

**Council**  
**21 February 2024**  
**Item 4 - Questions from Members of the Public**

**The following questions have been submitted in accordance with Part 4 Section E of the Council's Constitution**

**1. Zillah Chester has asked the following question of the Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder**

“Why is the council considering introducing charges in Frimley Park Lodge when obesity is such an issue at the moment and many people of all ages take exercise and enjoy the facilities of the park free of charge?”

**The Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Helen Whitcroft, has provided the following response:**

“The Council is very proud of the parks and greenspaces within the Borough. Four of our parks have been awarded the prestigious Green Flag status, two of which are our flagship parks, Frimley Lodge and Lightwater Country Parks. We are confident we will be able to increase this into more venues in future years. Our parks across the Borough are well utilised for exercise and general well-being. Watchetts Park is a sports hub within the Borough with permanent clubhouses for Camberley Rugby Club and Frimley Tennis Club. The Council has recently upgraded its tennis courts within Watchetts Park with the assistance of the Lawn Tennis Association. Frimley Green Recreation Ground has also benefitted from a similar tennis court upgrade and is having gym equipment installed in the next couple of weeks. We operate an ongoing maintenance programme to allow the continuation of the upgrade of children's play equipment across the borough.

Moving on to Frimley Lodge, the trim trail equipment has been replaced recently in addition to the disabled swing installed a few years ago. It is also home to the miniature railway and local football clubs who play all year round on the astro pitches. We have recently been through the procurement process to grant new leases of the cafes at both the Lodge and Lightwater Country park and both now offer a perfect coffee and tasty healthy snacks. The Basingstoke Canal runs along the back of the park, with bridges allowing access to the Basingstoke Canal Centre, it's Café and the woods of Mytchett Heath. The park has also hosted events such as Surrey Heath Show and community Platinum Jubilee and Coronation celebrations. Living in Frimley Green, my own children, and now grandchildren, enjoy a Sunday afternoon on the railway and feeding the ducks. We can often be found walking the dogs through the park, across the canal and through Mytchett Heath. The Council contractors maintain the park which is kept to an excellent standard contributing to a superb greenspace for residents of Surrey Heath and beyond.

This council does not charge, and has absolutely no plans to charge, for the use of our parks and greenspaces, they remain free for all of any age to enjoy as they wish, including for exercise.”

**2. Zillah Chester has asked the following question of the Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder**

“Does the council think that raising parking charges in the town centre will overall help the budget? For those of us who live in Frimley Green for example, it is cheaper to go to Farnborough to shop as parking is less expensive there. Increases in parking charges in Camberley would be detrimental to the footfall in the town centre. This would result in shops closing less revenue to the council from shop rents in the mall. As someone who lived in Camberley before moving to Frimley Green I would really be very upset to see Camberley diminish further.”

**The Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Helen Whitcroft, has provided the following response:**

“Yes, the Council does believe that increasing car parking charges will generate much needed funds for the car parks to complete the backlog of repairs, maintain them going forward and improve the resident’s experience. This also reduces the burden on local Tax Payers, who may not be car users, from having to subsidise the costs of operating the car parks for those that do. The Council’s Economic Development team were consulted on the proposed tariffs and were clear that the positive impact of improvements such as safety, cleanliness and simplicity etc would benefit the town centre. The increase of parking charges supports improving the experience of visiting the town centre, along with other current civic amenity investments, as part of wider regeneration in the long term.

**3. Attieh Fard has asked the following question of the Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder**

“1500 residents signed an e-petition asking the Council not to proceed with further parking restrictions; in particular they wanted to keep the 1 hour free parking at the Pay on Foot car parks; this is crucial as people use for example the Wharf Road car park when they have a GP appointment or need to purchase medication from Boots. Businesses in the villages are worried that reducing one hour free parking to 30 minutes means less customers and less revenue for them. Can the Council justify how the 1 hour free parking will not adversely impact local businesses and residents such as those in Frimley Green especially those in the villages and would instead support their businesses and community life.”

**The Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Helen Whitcroft, has provided the following response:**

“Car parks are a discretionary service and are inherently expensive for the Council to own and maintain. With increasing costs associated with running

and maintaining these car parks, the Council could not afford to do this without generating sufficient income to pay for them. The previous administration increased charges in April 2022 and used none of this income was used to support the car parks. This simply compounds the negligence on the part of the previous Conservative administration. Had they made regular maintenance and improvements to the car parks, we would not be in the shocking position we are now.

