

# GODALMING TOWN COUNCIL

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Sent Via Email: [tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:tim.oliver@surreycc.gov.uk)  
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Cllr Tim Oliver  
Leader of Surrey County Council  
Surrey County Council  
Woodhatch Place  
11 Cockshot Hill  
Woodhatch  
Reigate RH2 8EF

Dear Cllr Oliver

## **Re: Consultation on Future Bus Services in Surrey**

I write at the request of the Godalming Town Council regarding the *Future Bus Service* consultation being undertaken by Surrey County Council. As Godalming Town Council considers a number of the points raised below affect all areas of Surrey, in addition to the MP for the Godalming area, all Surrey MP's have been copied into this letter to make them aware of issues raised, which are equally likely to affect other constituency areas.

Whilst Godalming Town Council's comments regarding individual services are limited to those that affect the Godalming area, it does have concerns and comments regarding the wider programme of removing timetabled bus services, these concerns are set out below.

Godalming Town Council recognises the challenges highlighted in the SCC consultation statement which states:

*"The bus industry is facing challenging operating conditions, resulting from changed travel patterns and passenger numbers not returning to pre-pandemic levels. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 27 million passenger trips were made each year on Surrey buses. The figure is now 18 million passenger trips. This coupled with the impact of rising fuel and maintenance costs, as well as increased competition for drivers, means that bus operators need to consider what services they operate as the money Surrey County Council spends on supporting bus services cannot buy the same as it used to."*<sup>1</sup>

However, Godalming Town Council also recognises the importance of the local bus network to both residents and the economic development of an area, especially during the current cost of living crisis. Indeed, it is argued that the importance of the local bus network is recognised by the Government and was clearly expressed by the then Prime Minister in the foreword to the Government's "*Bus Back Better*" National Bus Strategy for England document when he stated:

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.surreysays.co.uk/environment-and-infrastructure/future-bus-network-consultation/consultation/intro/>

*“Buses are the country’s favourite mode of public transport too – used for twice as many journeys as trains, from thousands more stopping-places across the country. They get teenagers to college. They drive pensioners to see their friends. They connect people to jobs they couldn’t otherwise take. They sustain town centres; they strengthen communities, and they protect the environment. They are lifelines and they are liberators”<sup>2</sup>.*

The Prime Minister then went on to state:

*“We want better services in the evenings and weekends, to reflect people’s 24-hour lives and to provide safe, reliable transport for key workers. In places unserved or barely served by conventional buses, such as rural villages and out-of-town business parks, we want more demand responsive services with smaller vehicles”<sup>3</sup>.*

Despite the change of Prime Minister, Godalming Town Council does not believe that the Government has withdrawn its commitment to “*Bus Back Better*”. Indeed, the announcement of 19 December 2022 relating to a £2 fare cap per bus journey makes clear the Government’s continued support and recognition of the importance of local bus services.<sup>4</sup>

Godalming Town Council agrees with the statements contained in the National Bus Strategy document and the price capping of bus journeys, which is why it finds the approach being proposed by SCC to be at odds with the general principles of “*Bus Back Better*”.

A cursory glance of the proposals set out in the SCC consultation document clearly shows that SCC is not proposing to provide improved services in the evening and weekend that better reflect people’s 24-hour lifestyles, nor is it planning to use demand responsive services to support currently unserved or barely served areas. Rather SCC is planning to remove existing conventional bus services on important routes which connect the rural hinterland with the primary and secondary retail areas and services upon which they rely.

Godalming Town Council wishes to clearly state that the local bus services that support Godalming and surrounding villages are vitally important to the well-being of the local area. Our local bus services bring people to jobs, study and local services; they liberate people who are old, young, disabled and isolated; they save many tonnes of carbon and pollution and miles of traffic queues.

Godalming Town Council, like Surrey County Council, has declared a Climate Emergency, finds that the current *Future Bus Service* proposals put forward by SCC are at odds with the County Council’s stated Climate Strategy Aim to:

*“Deliver and promote an integrated, accessible, affordable, and reliable public and active (walking and cycling) transport system across the County, thereby reducing journeys and improving local air quality for improved health and wellbeing of our residents”<sup>5</sup>*

It is for this reason, amongst many, that Godalming Town Council strongly disagrees with any proposal to remove bus services such as Route 42, or the reduction of services on Routes 70/71/72.

**Surrey County Council’s proposals fail to reflect the aims of “*Bus Back Better*” as well as also failing to meet wider Government priorities such as levelling-up, and the challenges of climate change.**

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<sup>2</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/980227/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980227/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf) page 4

<sup>3</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/980227/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980227/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf) page 4

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/2-bus-fare-cap>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/community/climate-change/what-are-we-doing/climate-change-strategy>

It is a fact that buses are the easiest, cheapest and quickest way to improve transport. Building a new railway or road takes years, if not decades. Better bus services can be delivered in months. Experience shows that relatively small sums of money, by the standards of transport spending, can deliver significant benefits. Buses can play a greater role in enabling access to work or more productive work. 44% of bus trips are for work or education, compared with 27% of solo car journeys. Buses can help drive better employment outcomes for disabled people, and in cities outside London, 77% of jobseekers do not have regular access to a car, van or motorbike. Having found employment, affordable bus travel helps ensure that work pays and can be sustained for everyone. Buses can improve productivity more widely, for instance by reducing congestion which affects all road users and costs urban economies at least £11bn a year.

