

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 supermarkets. 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>

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

Hello everybody I am Priya Prakash, the Camberwell Business Network lead.

The question I had was regarding parking. I know that there is some great work around parking and I would love to understand from the council how are they looking at other pilots and best practices around free parking on the high street?

RESPONSE

It might be that Councillor Hargrove is better able to help on that specific, certainly you know I am very happy to look at things that will help our high street thrive, but I think as I set out in the response to the question I don't think we can consider that parking is the great panacea that will turn some of our high streets that are not doing so well into amazing high streets. It has got to be much, much better offer than that. So I think that is my starting point and I don't know if Cllr Hargrove has something to add on parking.

RESPONSE FROM CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND RECYCLING

Yes I fully support what my colleague Councillor Mills has said there, and as you are aware from the answer to the question, one of our policies is to reduce the number of car journeys to our town centres. However I have had previous meetings with the Camberwell Business Network and we walked around with Mark and Bora and they had some really challenging ideas about how we can make some more space for business parking.

I don't know if you know, recently we did try to introduce some shared parking space but unfortunately some of those were turned down because local residents were opposed to losing the parking outside. So parking is a precious asset, but I think the important thing is to keep the dialogue open with the Camberwell Business Network and other businesses in the area to look at how and where we can actually provide better parking facilities for their customers.

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.

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

My question is a supplement to the very full and helpful answer I got to my original question. It is, would the leader of the council, councillors and officers support a cross border town team consisting of residents' groups, traders, educational and medical agencies, councillors and officers as the best framework for the development of a new town centre growth initiative to provide businesses and business networks the opportunity to work together in Camberwell?

RESPONSE

I think I would have to hear a little bit more about your proposal about a cross border town team to know whether that is the very best option. I do know however that there is a really, really strong case that myself, Cllr Jackie Meldrum, who is my equivalent at Lambeth, and also the ward councillors from either side. Let's sit down, let's see how we can look on the Southwark side about how we might see the town centre growth fund come to Camberwell in the new year and let's look at what Lambeth has got to offer and what we can do together. So I think the starting point is for me to hear a little bit more from you and for all of us to sit down and have that conversation. I don't know if that is quite what you want, but the offer is there.