

COUNCIL MEETING – 13 MARCH 2024

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14.3

Q1 Councillor Haywood to the Chair of the Environment Committee,
Councillor Wallsgrove

Q1 Why are these proposed ticket machines being forced into the car parks at Felpham and Middleton with such haste and certainly without full consultation with Middleton Parish Council representatives

A1 Ahead of the report being presented to the Environment Committee on 21 November 2023, consultation was held with both Felpham and Middleton-On-Sea Parish Councils to gather initial feedback on the proposed changes. It is worth being clear that the proposals do not include introducing charges for the tickets.

Meetings were held with yourself, Councillors Haywood, and Allsopp from Middleton-On-Sea Parish Council during the week commencing 25 September 2023 and Councillors Baker and Hewlett from Felpham Parish Council during the week commencing 2 October 2023. Following these meetings, full proposals were sent to both Parish Councils for consideration at the appropriate Committee meetings. Comments were received from Middleton-On-Sea Parish Council ahead of the Environment Committee meeting, and their comments were included within the report. Unfortunately, Felpham Parish Council's Committee meeting fell after the Environment Committee, so were not included, but the Parish were in full support of the proposed changes.

Councillor Haywood, you attended the Environment Committee meeting who agreed to hear your verbal representations emphasising the submission made by Middleton-On-Sea Parish Council. The Environment Committee, having considered all the information before it, regarding the proposed changes approved the proposal.

Following the Environment Committee's decision, the Parking Services Manager held further meetings with both Parish Councils during the week commencing 8 January 2024 to discuss the proposed changes further. Middleton-On-Sea Parish Council advised during this meeting that they would forward all questions to Arun District Council and a Freedom of Information request was received on 16 January. A full response to all of their questions was subsequently provided.

Supp

Q Consultation in your answer appears to be a tick box exercise. You did not listen to a word that was said. Petitions from Middleton-on-Sea and Felpham will shortly be presented to Arun District Council with some combined total of 3,500 signatures today and will probably be more tomorrow. Can the Chair of the Environment Committee confirm that these ticket machines will not be installed in these car parks until the petitions have been properly heard.

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Supp

A Thank you Councillor Hayward. I didn't actually make that decision it was made by the Environment Committee.

Q2 Councillor Haywood to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Wallsgrave

Q2 In Middleton, what economic and social impact does the Chair of the Environment Committee think these machines and the associated car parking restrictions will have on local shops and businesses; the Jubilee Village Hall and their community clubs; the Scout Hall and their outside users including the use as a Polling Station; the pre-school nursery; Shrubbs Field recreation users including Felpham Colts who use the field as their football centre; the Avisford Park Medical Centre; the annual local fund-raising fete; day-time parish council meetings and the impact on our many elderly residents who need to use the car park for all these village facilities.

A2 A meeting and ongoing discussions have been held with a representative from Avisford Medical Group, located within Shrubbs Field car park and Buckingham Court, the over 60s residential development have been contacted and all queries raised have been answered. The pre-school nursery and other community activities' operating hours have been identified and considered. 8 hours free parking within Shrubbs Field car park, between the hours of 8am-6pm, is considered to be apt for the usage of local amenities. Parking between 1800-0800 remains free of charge, and free of time restriction. Free parking will continue to be offered for polling stations located adjacent to Arun District Council car parks on polling days across the district.

Supp

Q Answering questions with a firm "sorry well that is what is going to happen" is not consultation and taking into account what I have asked which is what is the economic and social impact these parking meters are going to have and so my supplementary is will the Chair of the Environment Committee confirm that the car parks in Middleton and Felpham will remain free to users for the foreseeable future and that payment meters and or new parking restrictions will not just be imposed as these ticket machines are being imposed once the data on usage has been collected.

Supp

A Thank you Councillor Haywood. We have never said that we are going to charge for car parking. It is being looked at and the information is being gathered to see how these car parks are being used. This will then come back to the Committee to be discussed further.

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**Q3 Councillor Haywood to the Chair of the Environment Committee,
Councillor Wallsgrove**

Q3 Why has the Chair of the Environment Committee not taken full account of the highways impact both on the Elmer Road bus route and on neighbouring roads. Anything that deters users to the car park at Shrubbs Field will result in anti-social parking and congested on-road parking. The car park will be empty and the roads will be full!

A3 The Council is actively consulting on proposals for 8 hours free parking within Grassmere and Shrubbs Field and 2 hours free parking within Links Avenue car parks. These time periods have been proposed after careful consideration of the character of the areas and the potential impact, including on the highway are being actively considered ensuring any potential impact and disruption is minimised. West Sussex County Council have been consulted on the proposals.

Supp

Q Has West Sussex Highways been properly consulted and if they have, what was the result of that consultation please.

Supp

A The paperwork still remains with West Sussex County Council and they still have not commented on it.

**Q4 Councillor Gunner to the Chair of the Corporate Support Committee,
Councillor Oppler**

Q4 In January, Council voted for the Financial Strategy which included – amongst others – the deletion of the post of Group Head of Organisational Excellence with the current post-holder being made redundant, subject to consultation. I have heard that, following consultation, the role will now be retained. Is this correct?

A4 Following the conclusion of the consultation exercise the Joint Interim Chief Executives reviewed the responses received and determined that it would not be appropriate to continue with the full extent of the proposed changes to the Senior Management Team at this time. It is proposed to provide a more detailed update to the July meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee via a budget monitoring report.

