

**GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL AND
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**



**GUILDFORD
BOROUGH**

GUILDFORD JOINT COMMITTEE

DATE: 21 OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT: MEMBER WRITTEN QUESTION

Two questions have been received from Guildford Borough Councillor Deborah Seabrook:

Question 1: Parking

Pay on exit / Pay on Foot means that people pay the correct price for their parking and removes the need for enforcement. It seems to work well in Sydenham Road and York Road. Whilst not practical everywhere, could it be installed in Leapale Road and other pay and display car parks?

RESPONSE:

The town centre car parks are owned and operated by GBC. Therefore, it is not really an issue for the GJC to consider. Nevertheless, to answer to the question:

Over half of the town's main car parks already have pay on foot barrier entry / exit systems. These include Castle MSCP, Farnham Road MSCP, Tunsgate MSCP and York Road MSCP. All are multi-storey car parks.

The town centre's surface car parks are generally too small to make the introduction of the additional infrastructure associated with pay on foot car parks cost effective. It is also the case that several of them are potentially due to be redeveloped in the fairly near future.

In respect to the two other main town centre car parks:

Bedford Road MSCP

The possibility of making this car park pay on foot has been considered on a number of occasions by various specialist car park consultants, most recently in 2018. However, they have repeatedly reached the conclusion that the geometry of the car park, its internal traffic flows, entries and exits, and the way in which the car park interacts with the adjacent highway network are such that it would be both impractical, as well as prohibitively expensive, to convert this car park to pay on foot.

Leapale Road MSCP

Even with its recent refurbishment, the geometry of Leapale Road MSCP is such that a Pay on Foot payment solution would not be practicable, without the removal of much of the parking on the lower levels to facilitate queuing at the exit and improved circulation for those entering the car park. Because of the car park's design, there

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are multiple points of conflict between those making their way to the exit and those making their way to find a space. Although the refurbishment works did look to address these, the opportunities to do so were limited. If pay on foot were introduced within this car park, even slight delays at the exit caused by waiting for the barriers to open and close could quite easily cause gridlock within the car park at busy times.

It is not presently possible for local authorities to operate car parks with barrierless exits, due to the legislation relating to pursuing penalty notices, in cases where someone exits the car park without paying for their parking session. If / when the legislation does change, clearly this may provide opportunities to reconsider the matter.

Nevertheless, those using our pay and display car parks already have the option to pay by phone and extend their stays without returning to their vehicles. This already gives them the flexibility to tailor the length of their parking session more closely to the duration of their visit.

The presence of enforcement staff within car parks can also act to reassure users of security and deter unwanted visitors. In this regard, it may be worth noting that two of the three car parks where we have previously experienced problems with unwanted visitors have been pay on foot car parks. This might be linked to the reduced enforcement patrols / presence of staff within these facilities, albeit that both pay and display and pay on foot car parks are both covered by almost 200 CCTV cameras.

Question 2: Parking and Air Quality

As far back as 2014, a report by Public Health England (Estimating Local Mortality Burdens associated with Particulate Air Pollution) estimated that 55 people a year were dying in the borough, due to air pollution. Since then, most people agree the situation has got worse. Whilst P&R charges for one person are lower than parking charges in the town centre, it is still uneconomical for families to use P&R. Charging policy should encourage people to do the right thing. As usage of P&R increased, the need to subsidise the service would decrease.

Given the climate emergency and poor air quality, would the committee consider radically increasing parking charges for the town centre?

There is also a desire to plan for the future by establishing a new P&R in Shalford/ Bramley area, to address current problems and prevent increased traffic as Dunsfold is developed.

At the least, can these points be considered in the AQMA action plan and consultation?

RESPONSE:

The park and ride bus fares are set by the bus service operator and not the GJC. Even so, SCC's Passenger Transport team liaise closely with the operators in relation to the provision of services. Although intervention through subsidy is possible, this needs identified funding and needs to be considered a priority over

similarly subsidised services, such as key bus routes through semi-rural areas, that may otherwise struggle to be viable.

Price is known not to be a significant factor influencing use in the vast majority of cases, so reduced pricing (and conversely, increasing pricing within the town centre) is unlikely to have a major effect on usage, particularly for shorter-duration visits to the town. Even so, significantly increasing parking charges within the town's car parks would disproportionately effect those wishing to visit the town centre, and not those driving elsewhere within the locality, or those passing through to destinations beyond, who also contribute towards congestion and air quality issues, particularly at peak times. The highest occupancy levels within the town centre car parks generally occur during the 11am-2pm window, and therefore outside the periods of peak traffic.

However, it should be noted that recent changes to the Borough Council's off-street parking tariffs in December 2020 meant that, for all but the shortest of stays (which would not in reality use the park and ride in any case), the cost of park and ride is now between 30% and 43% cheaper than parking in town in our shopper car parks for a single driver.

The service has offered family bundles for years. The service operates a 2 free under 16s for every fare paying adult, meaning that a family of up to six (two adults and four children) can effectively park all day to visit Guildford for as little as £3.80.

The report being presented to the Committee at this evening's meeting recommends increases in the on-street parking charges. The annual off-street business plan, which will be reported to the Borough Council's Executive in due course, will also provide the opportunity for it to review the parking charges levied within the town centre car parks.

The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) process will consider all possible options as part of a long list and the consultation will be public plus comprehensive. However, we are conscious that the timescale of an AQAP is relatively short and that measures will need to be realistic and timely for the plan to be effective. At this stage whilst it is not appropriate to speculate on the nature of the measures, we are happy to receive suggestions that can be fed into the planning process.

RECOMMENDATION

The Joint Committee is asked to note the officers' comments.

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