

GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL AND  
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL



GUILDFORD  
BOROUGH

**GUILDFORD JOINT COMMITTEE**

**ITEM 5: PETITIONS AND PETITION RESPONSES**

**DATE: 18 MARCH 2020**

**SUBJECT: INITIATE A CAR-FREE DAY IN THE TOWN CENTRE OF  
GUILDFORD.**

**DIVISION/  
WARD(S)**

**AFFECTED: GUILDFORD SOUTH-WEST, GUILDFORD SOUTH-EAST**

**PETITION DETAILS:**

**Initiate a Car Free Day in the Town Centre of Guildford**

A Car-Free Day would show what Guildford Town Centre could be like without vehicles – a day with much reduced air pollution, CO2 emissions and noise. It would demonstrate the benefits of walking, cycling, and public transport over using the car. It would encourage residents and visitors to find alternative, healthier ways of getting around the town. For a day, we could use the roadways for something other than just driving our cars. Guildford has an opportunity to show it is taking the climate emergency seriously by joining the many other towns and cities across the globe that are introducing car-free days. We therefore ask that the Guildford Joint Committee adopt this initiative by urgently requesting the relevant agencies to plan a car-free day, with the exception of emergency vehicles, in Guildford Town Centre. This should coincide with International Car-Free Day on or around the 22nd September, 2020.

Lead petitioner:  
Dr David Stokes

Signatures received: 321

**RESPONSE:**

Thank you for your petition to the Guildford Joint Committee.

At the full Council meeting held on Tuesday, 9 July 2019, it was resolved to declare a 'Climate Emergency', and commit actions to support businesses and all local authorities in their work to tackle climate change by providing a strong unified voice for councils in lobbying for support to address this emergency, and sharing best practice across all councils.

A preliminary discussion has already taken place with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Matt Furniss, and he is supportive of the principle of a Car-free Day. However, with the current uncertainty concerning the impacts of Covid-19, the County Council would not support it at this time. The advice surrounding the infection is evolving and it would be

inappropriate to introduce additional measures which may impact on people's ability to travel.

If any 'Car-free day' is progressed in future years the desire for a reduction in vehicle emissions, needs be considered very carefully and holistically.

In an area such as Guildford any closure of main classified roads will undoubtedly require diversion of through traffic onto other routes, generally making journeys longer and moving congestion and air quality concerns elsewhere, where air quality management areas are already in existence, such as Compton and Shalford. The Town is already severed by many environmental features such as railway lines, rivers, trunk roads and other features, which make diversion of traffic that much more difficult and complicated.

A complete closure on many roads would still necessitate some form of access for buses, emergency services such as the Police, Fire and Ambulance services, and would necessitate a level of manned gated access, whether that be the Police or other accredited traffic officers, to ensure compliance.

The signing for diverted traffic would be quite extensive to cover all types of vehicles that would be diverted from the Town Centre, as well as HGV traffic, so the routes would have to be suitable and appropriate for this type of vehicle. Closures of more minor roads would be simpler and easier to accommodate than large areas of closure such as the gyratory system.

With this in mind in future years the County Council may support some form of Voluntary Car Free Day, initially.

- Working closely with Guildford Borough Council this could be in the form of active publicity, to encourage those who require access to the Town more use of the Park & Ride facility.
- Working with schools, parents can be discouraged from driving their children to local schools and encouraged to try other modes of transportation, including cycling and walking.
- Poster campaigns, including radio information and publicity.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Joint Committee is asked to note the officer's response.

**Contact Officer:** Frank Apicella, Area Highway Manager SW, Surrey County Council  
Tel 0300 200 1003