

Standing Order 42

Consultation with Appropriate Chairman and Vice-Chairman for Urgent Action to be Taken Under Standing Order 42

To (Chair & Vice Chair):	Cllr Chris Howorth & Cllr Stephen Walsh
Relevant Committee:	Community Services
Date:	18.04.23
Report Author:	Linda Norman
Report Title:	Runnymede Pleasure Grounds Car Park Improvements
SO42 Proforma Number:	1019

1. Synopsis of report

To approve the expenditure:

- To provide the canoe club with its own parking portal to meet their seasonal parking requirements in a more efficient manner whilst protecting the parking income at the Pleasure Grounds
- To provide a better experience for disabled users who visit the grounds
- To improve signage within the car park for both disabled and regular users to ensure income is maximised and improve the visitor experience
- To repair and maintain the existing hard core parking spaces where parking bays have become faded and instal additional parking spaces for disabled users

2. Reasons why this matter cannot wait for a Committee Decision.

(Please state if agreement of Chairman and Vice-Chairman required within 24 hours, and why)

Due to the seasonal nature of visitors to the car park, the majority of this work needs to be implemented prior to the start of both the canoe club training season and when an increase in visitors is expected.

There will be a lead in time where the software improvements will need to be installed and tested as well as the installation of new signs and minor repairs to the car park surface which should be carried out with minimal interference for the public.

3. Recommendation(s)

To approve the expenditure of up to £7.5k to improve the car park operating systems, signage and maintenance of the car park to maximise the income generated at that location.

4. Context of report

Runnymede Pleasure Ground (RPG) comprises a land holding held in trust by the Council for the benefit of the public. The Community Services Committee exercise the Council's powers as Trustee of this land in the interests of social welfare with the object of improving the conditions of life for the surrounding residents.

The Canoe Club lease premises at RPG which includes a club house and a car park with spaces for about 40 cars. Access to the Canoe club can only be gained via the car park at RPG and with the introduction of a barrier system, this has created an issue where canoe club members cannot easily gain exit from the main car park as the system thinks they have not paid for their parking.

In addition, disabled badge holders are entitled to free parking in all of Runnymede's car park but with a barriered system, disabled people are expected to register on the Council's Parking portal to use this car park for free.

Whilst it was intended that this would assist disabled people in that they would only have to register their car and then the ANPR system would recognise their details and allow easy passage from the car park, for those disabled people who do not have access to the internet or who use multiple vehicles, they are unable to register on the portal and face difficulties when leaving the car park as their blue badge is not recognised.

Furthermore, of the 352 parking spaces only 3 are set aside for disabled users which is insufficient for the size of the car park. In 2022, 377 disabled people registered on the RPG portal which indicates this is a popular location and as such, the Council should ensure there are adequate spaces for disabled users and simplify the system to ensure ease of entry and exit to the car park.

For a car park of this size, the British Parking Association recommends a minimum of 4 spaces plus 3% of total number of spaces. However, as much of the car park is on grass, some of these spaces will be unsuitable to convert into disabled parking but a further 2 spaces should be set aside for disabled users at that location.

Notices at the car park are outdated and confusing and there has been no regular maintenance of the car park itself with no budgetary provision to allow for minor surface repairs, maintenance of parking bays and repairs to the barrier. This is a popular location and the car park needs to be maintained to a decent standard, with clear signage to protect income and support disabled users. The income from the car park fees is invested back into the Pleasure Grounds to provide a high calibre tourist attraction to be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. However if the car park is not maintained, this could result in claims against the Trust and loss of income if the barrier is not maintained on a regular basis.

5. Report and, where applicable, options considered

When the Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system was introduced at Runnymede Pleasure Grounds (RPG), the Treasurer of the Canoe Club (Ms O'Neill) was given access to the system to enable her to add her club members to the 'White-list' to obtain free parking at the Pleasure Grounds, including access to raise the barrier manually and also provided with the secure access code on days where events were held to allow visitors and spectators free parking within the main car park.

Whilst this was done with the best of intentions by the Open Spaces team, a member of the public should never have been given access, even in a limited capacity, to a Council owned system where personal data may be held.

Unfortunately, Ms O'Neill was not properly trained in using the system nor has she maintained proper membership records and she has been allowed to add over 400 cars onto the 'white-list' giving many cars unlimited access to both the RPG car park and Waitrose in Egham, which is linked to the same system. She has confirmed that there are only 60 members of the canoe club so the number of cars on the 'white-list' is disproportionate to club membership. Her access to the system has now been removed and all 400 car registrations have been set to expire on 30 June 2023. She has advised that not all members turn up every week and as such, their car park should be sufficient to support their users. However, the Council do need to consider a more effective way to manage the canoe club members parking to ensure they have easy access to their car park whilst not impacting on the RPG main car park.

