

**CABINET – 14 December 2017**

**PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**Public Questions**

**Question 1: Ms Sally Blake**

Surrey County Council (SCC) is considering the adoption of a policy which would introduce parking charges of £1.30 an hour (up to £5) at 15 car parks at the busiest sites in its Countryside Estate (Chobham Common, Norbury Park, Rodborough Common, Whitmoor Common, and Wisley and Ockham Commons), with payment by card or phone only. This followed its public consultation, 'Pay and Conserve', in which 75% of people said they did not want any parking charges at all, and 59% said if there were charges they would prefer to pay by cash. There are currently 446,000 cars visiting these car parks each year, indicating people visits of about 1 million a year.

An article in the British Medical Journal in October confirmed the huge financial benefits of regular exercise, by keeping people physically active and mentally healthy, in particular by keeping older people out of care homes. A report 'Natural capital accounts for public green space in London' in October has put a value on this. It says £950 million is avoided in health costs in London by providing free access to public green space.

Of the people that completed the SCC consultation and gave their age, 74% were over age 46, including 23% over age 65, and 50% of people said they would stop coming or come less often if charges were brought in. SCC pays £385 million for adult social care a year. The people who cannot afford to pay for parking and will stop coming will be those who are most reliant on public social care services. Also, older people will be less likely to come if they have to pay by card or phone.

Has the Council included a figure for increased social care and health costs to SCC in the financial model for charging in these Surrey car parks and:

- If so, how much is it? or
- If not, what are the reasons for this?

**Question 2: Mr John Oliver**

Mr Chairman, the Cabinet will consider, at Item 11, the proposal to adopt a policy of charging at 15 car parks across the Countryside Estate. In the paper, the response to the "Concern that the income from charging will be used for other SCC services" is that "The income will be ring fenced for the countryside and information will be put in the car parks to explain where the money is being spent". Similar proposals for the use of parking charge surpluses have been agreed, but not yet implemented concerning Newlands Corner, an Access Agreement site.

Given that car park charges are meant to cover only the cost and maintenance of the car parks and any associated buildings (e.g. public toilets) and are required to be "reasonable":

- How does the Council justify, legally, a policy which sets out to produce fiscal surpluses to otherwise spend on the Countryside Estate (e.g. conservation, Surrey Wildlife oncosts) or give landowners a share of the profits (up to a rumoured 50% at Newlands Corner); and
- Given that Councillor Goodman has not set out his legal authority for this policy at the Pay and Conserve sites, and the Countryside Group has been unable to provide me with the legal basis for its proposals at Newlands Corner, and has had to refer to its legal advisers, do you agree (and if not, why not) that:
  - No further consideration of this matter should take place, particularly at Cabinet level, before the legal basis for the policy is fully explained and clarified to everyone's satisfaction; and
  - That it is irresponsible that such policies are being proposed where the legal basis appears to be unknown to the policy team and the legislative position is not being explained to decision-makers?

**Question 3: Mr John Oliver**

Mr Chairman, at the Environment and Infrastructure Select Committee on 29 November 2017, the Committee was presented with the results of the 'Pay and Conserve' consultation and the policy proposals concerning the introduction of parking charges at the 15 car parks which were the subject of the consultation.

Councillor Furniss asked if, as part of the policy implementation, it would be necessary to seek 'commons consent' from the Planning Inspectorate for the introduction of parking charges. Councillor Goodman responded, quite rightly, "No". What he failed to go on to explain is that such consent should be sought for the placing of "structures" (machines and signage) on, and, if concrete plinths are involved, the "resurfacing" of, the commons under section 38 of the Commons Act 2006.

There was also no mention by the Countryside Group Manager as to whether, as part of the charging policy, there will be an initial free 20 minutes of parking, before charges apply, as has been promised at Newlands Corner.

Could you please confirm that the Council's policy for the Pay and Conserve car parks, if agreed at Cabinet, will include:

- applications to the Planning Inspectorate for commons consent; and
- an initial free period of 20 minutes at each of the car parks involved"

**Question 4: Mr James Osbourn, on behalf of The Chobham Society**

Relating to the Pay and Conserve proposal:

- What was the point of the consultation if it is intended to press ahead anyway in the face of the 75% of responders who were not in favour of parking charges?

- We question the right of Surrey County Council to make these charges as in doing so it is placing a fetter on the right of the public to freedom for air and exercise?
- We note that the County has decided not to proceed with some of the works it proposed at Newlands Corner on the grounds of risking Circa £30,000 on a public inquiry. What are the estimated costs of a public inquiry, or inquiries, for the erection of the charging equipment in the event that some or all of the 75 % who are against the proposal object?

**Combined Response:**

Thank you very much for your questions. The Cabinet is waiting for further details from Surrey Wildlife Trust and officers and will not be taking a decision on this item today.

**Mr Mike Goodman**  
**Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport**  
**14 December 2017**

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