
Victory in Westminster



Westminster Council decided last year to proceed with parking charges in the evening on weekdays (including Saturday), and on Sunday from 1pm to 6pm. The rate was to be £4.40 per hour on Sunday and at some of the other times, which must be one of the highest on-street parking changes in the country. Churchgoers and operators of businesses such as theatres and restaurants in the West End all protested very strongly but their complaints were initially brushed off. The Council said that it was necessary because of traffic congestion and parking pressure. Many people believed that this change was simply about raising revenue when council budgets are under pressure. Westminster already makes an enormous profit from on-street parking – for the details, see: www.freedomfordrivers.org/Profiting_from_Parking.pdf .

Despite the above disappointment, there was a resounding victory after some residents applied for a judicial review of the parking proposals. After the initial application was accepted, which meant the judicial review would have taken place in a few months time, the council suspended its plans. Subsequently Council Leader Colin Barrow, who was the main advocate of this scheme, resigned. The council then promptly announced it was dropping the whole scheme. Mr Barrow suggested he had resigned so as “*to devote more time to other areas*” of his life.

This is a good example of how public pressure can result in a swift “about-face”.

Oddly enough the grounds for the judicial review application in Westminster were similar to those in the Barnet case where the application has been rejected for a second time – although an appeal may be pursued.

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