While everyone, including me, would prefer not to pay for parking, the charges are broadly in line with charges in other neighbouring Councils and it right that those people who use our car parks should pay to do so as opposed to increasing council tax. I also know that residents would want the car parks to be safe and easy to use. However, that said, in your position as the Chair of the local Conservative Party, I am sure you are aware the doctors surgery in Frimley Green has its own car park.”

**4. Attieh Fard has asked the following question of the Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder**

“What financial or non-financial support will you provide to businesses and communities adversely affected by further parking restrictions; for example to those who may have less customers following the reduction of one hour free parking to 30 minutes and would not the cost of such support require a further increase in Council tax?”

**The Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Helen Whitcroft, has provided the following response:**

“Car parks are a discretionary service provided by the Council for the benefit of residents and local businesses. These improvements represent a huge contribution to the local economy and the vitality of our town and village areas. If the national Conservative Party really cared about businesses in Surrey Heath then they would not take 91.7% of all business rates away from this borough and local communities, but instead would allow us to keep more to invest in economic development and residents services.”

**5. Attieh Fard has asked the following question of the Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder**

“People who walk slowly due to physical issues would hardly be able to park, walk to a shop, do their shopping and walk back to the car park within 30 minutes. Do you agree that the reduction of 1 hour free parking to 30 minutes is an indirect discrimination against those who walk slowly? Do you also agree that making all car parks contactless would mean the elderly or those not carrying cards/phones with them would be discriminated against?”

**The Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Helen Whitcroft, has provided the following response:**

“The Council is committed to promoting equality and accessibility in relation to all services it provides. The Executive report and the Parking Strategy have both expressly addressed any equality implications.

An equalities impact assessment has been produced which does not indicate a direct impact on any specific group of people with protected characteristics. We are committed equality for all users within our car parking facilities. We will ensure that we have sufficient Disabled and Parent & Toddler bays across our parking portfolio and prioritise the safety and convenience of our customers. Within the Parking Strategy we have committed to an in-depth assessment of the current provision. This will include blue badge signage and other necessary infrastructure, ensuring that the facilities are fully accessible and adjusting our plans, so we meet the standards of inclusivity. We are dedicated to installing call/help points on every level within our multi-storey parking structures. These strategically placed points will not only provide aid and guidance to visitors but also enhance the overall security and accessibility of our facilities. It is our intention to continue to provide and improve provide the provision of larger bays closer to the entrances of all our car parks at no additional cost.

Evidence has shown the use of cash is dwindling following the pandemic. I am confident that anyone who has the capability to drive a car is also able to use a phone or use contactless payments. In removing the need for cash, we are removing the need to find individual fiddly coins and increasing users personal safety.”

**6. Attieh Fard has asked the following question of the Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder**

“What systems and procedures do you have in place to assess the impact of the introduction of further parking restrictions as set out in the parking strategy and approved by the Executive committee on 13 February 2024 on local businesses, especially shops and cafe in the villages, and local communities.”

**The Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Helen Whitcroft, has provided the following response:**

“The Council will continue to monitor car park usage levels and footfall data for our car parks and use this to inform its future management.”

**7. Attieh Fard has asked the following question of the Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder**

“Would you confirm if you are using two separate companies for car park charging apps; if so, would you not save more costs by using only one company and pay less administration costs?”

**The Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Helen Whitcroft, has provided the following response:**

“There is one App used within our town centre car parks and a different App for other locations, therefore the costs associated are simply shared between two providers. The apps currently attract a 20p surcharge per transaction for residents. The new contactless machines give the opportunity for residents to pay electronically without incurring the administration charge levied by the app companies, thus saving money versus today.”

**8. Attieh Fard has asked the following question of the Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder**

“I am told by residents that parents use Frimley Lodge Park's car park when their children use various local clubs such as football club. Do you agree that if any parking charges are introduced at Frimley Lodge Park that these families may not chose to register their children at such clubs; those who use the park for recreation and exercise, would think twice before going to the park and walk or run in the park?”

**The Resident & Community Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Helen Whitcroft, has provided the following response:**

“The Council does not currently have any proposals to introduce charges at Frimley Lodge Park, so the question is not relevant.”