

East Horsley Village Hall CIO

The Trustees of East Horsley Village Hall CIO

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Councillor Caroline Reeves
31 Artillery Road
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5th August 2019

From: Chris Tailby CBE
Chairman of Trustees, East Horsley Village Hall

Dear Councillor Reeves,

Petition against restricted parking at the East Horsley Village Hall.

I am writing on behalf of the Trustees of the East Horsley Village Hall to provide Councillors with background information and history of car parking at East Horsley Village Hall, in advance of a debate on the subject, as a result of a successful e-petition. I believe the debate is to be held at the Council Meeting on 8th October.

The signatories to the petition object to aspects of the new Parking Order which imposes parking restrictions in the East Horsley Village Hall car park ("the Hall car park"). The Order restricts parking to four hours with no return the same day.

Although the e-petition appears to be aimed at the "no return" provision, the Trustees are concerned to ensure that the four-hour parking restriction in the Hall car park is not removed as a result of the debate. The Trustees believe that it is extremely important for users and hirers of the Hall to be able to park in the Hall car park which they find difficult if spaces are blocked by commuters and other long-term parkers. Long term Hall hirers and users will not be affected as they will be issued with a day permit by the Hall.

Background

The lease of the East Horsley Village Hall site between GBC and the Trustees of the East Horsley Village Hall dated 30th December 1988 authorised the Trustees of the Hall and GBC to permit parking in the Hall and Medical Centre car parks. The medical centre has six designated spaces for use by the Centre. There are undesignated parking spaces in the Medical Centre area. The 67 car parking spaces which comprise the Hall car park were provided and paid for by the then Hall Committee as a condition of obtaining planning permission for the construction of the Hall.

The Hall car park is used by hirers and users of the Hall as well as users of the Kingston Meadow leisure facilities, walkers, dog-walkers, medical centre staff, users of the medical centre (patients), shop workers, commuters etc.

Problems caused by long term parkers

It may help to set the context of the restrictions now imposed if I record that the problems of long-term parking at the Hall by commuters, shop workers and others have been going on for a considerable time, and long before I became Honorary Chairman of Trustees nearly five years ago. The hall files show that over the years, my predecessors tried to make some headway with restricting commuter and other long-term parking but were unsuccessful. For example, in 2002 there was a discussion between GBC and the Parish Council, as Custodian Trustee of the Hall, to install a gated system for parking which would have been operated by the Caretaker. This system seems not to have been progressed.

During the time I have been involved with the Hall, both as Trustee and Chairman, from time to time successive Hall Managers and Caretakers have placed leaflets on parked cars requesting the owners not to block spaces. On occasions when I have been attending Arts Society meetings, I have photographed cars at 0930 and then seen the same cars still parked there at 1300. Regrettably these efforts have had little impact on the problem.

We know that some potential hirers of the hall have raised the problems of parking and in some cases have declined to hire the hall because of the parking problems.

Sometimes are worse than others. There are particular parking problems on three Wednesdays in the month when (apart from some holiday months) there are Arts Society and U3A meetings. Many of the people at the meetings have difficulty walking and rely on their car to attend the meeting. Unfortunately, I know of cases where members of Horsley Arts Society have turned up for the meeting but have been unable to park and have returned home.

The problem of lack of space is such that people park on the pavement next to the railway line which obstructs access by wheel chairs and push chairs. In the event of an emergency, it would be difficult for an ambulance or fire engine to access the Hall.

The “no return” rule

The Trustees realise that the terms of the current parking order have caused concern and strictly interpreted may cause difficulties for legitimate parkers, hence the e-petition. I do not know whether the supporters and signatories of the petition are people who regularly park for lengthy periods in the hall car park taking up space or have concerns about legitimate parking. And there was no discussion with me about the parking problems before the petition was launched.

Insofar as the petition complains about the “no return” provision in the parking order, there is real substance to the complaint since people may return to the parking area several times in one day to drop and collect children or items from the Hall or playground, walk dogs and visit the Medical Centre. All of those visits are likely to be of short duration and unlikely to cause parking problems for hall users. It should be possible to cover the issue of multiple short visits either by the way the order is enforced or maybe by means of a ticket machine.

The four-hour restriction

I very much hope that you will understand that the four-hour restriction is something that Trustees welcome as they believe that it will go some way to free up parking spaces and enable more hirers to park at the hall.

As I indicated at the beginning of this letter, the problems of long-term parking at the hall have been going on since it was first built and the four-hour restriction is at long last a step in the right direction to prevent long term parking. What we think needs to be “fixed” is the “no return” period for legitimate users of the Hall car park who wish to make multiple short-term visits.

Yours sincerely,

C R Tailby