

COUNCIL MEETING

18 September 2023

PUBLIC QUESTION 2

Name of person submitting the question: Sharon Blagrove

Member to whom the question is to be put: Councillor Doug Oliver

Question

Rother District Council imposed a flat rate trial £30 parking cost on the Central Carpark at Camber recently, without any consultation.

The traders in that area have suffered significant financial losses because of the low footfall mainly due to the cost to park, £30 even for half an hour.

This particular carpark is the only one with flat access to the beach and is used by many disabled people.

I note Councillor Timpe the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for tourism, said in the BBC radio interview, 'We have made a mistake, and we all have our hands up'.

I have today presented the petition I started regarding this issue, which asked that the charge be dropped to allow the traders to recoup their losses. It has just under 2,000 signatures from service users, residents and traders.

Will you please confirm that this Council will consult the public before carrying out any trials such as these and other projects that affect residents and traders in future and as the Leader of the Council, do you have any message to convey to the traders and residents of Camber?

Answer

Trials can be a useful way of understanding the full impact of changes to services. It is important that the experiences of residents and businesses are considered, alongside any other data collected when determining the extent of those services into the future. The flat fee parking trial was a result of the wealth of historic public engagement between the Council, residents, business owners, and visitors to Camber including comments and complaints received, feedback from the public meeting held on 28 July 2021, and the frequently asked questions submitted to the council in 2022 and circulated to all Camber residents via the Camber Parish Newsletter in July 2022.

A consistent concern of residents has been the number of vehicles accessing the village, increasing antisocial parking and congestion, and extending the response time of emergency services vehicles. We have worked with our partners to address these concerns in a number of ways included new and increased signage on the approach to the village and along the diversion route used when Central car park is full, supporting the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement by East Sussex County

Council, replacing damaged posts on verges, providing financial support to Sussex Police to provide additional police presence during the summer period, and working closely with our partners at SECAmb to provide local ambulance support to beachgoers and residents.

The flat fee parking rate was trialled for a nine-week period (3 July-1 September inclusive) during the summer of 2023 to assess the impact on congestion and the number of vehicles accessing the village. With any trial, it is important to collate data and review over a period of time, and, due to poor weather during July in particular, all of the car parks in Camber were quieter than they were in July 2022.