

CABINET – 26 February 2019

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Public Questions

Question 1: Mr John Oliver, Local Resident

In pursuance of its statutory responsibility to improve the health and wellbeing of its residents, and with particular regard to the Surrey Countryside Estate, what initiatives are planned by the Council and its contractor/lessee, Surrey Wildlife Trust, in the next 12 months to improve access to the Estate for those who find it physically or mentally difficult to access? For example, and not confined to this example, the difficulties for people who find it impossible to cope with the current parking charge regime, which depends on the use of modern technology?

Reply:

The Council is well aware of the importance of ensuring all residents of Surrey are able to access the open spaces for health and wellbeing. The Countryside Estate is managed to ensure that can happen as much as possible taking into account the nature of the landscape. The Countryside is open to all on foot and in some cases on horseback and bicycle. In order to ensure we keep access as available as possible we are not charging at all sites and have over 15 car parks where charges are not levied. Signage and access routes are made as accessible as possible and we have people with disabilities represented on our Countryside Access Forum to advise us on any issues. However we cannot predict all issues that may occur and any problems anyone has in accessing the countryside, understanding signage or paying for parking can be reported to us and we can respond to those issues as they occur. Not charging blue badge holders does ensure they can continue to park for free in the car parks where we charge and we also arrange vehicular access to key viewpoints where this is specifically requested.

The service has worked hard to balance the budget during challenging times for the Council. The introduction of car parking charges has enable us to resurface the car parks which had become unsafe, and we are planning to resurface the trail at Newlands Corner and install dementia friendly signage over the next year.

The Countryside Estate twenty five year strategy to be launched in May 2019 will include focus on access to the countryside for the elderly and those with disabilities, this will only be possible by raising revenue including car parking charges.

Mr Mike Goodman
Cabinet Member for Environment & Waste
26 February 2019

This page is intentionally left blank