



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr John Boyce
Leader – Oadby & Wigston Borough Council
Letter sent by email
RE: Car park charges across Oadby & Wigston

19th May 2021

Dear John,

I write to you regarding the recently launched consultation to introduce car parking charges across Oadby & Wigston. It isn't something I was made aware of by the Council prior to the consultation launching, but it is something that is understandably of great interest to many constituents and local businesses across the Borough.

They have a number of concerns about the proposals, many of which I share, that I will summarise below.

Can you please share details of the communication plan for this consultation, as there appears to be very limited information in the public domain? I am unable to find anything on the website in the 'news' section, with the only reference being on the 'consultations and surveys' page that is not easy to find. Some constituents are concerned that the process to feed into the consultation is not as straightforward as they would hope, so I'd appreciate any comments on this and steps that can be taken to improve the visibility, as I'm sure we all want as many responses as possible here.

More broadly, it is concerning that this is being proposed for the Borough. While I understand the need for Councils to balance their books, I would urge you to look very closely as to whether this is the best course of action. Many fear that shops will suffer and be forced to close, proving to be counterproductive with the loss of business rates revenue.

In addition to looking at ways to generate revenue, I would strongly advise the Council to look forensically at cost savings also to help with this endeavour. Notably the considerable expense the Council has incurred over recent years on temporary/agency staff, HR tribunals and staff pay-outs. My understanding is this figure over recent years (pre 2020/21 Covid-19 spend) stands at over £6 million, which is concerning for a small authority with an annual budget between £7-8 million. We need to understand why this figure is so high, and what is being done to tackle it.

The three relatively small shopping parades will be severely impacted. Centres such as Market Harborough or Leicester City, where charging is applicable, benefit from a breadth and depth of shops and wider offering to continue to attract shoppers in good numbers. The ability of the three parades in Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston to absorb these charges is likely to be much lower, given that the offering from retailers is spread across three reasonably close centres.

Alongside the communication plans for this consultation, I would be grateful to have sight of your plans for how the Council plans to address the above spending, as it is clearly now causing a risk to services. I understand the frequency of bin collections is also being reviewed, so would welcome details on how the Council is reducing this area of spend to ensure taxpayers' money is directed towards taxpayer services, ahead of internal employment issues.

I look forward to hearing from you at the earliest possible opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Neil O'Brien

Neil O'Brien MP

Member of Parliament for Harborough, Oadby and Wigston

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