

EXECUTIVE – 5 SEPTEMBER 2017

AGENDA ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

From Roger Blishen of Surrey Coalition of Disabled People:

You will all be aware of The Secretary of State for Health - Jeremy Hunt MP and The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions - Damien Green MP's joint "Work, Health, And Disability Green Paper", and the joint "Ministers' Statement" therein. This Green Paper was created following the results of an Open Consultation.

As you should be aware many Disabled People have to exist on very low incomes and/or have considerable mobility, dexterity, and other associated difficulties in their daily lives. Therefore WBC's proposals for making Blue Badge Holders' pay parking charges will dramatically reduce their chances of achieving the paid work both these Cabinet Ministers so clearly espouse and champion, as it will clearly effect their mobility.

WBC's proposals are diametrically opposite to what both of these Senior Cabinet Ministers are striving to achieve, so must be strongly opposed before they create ever more problems for Disabled People both seeking work and going – with some difficulties – about their daily lives. Anyone using a wheelchair in a car park is at personal risk from drivers travelling too fast there looking for spaces rather than noticing wheelchair users. There have been many near misses there. Also there is rarely enough space for wheelchair users to get between parked cars.

I therefore oppose WBC's intention of charging any Disabled Person for Parking in their car parks and ask if you could please advise which Benefits will entitle some Disabled People to be exempt from these proposed parking charges as just advised on the BBC News?

Reply:

In bringing forward the proposals for charging as part of an extremely challenging budget process the Council has recognised that, whilst the possession of a Blue Badge is not in itself an indication of financial hardship, there would be many Blue Badge holders who have to exist on low incomes or have mobility, dexterity and other difficulties. It was in recognition of this that the free permit scheme for those in receipt of income related benefits or in receipt of a range of mobility benefits was proposed. Following further consultation the report to the Executive proposes extending the criteria to cover a wider range of mobility benefits to ensure those with significantly restricted mobility are not disadvantaged.

From Mrs Angie Welch:

"I use the South Street Car Park in Godalming at least twice a week as I help out at the Godalming Hub on High Street as a volunteer. If parking charges are introduced for blue badge holders what action will be taken to ensure that I would be able to use the payment machines since apart from difficulties accessing the payment machines

I am in a wheelchair and find the buttons too high to press? In addition the location of the payment machine is in a relatively dangerous position near the entrance".

Reply:

The Council has recognised that the pay and display machines need to be more accessible and the report recommends modifications to the areas around them to make access easier. Most Waverley residents who need to make use of a wheelchair would be likely to qualify for a free permit so would not need to pay. The Council is however already introducing a range of payment options including pay by phone, credit card, apple pay and contactless payments in addition to cash to make payment easier and the report is also recommending giving an additional hour free for those displaying a Blue Badge in recognition of the extra time it takes for those with disabilities to perform daily tasks.

From Amanda Clegg of Milford:

"How was estimated revenue of £75,000 from introducing parking charges for blue badge holders calculated and has this figure been revised due to decision to increase eligibility for permits and costs of modifications to payment machines? In particular was there any deterrence factor arising from charging being introduced or was it assumed that all existing blue badge holders would continue to park in Waverley car parks after charges were introduced".

Reply:

The estimate was based on the number of disabled parking bays provided in Waverley car parks and the average occupancy rates less an allowance for behavioural change. The estimated revenue figure has been revised in the light of the proposed changes to the scheme and is now £50,000 per annum. The cost of making the pay and display machines more accessible and to provide additional signage is a one off amount of £16k.