

Surrey County Council Local Committee (Guildford) 7 December 2011

Petitions [Item 4]

None received.

Written public questions [Item 5a]

Question from:

Lori Winch-Johnson on behalf of the Focus Group which campaigned for gritting treatment during snow and bad weather for an identified set of roads in Charlottetown, Guildford.

The Focus group comprised local residents, an HTAG representative, the Head Teacher of Holy Trinity school and Pewley Down school, and community police.

Communication was made very helpfully with Cllr Steve Renshaw who chaired the Task Group looking at the winter response of 2010 and which made recommendations to go to cabinet at Surrey County Council; Cllr David Goodwin who was also on the Task group and who helped advise and keep informed the Focus group as the matter progressed. Also, the meeting between the community police and Head of Winter Response was very helpful indeed.

Officers in the Surrey County Council also discussed the proposal of gritting roads deemed priority two, so that in effect they would be treated as priority one, and Jenny Isaacs, Head of Highways, also responded.

The Focus group is absolutely delighted that most of the roads will indeed now be treated as priority one in severe weather. The high slopes and steep gradients combined with thermal chill warrant it, as seen in the hazards experienced last year during snow when schools closed and people were marooned, especially the elderly. The doctors' surgeries were hard to reach safely too and the lack of traffic had meant the roads did not thaw. Creating gritted roads will permit traffic to flow and thus ease the problems associated with impacted icy conditions for so many weeks on high gradients.

The Focus group wishes to extend its gratitude to the officers who listened and made the necessary recommendations which has extended the Priority one route to incorporate these roads in Charlottetown.

Members of the Focus group will also willingly help with the clearing of paths if they are available to do so, and the stock pile of salt and equipment arranged for self help groups through the action of Mark Brett Warburton is also recognised as very helpful.

It is hoped that the combination of gritted roads and clearing of paths will alleviate difficulties on the scale seen in the snowfall last year.

A vote of thanks was made before the police and council members at a recent meeting with residents at which the map showing the new priority one route was presented. A copy of that in full was given to HTAG to publish.

What the Focus group would now hope is for a monitoring of the p1 route's efficiency and level of self help applied, if a snowfall were to make them activated. Can the committee please investigate who would be overseeing that?

Answer:

The monitoring of the service providers performance on the Priority 1 salting network is undertaken by Operations. Within the new service provision all gritters are now fitted with GPS trackers enabling the gritting route to be audited against the salting network including time, speed, spreading and coverage. During snow further information would be provided on road condition and roads cleared.

Self help by its very nature is heavily reliant on the local community and is an additional response to snow above the strategic winter service being provided by the County. The overseeing of these adhoc responses would lie with the individual communities; we would nevertheless welcome feedback to our customer services on footways cleared.

Question from:

K C Meldrum CB, Chairman, Merrow Residents Association

As this committee will be aware there are now acute parking problems in Epsom Road, Merrow particularly during term time and also when a large event is taking place in either the St John's Church or Centre. This problem is likely to be exacerbated when the restaurant and shops in Merrow Heights in the Epsom Road are opened.

One solution to the problem is for some cars to be parked at the Merrow Park and Ride and for the occupants of the cars to be allowed to board the Park and Ride bus and to be dropped off in Epsom Road, Merrow. This arrangement would need to be reversed to allow the Park and Ride buses to pick up passengers from Epsom Road and take them to their vehicles in the Park and Ride.

Does the Local Committee have an opinion on this suggestion?

Answer:

Broadly, and as an overview, the Guildford Park & Ride network of services is designed to assist with reducing the traffic congestion in the town centre, providing associated environmental benefits through improved air quality and noise reduction. The car parks are strategically located to intercept cars on the route into Guildford, and thereby offering drivers a more sustainable journey option for the final part of their trip. During 2011 it is expected that almost 1 million passenger trips will be made across all the Park & Ride services.

The Merrow site was opened in Autumn 2008 and has had a steady increase in the number of cars parking. The bus journey time from Merrow to the town centre is the longest of the three permanent park & ride sites - approx 12 minutes with up to four buses/hour. (Artington journey time is 8 minutes, up to six buses/hour; Spectrum journey time 8/9 minutes, 5 buses/hour). The fare charged from Merrow is set at a level to encourage use of this site - drivers could continue their journey to Spectrum - as well as reflecting the increased journey time and lesser level of service.

