

To Full Council

Opposition Business Motion

Charging for Car Parking in our Parks

23rd March 2023

At the Council meeting held on 23rd February 2023, the 3-party coalition approved, by a very small majority, its budget proposals for the coming years. Contained within the budget, are plans to introduce parking charges in 2023 and 2024 to many of the City's parks and leisure facilities, where currently the car parks are free for all to use.

In reaching this very unpopular decision, the coalition has completely failed to understand the city it claims to represent. It has failed to consider the needs of our residents and visitors and the impact such a damaging policy will have on them and the Council's own leisure facilities.

Belfairs Park users will be particularly impacted by such charges, as there are two golf clubs, two bowls clubs, a restaurant, a riding school for the disabled, the woodland centre, the cricket club and other leisure and outdoor facilities and activities. This policy will severely impact the viability of many of these clubs, which are using the Council's facilities and for which they already pay the Council to use.

Many of the users of the golf course and parks facilities are retired pensioners on fixed incomes. The introduction of these punitive charges may result in many not being able to afford to continue with partaking in the leisure, social and physical activities they currently enjoy. It could further result in the closure of many of these clubs and therefore, a significant loss of other income for the Council as a result of this deeply damaging and poorly thought out policy.

This Council therefore resolves that:

1. The proposed introduction of parking charges at Belfairs Park, Chalkwell Park, Priory Park and Southchurch Park in the 2024/25 financial year are abolished.
2. The proposed introduction of parking charges at Big Gunners Park, Little Gunners Park and Jones Memorial Ground planned for the 2023/24 financial year are abolished.
3. It becomes Council Policy not to introduce car parking charges at any of the city's parks.

Proposed By: Cllr Lesley Salter
Cllr Alan Dear
Cllr Jack Warren

Seconded By: Cllr Beggs
Cllr Boyd
Cllr Buck
Cllr Buckley
Cllr Courtenay
Cllr Cox
Cllr Davidson
Cllr Evans (Fay)
Cllr Folkard
Cllr Garston
Cllr Habermel
Cllr Harland
Cllr Jarvis
Cllr Jones (Darryl)
Cllr Lamb
Cllr Moyies
Cllr Nelson
Cllr Walker