**Parking consultation response**

The Liberal Democrat Group supports the stated principles of these proposals – to reduce emissions, improve air quality, free up kerb space and make parking in Camden fairer and greener. We have significant concerns about some of the measures being proposed to realise those principles. In some cases those concerns may be addressed by further information. In other cases, we think the level of the proposed charges need modifying. And on some points, we are of the view that the proposals run counter to the stated aims and should be dropped.

We are also of the view that the way the proposals have been communicated by the council is not sufficiently clear on whether these proposals are about raising revenue for the council. This lack of clarity risks leaving members of the public feeling misled by the council. While it is true that the council cannot use parking charges as a general revenue raising tool, it can use the charges to raise money to meet policy objectives within the sphere of transportation. The council should be clear with the public on this point.

**Scratch cards**

As the Liberal Democrats have been saying for many years, the council must retain this option. The simple fact is that there remains a small minority of residents, often vulnerable and/or elderly, who would be badly affected by removing this option.

It is not good enough to ask people to rely on the phone system, as it has shown itself time and again to be unreliable.

Each of the above points are particularly important, given that the addition of surcharges to the visitor permits will make using the permits more complex.

The cost of retaining the scratch card system would be £95,000/annum. This is a price worth paying and necessary if we want to be an age-friendly borough. **The council should retain scratch cards.**

**Car club charges increase**

The proposals to increase parking charges for car clubs is irrational. The council’s own policies recognise that car clubs are an important way to encourage people away from car ownership and use. Increasing the charges will inevitably mean that costs are passed on to car club users, making it a less attractive option. It will also make Camden less attractive for car clubs to invest in, meaning less choice of car clubs and fewer bays.

It has been said by officers that parking charges for car clubs had not been reviewed for several years and that this move brings the charges into line with other boroughs. We do not accept this as a good reason to increase the charges – the council should keep costs down in Camden to encourage car clubs to invest in our borough. **This change should be dropped.**

**Electric vehicle charge increase**

We recognise that electric vehicles are not perfect – they have the same contribution to congestion and kerb space as other cars and do contribute to air quality issues. Nonetheless they are better than petrol and diesel vehicles on air quality and much better on greenhouse gas emissions.

Given this, and given that people are trying to make positive decisions for the environment, we think the great scale of the increase is unfair. Tripling the charge for residents and quadrupling it for businesses is an unreasonable hike. This increase would make Camden’s charges much higher than any other London borough. We think it is the wrong balance and sends a negative message about electric vehicles in the borough. It may also make Camden a less attractive borough for businesses to invest in electric vehicle charging infrastructure. **Any increase in parking charges for electric vehicles should be at a much more modest level.**

**Motorbike parking charges**

This is an area where we think the council has lost sight of the principles it claims to be promoting. The increases to charges for motorbike parking charges, particularly the introduction and scale of charges for the use of solo motorcycle bays do not make sense unless the policy is driven by a narrow focus on tail pipe emissions. It is a simple fact that motorcycles take up significantly less kerbside space and cause little or no congestion. In terms of air quality and greenhouse gas emissions they compare very favourably to cars of comparable power sources.

To charge an electric motorcycle the same as an electric car fails to take into account that the lifetime GHG emissions of the motorcycle are much lower. It fails to recognise the benefits in terms of kerbside space and congestion and air quality. Note that levels of particulate pollution from tyres etc depends on the weight of the vehicle, so a smaller vehicle will always be preferable in this regard. A similar set of arguments can be made when comparing a petrol motorbike to a petrol car, depending on the size of the respective vehicles.

The introduction of a daily charge for solo motorcycle bays is also problematic. Firstly it creates more hoops to jump through, costing users both time and money, as well as administrative costs for the council. Secondly, it means that motorcyclists living in car free developments could face costs of over £700/year to park their vehicles, including electric ones. Note that other boroughs, if they charge at all for solo bays, do so at a significantly lower rate and also offer annual and/or monthly charging options, at much lower levels.

Whatever views one might have about the safety of using motorcycles, these vehicles have a role to play in our transport infrastructure and to treat them as cars for parking purposes is unfair and makes no sense. **The proposed charges should be reduced to reflect the true impact they have.**

**Surcharges for visitor permits**

While we recognise the rationale in terms of emissions, we have concerns that it could make the system too complex for residents using the service, particularly more vulnerable residents. A system that requires too much information from visitors may make it harder to arrange parking, particularly in advance. There is also the potential for it to be complex administratively for the council and for residents. **The council must explain how this system would work in practice, well ahead of any decision being made.**

**Scale of increases and impact on people who rely on vehicles (some elderly, disabled people, some small businesses and charities)**

We have a general concern that the scale of the increases may be too great, given the cost of living crisis and because many people and organisations are already stretched. Parking charges in Camden are already among the highest in London and this would push them higher still, out of step with even other central London boroughs. There is a danger that the scale of the increases will make the borough a less attractive place to live and work in.

Critical to this issue are the support packages the council is developing for people and organisations that would struggle to afford the changes. The details of these ideas should have been provided as part of the consultation, so responses can be based on a proper understanding of these concepts. **The council must urgently provide the missing information, well ahead of any decision being made.**

**Limiting permits to one vehicle**

This proposal has created confusion, with it being incorrectly interpreted as meaning households can only have one car. Some political figures have engaged in scaremongering on this point. **The council needs to provide clarity on what the changes actually mean.**

**Consistency in the council’s rationale**

It is important that the council is consistent in how it justifies the changes. It does not make sense to say these changes are about making the policy fairer, but then penalise vulnerable people by removing scratch cards. Or to say it is about being greener, and then ramp up parking charges for car clubs. And it is unfair to ask residents and businesses to give their views on these changes when critical pieces of information are either missing (the details of the support packages), incomplete (how the visitor parking surcharges would work), or hard to understand (rules about the number of vehicles per permit).