Officers considered various options including installing a second camera at the Canoe club premises and moving the existing barrier which was considered cost prohibitive at £19k.

The most cost-effective solution will be to set up a parking portal similar to that used by the disabled badge holders where members can register up to 2 cars providing copy of their membership and ownership details. They will be expected to renew every 3 months as the canoe club have seasonal members and new members who are given trial periods who then do not sign up for the whole year. An email notification will be sent to the members for them to renew every quarter and if they do not renew, they will automatically be removed from the 'white-list'. The Council will allow 50 sessions of free parking a day which should ensure that the majority of canoe club members are able to park in their car park with a minimal number who may have to park in the RPG car park who will then need to pay for their parking.

For event days, the Council will issue the canoe club with a bar code to give to members and competitors to allow free parking on those days. However, spectators will be expected to pay for parking if they are using RPG car park.

The cost of this solution will be approximately £1200pa which will be recovered through proper administration of canoe events. The Council lost in excess of £600 parking income for their event in May 22 where Ms O'Neill was given access to the barrier code which she gave to all visitors. The barrier access code will no longer be given to event organisers and the canoe club membership will be properly managed and coordinated through the portal by RBC Parking staff.

For disabled badge holders, it is proposed to install a bar code scanner at the barrier kiosk that will be able to read and verify the Blue Badge bar code. This will enable those disabled visitors who are not able to register on the portal, to scan their badge on exit to ensure they continue to receive free parking. Whilst the portal is still the most efficient way for disabled visitors to use the car park as the system will automatically recognise their car registration so will allow immediate access, the bar code reader will enable an alternative method should they not be able to use the portal for whatever reason.

The cost of the scanner and bar code reader will be £1500 installation and £500pa for support and maintenance.

The signage is all old and confusing advising visitors that ANPR will be installed and other notices are unclear around payment and disabled bay usage. It is proposed to replace the signage with more up to date notices that are clear around payment and usage of the car park. It is anticipated that the cost of replacing these notices will be in the region of £500 - £1000.

The number of disabled bays need to be increased to meet best practice and to support disabled people using the car park as well as remarking out bays and filling minor potholes. It is anticipated that a budget of £3000pa is required to facilitate these minor works and ensure future repairs are budgeted for.

6. Policy framework implications

RPG is held in Trust by the Council and as such there are no Policy implications. However, as Trustee of this land, **by improving the parking facilities for both canoe club members and disabled visitors** this meets the Trusts objectives of enhancing the interests of social welfare by improving the conditions of life for the surrounding residents whilst also **underpinning the Council's Corporate Strategies of:**

- **Health & Wellbeing**
- **Empowering the Community**

7. Financial and Resource implications (where practicable)

The cost of the improvements are as follows:

- Canoe club improvements £1,200 pa
- Installation Bar code scanner and reader £1,500 (one off)
- Support and maintenance of barcode scanner £500 pa
- Replacement signs £1,000 (one off)
- Maintenance of car park surface £3,000 pa

Total revenue cost will be £4,700 pa annum with a further one off cost of £2,500 for immediate improvement works. It is anticipated that these costs will be recouped through increased revenue as visitors are able to clearly understand how to pay and will support disabled visitors with an improved experience.

8. Legal implications

There are none. The improvements are operational and will improve the visitor experience whilst protecting income for the Trust.

9. Equality implications

By implementing a bar code reader at the exit point to provide an alternative method for disabled users to improve their experience as well as increasing the number of disabled bays proportionate to the size of the car park will have a positive impact on disabled visitors

Installing clear signage around disabled bays and payment options will ensure disabled bays are only used by those who are entitled to use it.

Regular maintenance will ensure that the car park is fit for use and improves the customer experience for all.

10. Other implications (Environmental/Biodiversity/Sustainability must be addressed)

There are none

11. Background papers

There are none

12. **Chief Officer(s) Decision**

Signature of authorised officer ...

[Redacted Signature]

I have been consulted and am in agreement with the above

Signature(s) and position(s) of other relevant Chief Officer, Corporate Heads or authorised representatives

[Redacted Signature]

NB: this must include the Assistant Chief Executive or his authorised representative where the decision involves expenditure, loss of income, or future implications for budget or financial forecast.

13. **Chief Executive's Decision**

Signature of Chief Executive ...

[Redacted Signature]

I have been consulted and am in agreement with the above

14. **Chairman and Vice-Chairman Comments**

I concur in the Chief Officer's decision

[Redacted Signature]

Signed

Date

19/04/23

Signed

[Redacted Signature]

Date

20/04/23

I have the following further comments:

The completed copy is to be returned by the Councillors to the Corporate Head of Law and Governance (Democratic Services) who will send a copy to the Chief Officer and report to the relevant Committee for information.