

**CABINET**

Tuesday 26 February 2019

**RESPONSES TO PETITIONS**

**The Petition concerning 'Car Parking Charges on Countryside Estate'**

It states: "We the undersigned petition Surrey County Council to scrap parking charges at our countryside car parks"

Submitted by Deanne Blaylock representing Surrey Live

Signatures: 4532

**Response:**

The Countryside Estate includes such sites are Norbury Park, Newlands Corner, Ockham and Wisley, Chobham Common, Shere Woodlands, Sheepleas and Staffhurst Wood. This range of sites covers around 2,500 hectares of the County and along with the access agreement areas of Puttenham Common, Albury Estate, Friday Street and around Leith Hill, provides open access for the public. That access is free but the land has to be managed to ensure it is safe for the public to access, provides facilities that promote that access and encourage everyone to make use of those sites for their health and wellbeing.

In addition over 70% of the Estate is designated for its conservation value. Managing this land effectively has become a challenge even with volunteer groups helping and grants made available for specific projects. This has led Surrey County Council and Surrey Wildlife Trust to look at other forms of income that can ensure the countryside is conserved and enhanced for the future.

Free access will be maintained at all our sites, while charging people to park their cars. That income can then be used to maintain those facilities, provide new facilities and manage the paths around the sites.

Other organisations have been charging for parking for many years and this brings the SCC Estate into line with those organisations, for example the National Trust, Forestry Commission at Alice Holt, and neighbouring County Councils such as Hampshire and Kent.

We have introduced charges to the busiest car parks with particular attractions for visitors, for example views, café, toilets, popular walking areas. Parking charges apply in 16 car parks while the remaining 15 are free. In addition car parks on sites specifically established to draw dog walkers away from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA (Special Protection Area) designated for their ground nesting birds, remain free or free for at least the first 2 hours.

Prior to introducing parking charges a business plan was drawn up making allowances for a drop in numbers in year one, given an expectation that some people would try and avoid paying, and that there would be teething problems with the system.

Car numbers were initially impacted by vandalism, particularly at Newlands Corner, where, in conjunction with a campaign to encourage people to stay away from the car park, numbers using the car park reduced. We have also had a number of illegal traveller

incursions at Chobham Common. As a consequence the meters has been changed to make it more difficult to abuse and vandalise, unfortunately traveller incursions have continued on Chobham Common.

Car Parking charges will go live at Salt Box Road and Whitmoor Common in the Spring of 2019.

Despite these challenges vehicle numbers across Surrey with the exception of Norbury Park should exceed the expected figures for the first year.

The counters at the car parks have enabled us to record the actual car visits for October till December 2018, we have then annualised these figures to project a total year figure knowing that numbers in the summer will be higher. Despite this assumption it still shows visits above the anticipated level.

These figures estimate for a full year the following car visits:

81,772 for Ockham and Wisley (only vehicles arriving in the period 07.00 to 21.00), The figure used in the Business Plan was 78,689 (These estimates do not include those people staying for less than 20 minutes)

97,960 for Chobham, the figure used in the Business Plan was 96,787

For Newlands the recorded figures for the three month period, October to December which was 47,197 for Newlands Corner against a Business plan figure for this period of 45,781.

I am pleased that over 600 season tickets have been purchased which is double the number in the business plan and represents good value for residents.

We have reviewed our budgeted costs and have been able to make savings against the original plan.

Any new scheme will have its challenges and initial problems and no one would expect the figures for the first few months to reflect a whole year of operation.

However we expect to achieve the net income budget after the first year of operation and this will be used on the Countryside Estate, to maintain the car parks, provide further information and waymarked trails, improve the surface of paths and make them more accessible and provide clear viewpoints, such as the recent work at Newlands Corner. It will also contribute in the years ahead to deliver the Council's 25 year Countryside Estate Strategy that we will launch later this year.

Car Parking charges are just one of a number of funding streams used to protect and improve the countryside, others include income from the Council's extensive property on the Countryside Estate, income from a number of events including weddings, filming, wood sales, and one off events and activities.

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

**The Petition concerning 'Cuts to Surrey Fire & Rescue Service – Esher Fire Station'**

It states: "The enclosed petition is signed by Esher & Walton Constituency residents and shows the strengths of feeling against the cuts and the proposed closure of Esher Fire Station. Residents are extremely worried about the lack of fire services and the potential danger to the public in Surrey, which not only puts them at risk but also the firefighters' own lives. The Esher & Walton Constituency Labour Party are asking that you reconsider your proposals for the safety of all. This is a matter of great importance for those of us who care about each other's safety."

Submitted by Jamal Ajjane representing Esher & Walton Constituency

Signatures: 637

**Response:**

On 4 March 2019 the Council will be launching a public consultation about our plans to transform Surrey Fire and Rescue Service. Petitioners are encouraged to contribute to the consultation and findings will be published in due course.

**Ms Denise Turner-Stewart**

**Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Fire & Resilience**

**26 February 2019**

This page is intentionally left blank