

Councillors Written Questions and the Responses

Full Council – 19 July 2023

Q1 – Question to Councillor Atif Nawaz (Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development) from Councillor Kim Jaggard

At the beginning of June, several newspapers (Telegraph, Independent etc) reported on guidance from The Institution of Structural Engineers which calls for car park designs to change to cope with bigger, heavier electric cars, some of which have batteries which can weigh around 500kg. [UK car parks could ‘collapse’ under the weight of EVs, report warns | E&T Magazine \(theiet.org\)](#)

They stated that “Many of Britain’s multi-storey car parks (need) to be ‘carefully considered’ amid fears that older designs cannot cope with the weight of electric vehicles. The greater weight is putting strain on car parks that were built in the 1960s and 1970s, which could put pressure on car park floors, with older structures most susceptible to buckling.”

With Crawley Borough Council owning and operating three multi storey carparks in Crawley:

- 1. Please can you confirm when our carparks were last independently assessed by structural engineers for load bearing limits?*
- 2. What measures have been put in place to determine whether our carparks are strong enough to support the additional weights of electric vehicles going forward?*
- 3. The report suggested reducing the number of spaces in carparks in order to limit weights. Will our car parks need to be reconfigured to accommodate fewer vehicles in the future?*
- 4. Would it be feasible to either limit or measure the weight of any vehicle entering our multistorey carparks?*
- 5. What are the likely budget implications for any future structural or configuration changes should they be needed?*

Answer by Councillor Noyce – (Cabinet Member for Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change)

Response

- 1. Town Hall/Exchange Road Car Park, Orchard Street Car Park and Kingsgate Car Park were last subject to a structural survey in 2022. These assessments were in relation to openings and vehicle restraint systems only, but no concerns were identified in relation to the wider structure or load bearing. The recent from**

the Institution of Structural Engineers now recommends including load/weight bearing as part of these regular surveys and will be incorporated moving forwards. In light of information from the report, and work ongoing in relation to EV charging, a report has been requested and is to begin shortly which specifically focuses on weight bearing within the Town Hall Car Park. This is the only car park currently being considered for EV charging. Kingsgate and Orchard Street will be considered in due course.

2. An assessment of the Town Hall Carpark which is due to begin imminently. This will provide the council with sufficient structural calculations and data to ascertain if there are structural considerations relevant to the Town Hall Car Park which would require us to mitigate against excessive load bearing within the structure. Given this car park has been created using reinforced concrete, including the use of pillars, it is not anticipated that there will be an issue. Kingsgate and Orchard Street to be considered in due course and no EV charge points will be introduced without structural assessments being carried out.
3. It is not anticipated that EVs will result in the reduction of car parking spaces within the Town Hall Car Park and any weight limits may apply to specific areas of the carpark, which will likely result in EV charging being located at various points within the site, rather than a dedicated area for EV charging. The assessment due to begin shortly will inform how and where EV charging can be located. Kingsgate and Orchard Street will be considered in due course.
4. Technology does exist which would enable us to limit the weight of vehicles entering the site. It is not anticipated that EVs will result in the reduction of car parking spaces within the Town Hall Car Park and any weight limits may apply to specific areas of the carpark, which will likely result in EV charging being located at various points within the site, rather than a dedicated area for EV charging. The assessment due to begin shortly will inform how and where EV charging can be located. Kingsgate and Orchard Street will be considered in due course.
5. An assessment of the Town Hall Car Park which is due to begin imminently. This will provide the council with sufficient structural calculations and data to ascertain if there are structural considerations relevant to the Town Hall Carpark which would require us to mitigate against excessive load bearing within the structure. Given this car park has been created using reinforced concrete, including the use of pillars, it is not anticipated that there will be an issue. Kingsgate and Orchard Street to be considered in due course and no EV charge points will be introduced without structural assessments being carried out. It is important to note that the risks highlighted in the report published recently by the Institution of Structural Engineers. The Design Recommendations for Multi-storey and Underground Car Parks highlighted that the risks associated with weight bearing on related to the concentration of electric vehicles in dedicated places within structures i.e. EV-only charging on Floor 3. This means that there are different strategies to allow the integration of EV points that do not create load bearing risks or costly reinforcement.

