

Brighton & Hove City Sustainability Partnership

c/o 139 Hollingdean Terrace

Brighton

BN1 7HF

Tel: 01273 553044

Councillor Jason Kitcat
Chair, Policy & Resources Committee
Brighton & Hove City Council
King's House
Rand Avenue
Hove
BN3 2 LS

7 April, 2014

Dear Jason,

Concern over Sunday free parking proposals

The City Sustainability Partnership (CSP) is a member of the family of partnerships which form part of the Brighton & Hove Strategic Partnership, Brighton & Hove Connected. It is tasked by the Brighton & Hove Connected with being the city's lead on sustainability issues, both in developing strategies and policy but also in helping to oversee progress towards the outcomes in the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) as you are fully aware.

Within the CSP, there is concern about the impact that any reduction in car parking charges on Sundays could have on the city's ability to meet its outcomes in the SCS, in particular around reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, increasing use of public transport and increasing active travel. The Liberal Democrat proposal to Full Council the other week, which was deferred to Policy and Resources, has the potential to undermine all of these ambitions. In addition there could be a real economic cost, directly and indirectly to local residents.

The first is that any loss in revenue, at a time when resources are scarce could see cuts made elsewhere to pay for this. Secondly, if the free parking leads to any loss of revenue for the bus company it will either have to reduce its costs (by cutting services) or increase its income (by raising prices). Given that Sunday services are often more marginal than weekday ones, free Sunday parking could seriously undermine their viability and lead to more pressure for Council supported services. Thirdly, there could be wider financial costs if more cars lead to more congestion resulting in delays to bus services across the city. Given existing concerns about the cost of bus services in the city, any upward pressure on prices is highly undesirable.

Therefore, the CSP would like to request that when any report is prepared into the proposal for free, or reduced price, Sunday car parking, it should consider the following issues:

- Likely impact on carbon emissions
- Likely impact on air quality and how it fits with the Air Quality Action Plan
- Possible impact on active travel (walking and cycling)
- Direct financial cost to public purse
- Potential loss of income for the bus company
- Vulnerability of Sunday bus services to any loss of revenue, particularly if it leads to pressure for more Council supported services and the cost of this if it were to happen

While it is always difficult to say with any certainty exactly what will happen due to a particular intervention, reducing cost nearly always stimulates demand. Therefore, reducing the cost of car parking is likely to increase car use and attract people away from more sustainable forms of transport, particularly the buses, with all the negative impacts outlined above.

Equally important is that if any free or reduced price parking is taken forward, monitoring is put in place so that its full impact can be assessed. Therefore, the CSP would be keen to see an adequate monitoring regime agreed and properly resourced alongside any proposals that are taken forward.

I trust this letter is clear in outlining our concerns and what we would like to see happen if any proposal for free Sunday parking is given further consideration. If you have any queries about anything we have said please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Todd". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Chris Todd
Chair
City Sustainability Partnership

c.c. Cllr Geoffrey Theobald, Leader Conservative Group
Cllr Warren Morgan, Leader Labour Group
Tony Mernagh, Chair of Brighton & Hove Connected