Godalming Town Council believes the Government is correct in stating that improved bus services will strengthen communities, sustain town centres and connect disabled and isolated people. That buses should not be seen, or promoted, only as transport for those without an alternative. There is clear evidence that they can be made attractive enough to draw people away from their cars. For this reason, buses are vital to ensuring the economy meets Net Zero carbon emissions and driving the green transformation. In congested areas, substantial modal shift away from the car will soon be needed if clean air targets and the Government's broader climate goals are to be met. The only mode capable of sufficient expansion in the time available is the bus. We need more people to choose the bus for their journeys; we need to reverse the declines of the past.

Improving bus services deliver a greater economic benefit than can ever be achieved by reducing services. A Department for Transport (DfT) analysis of 33 major bus schemes found an average benefit cost ratio of 4.2; in other words, they delivered benefits worth more than four times their cost. Buses generate a significant proportion of benefits which accrue to other road users and to society at large.<sup>6</sup>

As stated at page 21 of the National Bus Strategy document, if we are to meet our legal obligation to deliver Net Zero carbon emissions and have thriving communities, we must reverse these cycles.

For all the reasons stated above, Godalming Town Council does not agree either with the principle or the specifics of Surrey County Councils flawed consultation process for *Future Bus Services* within the county and in particular the Godalming area.

### **Changes to Local Godalming Services:**

As part of the current consultation Surrey is proposing changes to the No 42, 70/71/72 routes.

Surreys proposal for No 42 Route. – Withdrawing the route from Catteshall Lane Godalming, Ifold and Loxwood: Considering maintaining Godalming College journeys and converting the rest of the service to DDRT.

Having considered the survey, Godalming Town Council emailed the *Future Bus Service Review Team* on the 22 November. It is considered extremely disappointing that no response to a legitimate enquiry has been received from SCC. The failure to respond to enquiries to clarify proposals shows not only a total lack of willingness to engage with residents or their representatives, but also highlights the weakness of the arguments put forward, leaving a greater feeling that this is an exercise in cost cutting rather than one genuinely focused on societal and community improvement.

**Based on SCC's online survey, Godalming Town Council wishes to highlight the following points and looks forward to finally receiving a detailed response:**

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<sup>6</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/980227/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980227/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf) page 18

The first question relates to the survey itself and the fact that whilst on question 6 you can select a specific route to comment upon, this is not the case for question 9 that covers the proposal for changes to DDRT service. It is unfortunate that the online consultation only allows for an individual to indicate an opinion on all the proposed routes to be changed to DDRT as opposed to being able to express a view on the merits or otherwise of a change to a specific route. Can you let me know why the option is only to comment on the entirety of the DDRT changes and not the merits of a specific route? The way the question is currently phrased is asking people who may have differing opinions about different routes to give one answer and it is suggested that as a result respondents will give the least favourable answer as a default when they may indeed support some proposals and not others.

On Question 6 a proposal for the No 42 route states:

*“Withdrawal from Catteshall Lane, Godalming, Ifold and Loxwood; considering maintaining Godalming College journeys and converting the rest of the service to DDRT.”*

Looking at this question and the existing timetables it is unclear what is meant by “consider maintaining the Godalming College journeys”, does it mean that the No 42 from the Guildford direction will call at the College at 08.21, 09.31, 11.31, 13.01, 15.01, 16.26 and 17.47 as it does at present, along with the No 42 from the Cranleigh direction at 07.14, 08.19, 09.49, 11.19, 13.19, 15.19 and 16.34, in which case what are the proposed changes or if not, what are the specifics of the proposal being considered regarding the Godalming College journeys?

The other consideration for Route 42 is the proposal to withdraw this service from Catteshall Lane, which would mean the loss of the only bus service that covers the Farncombe and Busbridge residential areas that stops at the Mill Medical Practice – one of the main medical practices within Godalming. It should also be noted that an additional 100 homes will also shortly be completed on Catteshall Lane. Again, what is unclear is whether the withdrawal of the service from Catteshall Lane means that even if it became a DDRT service, would the DDRT provide a service along Catteshall Lane to the Medical Practice? If it will not, could you confirm that is Surrey County Council’s intention to remove a bus service that serves as a link between the residential areas and a main medical facility of the town?

For the proposed changes to the 70/71/72 service, could you please confirm the proposed changes would mean that the first bus to Guildford from Godalming would be 06.43 instead of 06.13 and the last bus from Guildford to Godalming would be at 19.25 instead of 20.25 and the last bus from Haslemere direction to Godalming would arrive in Godalming at 20.07 instead of 22.07, thus being diametrically at odds with the statement contained in the National Bus Strategy for England document that states *“We want better services in the evenings and weekends, to reflect people’s 24-hour lives”*?

In addition to these specific questions, Godalming Town Council believes that the wider issues relating to future bus services and the effect on the economic and social well-being of residents who live within the hinterland of Godalming have been clearly set out.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

*Andy Jeffery*

Andy Jeffery  
Town Clerk

cc All Surrey Constituency MPs (via Email):

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP – MP for South West Surrey - [huntj@parliament.uk](mailto:huntj@parliament.uk)

Sir Paul Beresford MP - [office@molevalleyconservatives.org.uk](mailto:office@molevalleyconservatives.org.uk)

Crispin Blunt MP - [crispinbluntmp@parliament.uk](mailto:crispinbluntmp@parliament.uk)

Claire Coutinho MP - [claire.coutinho.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:claire.coutinho.mp@parliament.uk)

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP - [michael.gove.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:michael.gove.mp@parliament.uk)

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP - [chris.grayling.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.grayling.mp@parliament.uk)

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