

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(i) Visitor Parking Brighton- Supplementary Information

We have requested this deputation today as we strongly feel that the current council's car parking policies are having a serious detrimental affect on tourists coming to Brighton and also whether they choose come back another time. There are two main areas of the city in question especially – parking zone Z in which the main public car park is the council run Regency Square and parking zone C, Madeira Drive, Marine Parade, Kings Road and New Steine.

In New Steine/Madeira Drive we appreciate the efforts and time of Councillor Graham Cox in helping make changes last year in reducing tariffs, charging implementation hours and the available payment methods. However there are still a few points raised that we feel require an update and/or change.

- When will the pay by phone/card meters that were promised be in place?
- There is still negative feedback from visitors that they have to pay until 8 in the evening, this should revert to the previous time of 6pm

With regards to Zone Z and Regency Square we are hugely disappointed in the results of the refurbishment, we appreciate that the work needed doing but the restrictive pricing model in place now is creating a devastating loss to local businesses.

Initially there is plenty of anecdotal evidence from both myself at the Cecil House Hotel and Stephen Hipwell and his team at the Granville Hotel that as soon as parking options are queried and the charges mentioned to potential booking enquiries a large majority of guests say that they will think about it and never call back to make a booking. Those that have already made a booking and phone or email to ask about options are astounded at just how much the cheapest public car park, Regency Square, charges. Here at the Cecil House Hotel we have had to reduce rates in order to secure occupancy midweek losing around £10-12 per room per night, a room that last year we could sell for £59.00 or more is now £49.00 as people have to take into account the increased pricing model in Regency Square when booking their stay. This has equated to a 9.2% or £2000 year on year loss in June this year, hardly a sustainable business model. Figures from the Granville Hotel via Stephen Hipwell show a similar year on year room price reduction in order to gain reservations.

We are competing on a unfair playing field this end of town as on the other side of the pier (Kemp Town area for example) people are able to purchase parking vouchers from their hotel/guest house and secure on-street parking from £6.50 per 24 hours. The cheapest comparable rate in Regency Square is £10.00 for an overnight stay with the limitations that the car must be parked after 4pm and removed before 11am, severely restricting the amount of time guests can spend in the city and consequently their potential further spend in other businesses as well. This is also no help to weekend visitors where the city's hotel business model requires a 2 night minimum stay if they wish to stay on a Saturday night. These people are forced into the highest band of charges at £22.00 for 24 hours.

There was a commitment made by the now council leader Jason Kitcat to limit tariff increases in Regency Square and other council car parks after refurbishment to 30-40% as outlined in the consultation documents which are now part of the public record. The 24 hour rate at £22.00 is nearly an 80% increase on the previous charge of £12.50, we have asked for an explanation of this from him but that which we have received is in no way satisfactory and still penalises visitors,

his overall percentage increase on all tariffs fits into the 30-40% increase but the majority of those he uses to justify this are not relevant to tourists to the city.

If there is an overall council policy decision to remove cars from central Brighton it is certainly working but it is also working to reduce the income of local business and traders who form a large part of the tourism industry in this city. I think it's fairly obvious what the affect of a reduction in visitors both national and international, will have on the city overall.

However if the price increases are actually an economic decision then the figures we have obtained from the council under the Freedom of Information Act show that less cars are now using the car park. If this continues how does the council expect to pay for the refurbishment, surely a higher volume at a lower than the current tariff will pay the debt quicker and have the knock on effect of increasing tourism to the city.

From Hotel Association figures the drop off in users of the car park correlates strongly with the drop off in hotel occupancy:

April 11/12-12/13 (-15%) 12/12-13/14 (-25%) 11/12-13/14 (-36%)
May 11/12-12/13 (-11%) 12/13-13/14 (-18%) 11/12-13/14 (-25%)

It is impossible to say for certain if this is the same for day trippers but we would suspect that it is the case, we acknowledge that the weather may also have played a part but then again if that is the case why should we force people away by putting up parking charges who may otherwise may have braved the conditions for their day out.

And will there be a knock on effect? What chance do local businesses have for visitor retention when these pricing models are keeping people away?

We respectfully request review and consultation of these tariffs and answers to the questions on the Zone C issues in the light of the above and further ongoing dialogue to continue to secure visitors into this vibrant city of ours.

We would like to make the following proposals for change for the tariffs in Regency Square car park:

Add a "Hotel Guest" or "Overnight rate" that is valid for a 2 night stay on the weekends (Fri-Sun)

Move the 24 hour rate in line with the structure of the original proposal:

1/11 – 29/2 £15.00 per 24 hours
1/03 – 31/10 £17.50 per 24 hours

Reduce the 4 hour rate:

1/11 – 29/2 £8.00
1/03 – 31/10 £10.00

Reduce the 9 hour rate:

1/11 – 29/2 £12.50
1/03 – 31/10 £15.00

Increase the 1 hour rate to £1.50 more in line with on-street meter charges

These would still equate to an overall increase of 31.23% in the off season and 35.65% in peak season on the relevant tariffs, encourage more visitors to use the car park and therefore make paying for the refurbishment a quicker process. Increasing the one hour rate will also have the benefit of suggesting to local people that it could be more cost effective to use public transport for a short journey and stay and help your policy of reducing the number of cars in the city centre.

We would also ask for consideration of the following:

In appreciation that we can't have on-street parking vouchers due to space limitations we would like the opportunity to purchase, as a hotel, season tickets for Regency Square car park. The hotels in the area should be able to purchase these for £2372.50 in line with the on-street parking at £6.50 per 24 hours at the other end of town.

