

## Statement from Julie Redfern

We were extremely disappointed that our concerns won't be discussed at full council.

Meeting and surpassing the 3600 threshold set by UDC, more than 4100 people signed our petition. However, despite exceeding the required number of signatures, the petition was rejected on the grounds that not enough signatories were from within the Uttlesford district.

We would argue that the physical presence of signatories in the town centre implies their direct stake in the issue, even if they reside just outside the district's boundaries. Please don't underestimate the importance of including town centre workers, many of whom may commute from neighbouring areas, in this decision-making process. Your papers state that you had 485 responses, with our petition we would argue that you in fact had 4591.

We and our members understand that parking creates revenue for UDC and we appreciate that parking has not been increased since 2015. However we are concerned that having commissioned consultants to assess tariffs for parking in Uttlesford, aligned to other towns in Essex and the surrounding counties, it appears that UDC has chosen to disregard most of their recommendations and increase prices on all areas of parking between 60% and 70%.

Given that the increase in 2015 was an average of 22% on the 2008 prices it seems excessive to be increasing charges at three times the previous rise.

We would prefer to see lower increases overall given the change in the national economy and cost of living crisis since your consultants prepared their report. But you have chosen to apply even higher rises than the consultants recommended. These increases take £385,406 of additional profit across the whole district but £300,000 of this figure is solely out of the Saffron Walden town centre economy. This is surely unfair to place this burden on just one of your town centres?

We and our members are worried that the increased parking fees will negatively impact the town centre's vitality and therefore should be a crucial consideration for councillors. If the majority of revenue generated from car parks is derived from individuals who work and shop in the town centre, raising parking fees could potentially deter these people, leading to a decline in footfall, the ability to recruit staff, overall economic activity and in turn parking revenue.

The increases to season tickets is also concerning our members. The proposed annual increase from £300 to £450 is a whopping 50% hike. We are aware that some businesses in the town cover the cost of their employees parking and this will have a significant impact, perhaps, if the cost to our office based businesses is too much they may well decide that they would be better off relocating outside of the town centre.

And that brings me to Catons Lane: Our members are concerned about the knock on effects of making this a chargeable car park. They recognise that it is used primarily by town centre employees. If the reason we've been given for this is honestly because UDC maintain it but SWTC own it and neither council wants to bear the cost, we can see the issue, but why do these proposals show that there will be an expected profit of £64,000 per year? That's not for maintenance. If you really must add charges to this car park and they are to match Swan Meadow could they not have the various season ticket options too? We don't want to see all regular users pushed across town adding to rush hour congestion.

Businesses are worried that staff recruitment will be negatively impacted. Potential employees will be deterred from working in the town centre as parking is already expensive

and diminishes their earnings. If businesses can't recruit locally they could look to relocate their premises elsewhere thereby negatively impacting the vibrancy of our town.