Sarah Wollaston (Totnes Conservative) Click here to watch Parliament Live

Towns such as Dartmouth and Kingsbridge in my constituency are resisting the imposition of high and unwanted on-street parking charges by the county council that they see as a back-door form of revenue raising. Would my right hon. Friend encourage them to organise a local referendum?

Eric Pickles (Secretary of State, Communities and Local Government)

It is always a bit of an inconvenience when the public make their position known—democracy is always a bit messy, but it is the best system we have. I cannot see any problem with local authorities facilitating such a referendum. The county council could also think about delegating that function to the local towns, so that they can organise these things. That is what happens in an awful lot of districts. My hon. Friend represents an attractive part of the world that many of us visit in slightly more clement times. However, car parking can be vital to a local economy so if she wants to start the referendum process, she has my full support.

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