

## **Request for Scrutiny - Proposal to introduce charges for parking permits in residential permit parking schemes**

### **Emails sent from Ms Kath Field**

Dear Councillor Rafique,

I am a resident in the Horsforth Train Station Permit Parking zone and would be grateful if you would carry out a Scrutiny Inquiry into the above proposal.

The Report to the Executive Board (19th June 2013), its author Andrew Hall, relies heavily on the results of a Yougov survey, stating four times that in this survey 46% of respondents said they would prefer Leeds City Council to generate additional income by increasing parking charges, rather than by adopting 'across-the-board' measures.

This one survey has, I believe, been used to justify two separate proposals: (a) the one I refer to and (b) a proposal to re-introduce parking charges in the centre of Leeds on Sundays and evenings.

The questionnaire was worded as follows:-

HOW CAN WE BRING MONEY IN TO THE COUNCIL

YOU CAN HAVE YOUR SAY ON WHICH, IF ANY, OF THESE OPTIONS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN THE COUNCIL DECIDES THE 2013/14 BUDGET IN LATE FEBRUARY 2013.

INCREASE CHARGES FOR PARKING: AN ABOVE INFLATION INCREASE WHICH WILL APPLY TO COUNCIL-RUN PARKING COULD RAISE £250,000

(The survey then went on to offer a further five options, the last one being to increase Council Tax by 3% which would generate in excess of £8Million!)

In my view it was therefore either incompetent or deliberately misleading to use this data as a basis for proposing to introduce NEW charges for Residential Parking Permits which were previously free. The parking option was extremely generalized and implied that it related to charges for council car parks or parking meters. It certainly DID NOT relate to the imposition of new charges for residential parking permits. The 46% who ticked that box would not have been aware that they were supporting this cynical and inequitable proposal.

Since it was clearly inappropriate and misleading to use and cite the results of this survey in the Report, I believe that the proposal to introduce new charges for residential parking permits should be rendered invalid and that the project should be abandoned immediately before any further

council tax payers' money is wasted in this attempt to raise such a relatively small and uncertain amount of revenue.

A further reason to scrutinize this proposal relates to issues around finance. I gather from Greg Mulholland that when libdem councillors raised concerns they were initially told that the cost of managing RPPSs across Leeds would be £115,000 but this figure was suddenly revised to £400,000. The Yougov survey stated that 'general increases in council parking' could raise £250,000. Nobody seems to have any idea of how much money the project would generate or how much it would cost to implement, maintain and enforce. Obviously know-one can forecast how people will respond or behave if they are treated unfairly. It is therefore impossible for anyone to estimate what level of 'drop out' from the scheme there would be.

On the basis, therefore, that unreliable figures are being banded about to back-up arguments for or against the charges, the proposal, and those who are trying to implement it, deserve to be thoroughly scrutinized. It would be interesting to find out what the real reasons behind the implementation of the charges are. They are clearly not (a) to reduce inequality/promote fairness, (b) to improve social cohesion, or (c) to generate sufficient funds to significantly reduce the budgetary gap.