Whilst introducing additional bus stop in both directions to serve the Merrow Heights development is feasible and would generate additional revenue to support the Park & Ride services (assuming existing £1.50 fare structure is retained or "short-hop" £1 is offered), this has to be balanced against the time penalty with the additional stop, existing passengers perception that the service may not be as direct, and potential pressure for parking spaces at Merrow with those who wish to travel in to the town centre.

On balance, taking into consideration the pressure on journey time, particularly during the peak/school times the Merrow Park & Ride Service 300 should not stop at Merrow shops. However, should there be a number of known and planned events which are likely to cause parking problems on Epsom Road consideration could be given to accommodating these.

Question from:

Maurice Byham, on behalf of The Guildford Society

Formal consultation on GBC's Town Centre Masterplan is due to commence on 7 December. A number of projects are being developed which are expected to have an impact on Guildford's transport system: the Railway Station re-development, the Friary Extension, North Street and the proposed new bus station on the Bedford Road site. We are told that the County Transport Authority has been consulted on these matters; this tends to imply a reactive approach. These are matters which will concern both Guildfordians and visitors for several generations.

We would like to be told the extent to which the Transport Authority is, or has been, proactively engaged in developing an overall plan to ensure that these projects together produce overall benefits for Guildford's transport system.

In particular, as regards the location of a new bus station, how much evaluation and modelling of traffic flows has already been carried out, bearing in mind that a bus, at current peak rate would be either arriving at, or leaving Bedford Road every 23 seconds, and at the projected capacity rate, every 15 seconds? We consider that any serious pitfalls should be uncovered at an early stage, before it is too late to seek alternative solutions.

Answer:

Please see the answer to Mr Norris' question below.

Question from:

Alan Norris, resident of Ash

What consultation has Guildford Borough Council undertaken with Surrey County Council in respect of the proposed new bus station at Bedford Road, Guildford? In particular, has this consultation extended to the anticipated effect of the location of the bus station on traffic flows on the town centre roads? Also, has any consultation included the effect of the proposals on local bus services and bus passengers, including the plans for to terminate some bus routes from the east of Guildford at stands at the upper High Street? Does this Committee consider that the level of consultation has been adequate, bearing in mind the decision taken at the GBC Executive meeting on 20 October.

Answer:

The County Council, as consultee of Guildford Borough Council on planning applications, and in its role as Transport Authority, has been involved to some extent in the variety of proposals within Guildford Town centre. Surrey County Council officers have been mindful of the potential cumulative impact of these developments and in reaction to this, a piece of modelling work is being scheduled for early in 2012. This will enable the assessment of the wider implications of the combination of these proposals on vehicle traffic movements around the town, as each one comes forward. Although two of the projects involve transport infrastructure at the railway station and a future bus station, there should not be an expectation that the projects will necessarily produce overall benefits to the town's transport system. The railway station proposals are primarily to deliver a mixed use development, whilst the bus station re-location is being explored by the Borough as a means of delivering possible further retail development in the town centre.

The County Council's remit in the consideration of these proposals is to try and ensure that there is at least no overall reduction in quality of facilities for these two modes, and that the remainder of the transport network experiences no worsening in operation. There will be gains in terms of some of the facilities, but there might also be costs, and it is the modelling work which will assist in quantifying the impacts that might arise. In the wider context we do of course have the remit as Transport Authority to ensure that we work with Guildford to support development that will add to economic growth and enhance facilities in the built environment, and we will continue to do this through the LTP and the forthcoming LSTF bidding process.

In respect of the specific reference to the potential bus station relocation, the County are in the process of working with Guildford as developer, to explore potential solutions to all the transport issues that arise in moving a major piece of infrastructure such as this. This includes assessing modelling work that is being produced by the developer's agents, and potential mitigation arising from that. Discussions are taking place with bus operators, and their comments are also being conveyed to the developer. We would also expect the developer to give consideration to the needs and views of bus users. Many issues still remain to be addressed, not least those surrounding the location of a substantial proportion of the bus terminuses on street in the east of the town centre. Finally, the County will be formally consulted if planning applications are submitted on any of the proposals