

County Council meeting – 12 June 2012

STATEMENT BY MEMBER

This local issue is one that should have been sorted out locally and promptly, but it has not.

Over the old A3 in Cobham there has, for over 40 years, been a footbridge, used in particular by children at a nearby Primary School, one of the largest in Surrey. In January it was struck by an over-height vehicle. The decking was promptly removed for repairs that were made, but it has not been replaced.

A paper, issued 4 months after the damage, is going to the Elmbridge Local Committee in 2 days. It states that the Council has decided that the bridge is to go, as it is not well used. But our Constitution provides, in paragraph 7 of section 3 of part 3, that officers have no power to declare land or property surplus to requirements. The bridge is clearly property. And why this was decided after making the repairs seems weird.

The paper was prepared not by officers responsible for road safety, but by structural engineers who focus on the bridge removal. It accepts that improved road surface crossing arrangements are needed there, but, and after 4 months, provides no details of them, no financial estimates, and worst of all, no proper safety audit and no police evaluation.

The safety of our children has been, and is being, put at risk for much longer than necessary. This could be managerial incompetence, or something worse.

The road in question is part of the route for the Olympics Cycling Time Trials. The bridge is alleged to be an eyesore. Could this foot dragging over this footbridge be related to the Olympics? The people of Surrey need answers. The Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee must have this scandal investigated by officers allowed to tell the truth, no matter how embarrassing that may be to senior management.

John V C Butcher
Local Member for Cobham
12 June 2012

[NOTE: This is the text of the speech prepared. No recording of the speech delivered is available, and that may have been slightly different.]