

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL



LOCAL COMMITTEE (MOLE VALLEY)

DATE: 12 DECEMBER 2018
SUBJECT: PARKING ON LEATHERHEAD HIGH STREET
DIVISION: LEATHERHEAD AND FETCHAM EAST

PETITION DETAILS:

A petition containing 830 signatures as of 30 October 2018 requests:

“We, the undersigned individuals who wish to use the services in central Leatherhead, request that Leatherhead High Street be open for free parking and access from 3.30pm (4.30pm on market days), for an experimental period of six months. This will encourage us and others to patronise Leatherhead, when at present, the free parking available in other surrounding centres encourages us to go to them instead”

Mole Valley Local Committee Petition (12 Dec) Summary:

The Petition is sponsored by **the Leatherhead Residents Association and the Leatherhead & District Chamber of Commerce**. It is a request for the **RETURN of free parking to Leatherhead High Street at 3.30pm, with the Pedestrian Zone finishing an hour earlier than the current end time of 4.30pm**. This is because the Street is virtually empty of pedestrians at 3pm and the businesses and traders on the High Street have suffered greatly under these TROs for the last 12 years.

TRO 1 - Pedestrian Zone 10 - 4.30pm - shorten the zone to end at 3.30 pm
 TRO2 - NO WAITING 8.00 - 6.00pm - change the TRO after the Pedestrian Zone to free parking.

We have previously sponsored a Petition with a similar objective except that we were petitioning for a 6 months trial of free parking on the High Street from 3.30pm, except from 4.30 on market days Thursday and Saturday. This Petition was signed by 99 businesses and civic organisations and was considered by the MV Local Committee on 5 September 2018 and PASSED. Surrey Highways was asked by MVLC to reconsider its negative response, meet with its Chairman and with the Petitioners to try to find a way to do the TRIAL.

We have since heard from Highways that a permanent TRO change is much easier than a trial, or that an 18 months trial is easier than a 6 month trial. We are eager to be flexible and would agree to either of these changes, but particularly the permanent change one, as the difference it makes in the vitality of the town centre is extreme.

Likewise, Highways said signs for different hours ad different days are complicated, so we are delighted to go for 3.30 M-S, especially after hearing from market traders that they too wish for greater footfall into their markets.

Not only all the Councillors in the MVLC support this move; the local MV Councillors for Leatherhead of all political persuasions also support it.

We note from Surrey Highways Strategic Plan 2016-2021 12 statements in the various sections throughout the document that it is committed to doing its part to ensure the economic vitality of the businesses around its network of roads. We believe that Leatherhead is the only town of its size (11.3k) to have NO WAITING following a pedestrian zone, resulting in NO POSSIBILITY for a shopper to stop on the Street while shops are open. The effect of this has been extreme harm to the town centre.

RESPONSE:

This petition follows a similar petition received by the Local Committee at the meeting on 5 September 2018. At the request of the committee, further analysis was undertaken of the petitioners' concerns, and a full report is brought to this committee meeting.

It is acknowledged that there is strong support from residents and elected Members for encouraging the use of the local shops, theatre, services, restaurants and hotel in Leatherhead town centre. It is also understood that there are strong and opposing opinions on changes to the parking in Leatherhead, and concerns about safety for all road users. A safety review is required, of the proposal to change the end of the pedestrian to a time when particularly children could be more likely to be present, to manage highway safety risk.

Leatherhead, like most high streets across Britain, has responded to changes in the economy and the changing nature of retail and the high street experience. It is understood that users of the High Street would like to have better access and more free parking, to potentially encourage footfall in the town centre.

Encouraging footfall and vibrancy of town centres is a complex issue, and Transform Leatherhead (TL) is the major project to address this. It is important to ensure that the implications of the petition proposal are fully understood and evidence based before implementing any changes.

There will be a full parking review across Mole Valley in the next financial year, with a new Parking Strategy from 2020. This petition proposal will be reviewed in more detail within that parking review, with information from a safety review of the proposal that is scheduled to be carried out by March 2019.

Comments made, within the petition signatures, have been captured and indicate concerns about parking generally, cost of business rates, parking for people who work in the High Street, use by cyclists, the costs of parking, and also disabled user liking the parking to stay as it is.

The current free and unrestricted parking on the pavement area, next to the shops, can sometimes inhibit access and may not encourage pop-and-shoppers.

The TL team propose to extend the work already being carried out on the Swan Centre and have commissioned an economic impact assessment of the High Street. This information could be available in 2019 to tie into the results of the traffic model and the longer term options work for the Swan Centre.

The report to the 12 December Mole Valley Local Committee, following the similar petition on 5 September 2018, sets out the proposed actions that could be carried out in the shorter term for Leatherhead High Street.

MVDC and SCC acknowledge that the High Street and the existing access arrangements are not easy to resolve. There are many competing issues in the High Street which need to be effectively balanced. The TL project team, SCC and Members of the Mole Valley Local Committee are very sympathetic to the information provided in the petition and the reasons set out for proposing alterations to the existing arrangements. However, it is not recommended to proceed with the petition proposal, at this time, at an approximate cost of £25,000 (funding has not been identified).



Parking on Leatherhead High Street, 9 December 2018

<u>RECOMMENDATION</u>
The Local Committee is asked to note the petition and response, and to refer to the full report that identifies a number of recommendations for the committee to consider.

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