Supp

Q As Councillor Oppler appears to know the detail, is there any reason why we cannot know that now.

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Sup

A I did not make that statement and I would draw Members' attention to the key words in the answer, conclusion of the consultation.

Q5 **Councillor Gunner to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Stanley**

Q5 When did you decide to break your election pledge to cut parking charges and instead increase parking charges?

A5 The Chair confirmed that in the absence of Councillor Stanley a written response would be provided.

Written:

A5 At this council's Environment Committee meeting in November a cross party committee of members took the decision to increase parking charges from 1st April 2024.

Q6 **Councillor Gunner to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Stanley**

Q6 A significant investment of officer resource is now going into the Felpham and Middleton-on-Sea car parks in terms of enforcement and monitoring. How do you intend on recouping that investment?

A6 In the absence of Councillor Stanley, Councillor Nash responded to this question.

These areas are already on the Council's enforcement rotas and enforcement of the proposed changes would not require additional resources. Arun District Council currently invest officer time and incur legal costs in the ongoing monitoring and removal of abandoned vehicles, especially from Links Avenue car park, which regularly requires legal input to issue notices to remove vehicles that are untaxed.

By introducing a reduced free parking time period, a no return period, and the requirement to obtain a free ticket, Arun District Council officers will be able to identify abandoned vehicles earlier, in turn reducing the resources required to monitor, enforce, and remove vehicles. It is considered likely that the proposed changes will enable more effective enforcement, reduce costs and resources required and increase availability within the car parks for genuine users.

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Supp

Q I appreciate the response. Can we see the before and after costings as I am surprised that having to enforce a 2 or 8 hour free car parking period is cheaper than not enforcing one. In terms of having to incur legal costs, I am aware that this Council was required by law to seek the approval of West Sussex County Council before making these changes. In an email that I have seen from West Sussex County Council, they have said that this Council was either unwilling or unable to do so. Will that incur potential legal charges and legal costs?

Supp

A On the issue of the email from West Sussex County Council, I am not aware of that and so I ask the Director of Growth if he is able to respond otherwise, I will provide a written response. In terms of comparative costings, I am sure that in the course of time we will be able to provide that.

Supp Written

A Enforcement of the maximum stay time will be more efficient as a consequence of the proposed changes as it will be quicker for civil enforcement officers to identify if a vehicle has breached the maximum stay time. Arun District Council have sought consent for the proposed changes from West Sussex County Council and have followed the required steps in order to enable the proposed changes to be made. Officers have been active in communicating with West Sussex County Council on this matter and have ensured all information required has been supplied. Legal costs are incurred whenever a change to Arun District Council's Parking Order is required as any new draft must be reviewed by our legal department. The Parking Order required updating following several decisions taken on 21st November 2023 by the Environment Committee affecting these and other car parks.

Q7 From Councillor Pendleton to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Wallsgrove

Q7 Can you rule-out implementing parking charges in the Felpham and Middleton-on-Sea car parks for the remainder of the term of this Council?

A7 It is for the Environment Committee, not the Chair, to make decisions on parking charges.

Supp

Q Could the Chair of the Environment Committee say whether she personally would support a proposal that limited charging for the remainder of the term of this council.

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Supp

A Being a Green Councillor, I don't like anyone driving anywhere or parking anywhere so I cannot guarantee that it will be free for the remainder of this Council's session. I think that things need to be looked at and that it does come through the Environment Committee not just through me.

Q8 From Councillor Pendleton to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Wallsgrove

Q8 Although the car parks are to remain free for now, the free periods and the no-return periods have now been implemented without consultation with the ward councillors. Do you think it is right to implement such changes without reference to the local councillors?

A8 Ward Councillors were made aware of the proposals on 20 October 2023, ahead of the Environment Committee meeting on 21 November, and given the opportunity to raise any concerns or queries with officers. One Ward Councillor is part of the Environment Committee, a second Ward Councillor addressed the Environment Committee meeting in November. A third Ward Councillor has spoken with officers on multiple occasions on this subject in the months following the decision of Committee, sharing insight into how the car parks are used, which the proposals take into account. Ward Councillors were again written to on 5 March drawing to their attention the detail of the proposals and consultation thereon where you have a further opportunity to have your say.

Supp

Q Does the Councillor agree with me that the opportunity to raise any concerns or queries with officer is not full consultation.

Supp

A It needs to be looked at. As I say, I don't agree with driving around in cars – maybe we need some bike parks instead. I will have to provide a written response to that.

Supp Written

A Ward Members were able to, and some have taken the opportunity, to express their views on the proposals before, at and after the Environment Committee made its decision. Ward Members valuable representations have been taken into account and influenced the detail of how the proposals are being implemented to reduce the risk of unintended consequences.

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**Q9 From Councillor Pendleton to the Chair of the Environment Committee,
Councillor Wallsgrove**

Q9 In the Council's statement, it says that the data gathered from the parking machines will be used to inform any future changes. What potential future changes does the Council have in mind?

A9 There are no specific changes proposed beyond those made by Environment Committee in November 2023. The Council's Financial Strategy, agreed in January, that it commits to a review of its assets, and information on their use is helpful in enabling Members to make informed decisions.

Supp

Q Does the Councillor agree with me that as a green environmentalist the Councillor should be encouraging people to park their cars and take the bus into the local towns and therefore save pollution.

Supp

A No, you should not be driving your cars anywhere. You should be on your bikes or walking or on the train or bus.