

CHARGING POLICY FOR CAR PARKING

Members received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the charging policy for Barbican car parking.

Officers outlined the last report to the Committee, which sought to fulfil the City of London Corporation's Service Based review and provide a fair return on the City's investments. Members noted that a report on storage charges would be presented at a later date and there would be a rolling 'Questions and Answers' document presented to the Barbican Residential Committee on 5th June.

The Chairman asked for Members to be factual and non-anecdotal or emotive in their comments as it was accepted that the local Ward Members had received a lot of communications on this matter. During the discussion, the following comments were noted:

1. The basis of the valuation was challenged as, based on supply and demand, there were currently 513 spaces vacant. The £2,000 market value was challenged as to whether it was a fair comparison. Members suggested that a lower price would raise the level of useage.
2. Members felt that, in its current format, the report was inadequate for taking a decision on. This was only one element of the Charging Policies as the Stores Policy is due to be presented later in the year.
3. Given that 25% of space renters would give up their spaces if the charges went up, Members felt that this would negate any benefit from the increased charges.
4. Whilst accepting the need for a 'fair' return on investments, Members were concerned that Barbican residents could not park on the street and therefore the Policy was unfair.
5. Dolphin Square was not considered to be a fair valuation on a comparable estate, as it was entirely rented and not local authority managed.
6. Lauderdale House Group has undertaken some costings on other possible savings, which the BRC might consider; i.e. the reallocation of the cost of time spent by car park attendants /Estate Concierge carrying out their duties revenue from baggage stores and restoration of commercial car parking. The House Group suggested setting up a working party to look at this in more detail and then report to the BRC on a proposal to eliminate the deficit, without such a high increase and within the RPI.
7. Was the estimate for supervision and management over generous? Members asked if this could be explained and examined further.
8. Members were concerned that this was a Low Emission Neighbourhood incentive intended to reduce car ownership and use in the City and suggested that, if this was the case, it should be more transparent in the report.
9. There could be an adverse effect on young City professionals on lower incomes and with young families, those with disabilities and the elderly and therefore should be subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment.

The Chairman of the BRC thanked Members for their comments and said she was listening carefully, would ensure BRC Members were made aware of comments made and would then listen carefully to debate at the BRC, before coming to her own view on the best way forward.

Meanwhile, she responded to a number of factual points which had been made:

1. The Barbican had never been social housing.
2. There is no right to a car parking space in leases and Barbican residents can use places in other city car parks at residential rates.
3. The report doesn't say 25% will find the increased costs unaffordable but that an increase in cost could lead to a reduction in use.
4. Commercial car parking is not an option because of City planning policy.

The Barbican Estate Office Manager responded as follows

1. Income from stores in the car parks will be credited to the car parking account. Treatment of the reallocation of cost of the time spent by car park attendants /Estate Concierge carrying out their duties is still under review.
2. For Blake Tower, the take up of car parking is anticipated to be less than 1/3.
3. Advice was taken on all comparators used in the report.

In summary, the Chairman thanked everyone for their comments and asked that the BRC note the following:

1. Members concerns at the level of increase; the methodology used in the valuations, fairness and necessity of the charges.
2. The suggestions for looking at alternative revenue streams and the establishment of a working party to do so; the report should not be considered in isolation to other possible revenue streams
3. The suggestion that the report needs a full Equality Impact Assessment.