

GUILDFORD JOINT COMMITTEE

ITEM 5: PETITIONS AND PETITION REPSONSES

DATE: 03 JULY 2019

SUBJECT: CLIMATE CHANGE

DIVISION/

WARD(S)

AFFECTED: ALL

PETITION DETAILS:

We are writing to you to talk about the state of our natural world. As you may be aware, we are witnessing a climate breakdown. This means we have approximately 11 years left before our planet will become uninhabitable. We are writing to you, as the young people of Guildford, to make you aware of this and to ask for action on this issue.

Today, on Friday 24th May, we have decided to strike school to campaign for our future. The school strikes have been inspired by Greta Thunberg, a 16-year old climate activist from Sweden, who striked from school on her own in order to educate people and make them aware of this climate catastrophe. We decided to set up our own strike in Guildford, and the response has been amazing.

These are our 4 demands: (from UK Student Climate Network)

The Government declare a **climate emergency** and implement a **Green New Deal** to achieve Climate Justice.

The national curriculum is reformed to address the ecological crisis as an **educational priority**.

The Government **communicate** the severity of the ecological crisis and the **necessity to act now** to the general public.

The Government recognise that young people have the **biggest stake in our future**, by incorporating youth views into policy making and bringing the **voting age down to 16**.

We would like these demands to be met on not only a national level, but also a local level. The first demand has been partly met, but although the government have declared a climate emergency, we don't feel that they are acting on it. For example, there is still fracking going on, a new runway at Heathrow, etc. Here in Guildford, we can make many changes to make it a greener place – for example being a plastic free borough, a better cycling and public transport system and encouraging schools to reduce their carbon footprint. All it needs is bold action from those in power.

We hope that you understand the severity of this and we would love to hear back from you.

Lead petitioner: Petra Todd

Number of signatures submitted: 342

RESPONSE:

Thank you for submitting your petition to Guildford Borough Council on 24 May 2019 raising your concerns about the natural world and asking the Council to act to make the Borough of Guildford a greener place.

Climate change is a priority for both Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council and embedded in multiple policies and strategies. Much work has already been completed across many Council departments. However, we realise that we can't stop there, and more is planned for the future.

The environment and the issues raised by this petition around use of plastics and air quality are of great concern to the borough and county council alongside wider environmental issues. In response, the Leader of Surrey County Council made a statement at the last council meeting highlighting these concerns and has requested that the select committee set up a task group of councillors to look at this issue. The select committee will be agreeing their approach to this at its next meeting on 1 July and will be looking to engage with a wide range of residents, community groups and partners over the summer to understand the issues from their perspective and look to identify where we can all work together to improve our environment.

Related to this, the county council, with partners across health and districts and boroughs, have in recent months also established the Rethinking Transport programme to reimagine how transport should be commissioned. In line with the Community Vision for Surrey, this is a real opportunity for a new approach to providing transport services across the county, supporting residents to stay connected to each other, their communities and services in sustainable ways.

Over May and June, there have been a series of engagement sessions taking place working with representatives from boroughs and districts, education settings, community partners, health care providers, residents, businesses and service users to discover where transport is working well, what can be improved, and how it can be more innovative and integrated. In response to the petition being submitted, the county council has contacted the petition organisers and are in the process of arranging a focus group with them which is a great opportunity to start working together to tackle the very real issues they have raised.

Below is a summary of achievements and future plans to demonstrate that both Councils are working together and with partners across a broad range of areas to improve air quality, encourage sustainability and reduce carbon footprint.

We know we cannot deliver the changes alone and want to work collectively with communities and partners. Your passion and enthusiasm for improving the environment locally and nationally is inspiring and will no doubt motivate others to take positive action.

Guildford Joint Committee – air quality priorities

The Guildford Joint Committee agreed a set of air quality priorities at its last meeting on 20 March 2019. In producing the priorities, a review of existing strategies and policies discovered air quality targets were already within over 15 plans across both organisations.

Appendix B of the Air Quality report details the air quality priorities:

<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=751&MId=6885&Ver=4>

Green Travel Network

Guildford Borough Council has just launched easitGUILDFORD, a green travel network. The green travel network aims to encourage commuters to use sustainable ways to get to work to reduce congestion and pollution. More details about the scheme can be found at: <https://www.easit.org.uk/network/easitGUILDFORD-23>

Energy saving at Guildford Borough Council

For many years the Guildford Borough Council has been proactive in identifying and delivering projects that save energy and carbon dioxide, which are mostly financed through our dedicated Invest-to-Save sustainable energy fund and our Capital Programme. Projects such as LED Relighting, Air Source Heat Pumps, Solar PV installations, Variable Speed Drives, boiler replacements and building insulation measures have contributed towards carbon dioxide savings of over 40% since 2008/9.