Q2 – Question to Councillor Chris Mullins (*Cabinet member for Leisure and Wellbeing*) from Councillor Peck

With regards to the completion of the major refurbishments and charging being introduced to the nine tennis courts across West Green Park, Maidenbower Park and Southgate Park, I would like to ask what the uptake has been since it's launch, in terms of courts rented both as annual season tickets and in addition, as pay per hour broken down weekly. How does this compare to previous usage when charging was not in place?

Response

Implementation of the new booking system and charging model went live on 17 April 2023. Following this, the final renovation and refurbishment works were staggered and completed in sequence to include: 2-tone court colouring across all three sites and the installation of ball-netting and kickboard at Maidenbower courts – work to be carried out in mid-July 2023.

Between April and June 2023 (Q1 2023/24), a total of 124 household season tickets and 218 Pay & Play sessions were sold, generating a gross income of £6,607.50. This equates to 32.6% of our Year 1 annual income target set at £20,215 (gross).

Table 1: below shows the month on month increase in court bookings and number of P&P sessions sold in the first 3 months (Q1: 2023/24)

	No of court Booking	P&P Sold	Season Tickets Sold
April	179	12	46
May	452	75	41
June	633	131	37
Total	1263	218	124

In addition, On 20 May, following the soft launch of the booking system, a successful Open Day was held at West Green Park with over 200 participants, of all ages and abilities, with free coach-led activities delivered by our coaching provider 'Serious About Community Tennis'. The event included a live DJ, free junior, adult and cardio taster sessions.

We do not have any recorded data on court usage prior to implementing the new gated access and booking system.

Q3 – Question to Councillor Nawaz (*Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development*) from Councillor Crow

The water jets in Queens Square were described as being a central feature and a focal point, when the square was redesigned and repaved. While it was some years ago, I believe it was October 2017 when I attended the formal re-opening of Queens Square, with the water jets switch-on effectively being the main event after speeches being made.

I am aware the jets have not been working for a long time, longer than you have been a member of this council, although they were also switched off during parts of 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic which muddies the waters somewhat as to if the jets were able to work or not.

We are now into the second half of the summer of 2023. We have just had the hottest June on record and summer last year was one of the hottest ever, with high temperature records broken. The water jets are still not working and it has been several years since this feature has been on during the summer with children in particular able to enjoy. There were media reports last month that they may be working soon, but I don't recall any information given to councillors about this

1. Please provide a broad monthly timeline of the operation of the water jets since first use, with the reasons for periods of non-operation explained?
2. Please provide an update as to when repairs will be completed. Will the water jets be switched on this summer or will Queens Square have a fourth successive summer without the water jets being switched on?

Response

1. November 2021: Flood to plant room where it filled the whole room up to ceiling level. Equipment controlling the fountains, and some surrounding electrical supplies were damaged and became unusable. Initial investigation highlighted that repairs to the plant room will be significant and not a simple solution.

November 2021 – May 2023: The ability to award the tender for these works was linked to the assessment of whether there may be a case to recover repair costs from the original Queens Square contractor. The advice was that until that position was clearer, the Council needed to hold off from completing the repair / refit to the plant room. Following collation of evidence and review by external legal advisers, it was apparent that pursuing a case against the contractor was likely to be costly, very difficult to prove and could have necessitated holding off undertaking the repair works until it is resolved (and no time frame could be given before any such case were resolved). Within this context, the agreed approach was for the Council to progress the repair / reinstatement directly.

The hiatus while the legal position was being assessed subsequently required the design consultants to be re-engaged and for this work to be re-programmed. The specification and tender for the works (including adding greater resilience to minimise the potential for this to re-occur) were then progressed.

March – June 2023: Completion of specification, consultant and contractor procurements and appointments.

July – September 2023: Works on site

2. Week Commencing 24th July: Site set up and health and safety checks. Health and Safety checks to relevant areas and completion of the final design matters.

WC 31st July: Works on site to commence.

End of September: Works on site scheduled for completion.

There are currently regular meetings for every contractor and consultant to see if they can attend site earlier than planned and shorten their works programme. They are bound by their own supply chain requirements however these co-ordination meetings will continue over the site set up and works period to see if the programme can be shortened.

