users has decreased.

Notwithstanding this, all of our off street car parks offer free evening and weekend parking.

(1) A review for London Councils

<http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/transport/parkinginlondon/parkingurban.htm>

2. QUESTION FROM BARBARA PATTINSON TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING

Camberwell has scores of independent businesses struggling to survive in a setting of site specific challenges, many of which require multi agency co-operation.

Do you think the council should reinstate the role of neighbourhood co-ordinator to lead a team seeking opportunities to support and promote local businesses and community well-being?

RESPONSE

Supporting business to grow and creating thriving town centres and high streets in places like Camberwell is a big priority for the council. I am very interested in hearing about different ways in we can better support local business, particularly in these austere economic times.

I want, however, for us to learn the lessons of the past when we had teams of officers in different places not always aligned to each other. This risks diverting stretched resource into staff and administration rather than passing it directly to communities.

Through our regeneration team we have recently established programme officers who, alongside delivering projects, also ensure there is alignment of the different regeneration activity going on in places like Camberwell and Peckham. This includes working with local groups and organisations.

We are also supporting and promoting local business by investing resources directly into the local economy in areas like Camberwell. This includes building capacity in local firms and groups to work together to promote their area.

Almost £500,000 has been spent through the community restoration fund (CRF), which was set up in the wake of the 2011 disturbances, engaging over 400 businesses in different ways across the length and breadth of the borough. The cash has put direct investment into our high streets and supported networks like the Camberwell Business Network who received some £50,000 to promote Camberwell as a place to shop.

Learning from CRF, we are also developing a new town centre growth initiative of up to £600,000. The fund will provide businesses and business networks with the opportunity to work together in places like Camberwell to promote the area and further improve the high street. I would welcome ideas on how we make the most of that fund to support our independent traders, whether that is through better co-ordination or other means. More details of the fund will become available in the new year.

We've also developed a new model of community engagement that promotes community well-being from the ground up. This is about investing in capacity building and supporting stronger community organisations that take direct responsibility for the future of their areas. Further, our latest round of a £1.5m transition fund will support voluntary and community organisations, particularly those providing advice on welfare changes, to transform and provide better services for our community.

We are also making greater use of the web and on-line tools and have developed a new business portal as a one stop shop for business advice and support in the borough which will help local traders in areas all across the borough including Camberwell.