In addition, our Hydroelectric plant on the River Wey has been generating clean electricity for nearly 15 years and we have used this and other initiatives to educate the public and support action on climate change locally.

Air Quality Strategy and Climate Change Task Group

Guildford Borough Council adopted an Air Quality Strategy with an accompanying action plan in November 2017 that sets out the Council's commitment to improve air quality. Working with partners such as Surrey County Council, the University of Surrey and engaging local residents and businesses is key to delivering improvements. The Strategy can be found at: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/19807/Air-quality-monitoring>

The action plan attached to Air Quality Strategy is monitored by Guildford Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that sufficient progress is being made implementing the actions. The last report in January 2019 can be seen at: <http://www2.guildford.gov.uk/councilmeetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=262&MId=772&Ver=4>.

There is also a Climate Change Task Group at Guildford Borough Council led by Councillors.

Encouraging Schools to Reduce Their Carbon Footprint

Surrey County Council's Safer Travel Team which is part of Road Safety & Active Travel Group is working to promote safe and sustainable travel almost exclusively through working with schools. In addition our Cycling Training Team also offer Bikeability cycle training to all schools. Therefore we offer a range of services to schools to assist them in promoting road safety and alternatives to the car:

- Promotion and development of school travel plans. These are action plans created by schools listing the activities they will undertake to promote road safety and sustainable travel using the national Modeshift STARS online portal. This is a nationally accredited programme with hundreds of schools up and down the county taking part. In Surrey, we have approximately 30 Bronze level schools and have recently been advised by Modeshift that we now have a Silver. This scheme has been in existence in Surrey for approximately 18 months.

- Cycle training – SCC provides cycle training for circa 19,000 young people a year mostly through Surrey’s schools.
- Pedestrian training – SCC will be piloting and offering a pedestrian training service to Surrey’s primary schools next academic year.
- Theatre in Education programmes for year 7 and 11 (secondary school) involving key road safety messages delivered by external theatre companies to schools.
- The annual Golden Boot challenge within schools across Surrey in June (nearly 200 schools will be taking part this year). The Golden Boot Challenge is an interclass competition to reward the class who use the most sustainable modes of travel for the school journey. It engages approximately 40,000 pupils across the county.
- Road Safety Outside School Assessments – these are visits to the areas adjacent to schools to identify and address concerns over road safety that are a barrier to more walking and cycling. This has resulted in investment in a range of highway improvements at a range of schools across Surrey.
- Collaboration with the charity Living Streets on the provision of their WOW year round walk to school challenge across 60 schools in Surrey.
- Provision of school crossing patrol service to facilitate walking to school at 50 sites across Surrey.

In addition to the above, the Safer Travel Team are delivering an Air Quality programme to 49 schools across Surrey whom lie within a 2km distance from a declared Air Quality Monitoring Area. A grant was won as result of a joint bid by SCC and Surrey Air Alliance to DEFRA for behaviour change activities at the schools selected. The programme has involved the following interventions: Theatre production, Workshops and assemblies delivered by an Air Quality Charity, and Anti-Idling events to highlight to parents the effects of idling outside the school. SCC Safer Travel Team colleagues are looking at ways to complete another programme next academic year with District and Borough Council partners.

Improved cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure

Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council working collaboratively have recently undertaken or are currently in the process of implementing a number of varied measures with the specific aim of encouraging greater use of public transport and/or walking and cycling and modal shift away from the private motor vehicle.

There are currently two ‘live’ packages of transport schemes in Guildford which are in the delivery phase:

- Guildford Town Centre Transport Package
- Unlocking Guildford

Information on Guildford’s major transport projects can be found online at:
www.surreycc.gov.uk/guildfordtransportschemes

More details about the projects can be found in the report Model shift: encouraging sustainable travel:
<http://www2.guildford.gov.uk/councilmeetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=262&MIId=770&Ver=4>

Thank you again for taking the time to contact the Council on such an important issue.

RECOMMENDATION

The Joint Committee is asked to note the officer response.
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Contact Officers:

Justine Fuller, Regulatory Services Manager, Guildford Borough Council 01483 444370

Cherrie Mendoza, Transport Strategy Project Manager, Surrey County Council 01483 404651

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