



**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S
LOCAL COMMITTEE
IN EPSOM & EWELL
ILLEGAL SIGNING
ON THE HIGHWAY**

18th July 2005

KEY ISSUE

To approve a strategy to address the problems created by the growing number of advertising boards, which are placed on the Public Highway by local retail outlets and other businesses.

SUMMARY

Surrey County Council has a duty, as Highway Authority, to remove the obstruction created by the growing number of advertising boards, which are placed on the Public Highway.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to agree:

- i. That the Committee confirms its support for a strategy of increased and targeted enforcement of the removal of illegal signs on the Highway;
- ii. That the problems associated with advertising boards being placed on the public highway be addressed by undertaking enforcement as detailed in Para 2 below;
- iii. That a publicity campaign be initiated to publicise the strategy of removing advertising boards to both the business community and to the public at large.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In accordance with the Highways Act 1980, Surrey County Council has a duty to remove any object, which is creating an obstruction to the Public Highway (carriageway, footway, grass verge, hard or soft landscaped area).
- 1.2 In recent months the Local Transportation Service has been able to increase the resource directed towards the removal of fly-posted signs attached to lamp columns and other street furniture. Further measures to undertake the occasional removal of signs at the weekend are in hand.
- 1.3 Advertising Boards (A Boards) can be both physically and visually intrusive and, if uncontrolled may pose both a potential hazard to pedestrians and an environmental eyesore. Complaints are regularly received from the public regarding A Boards, particularly from those with a visual or physical handicap.
- 1.4 There appears to be a growing number of retail outlets and other businesses, which take advantage of such free advertising and place A Boards on the Highway.
- 1.5 The problem is widespread both in the main shopping centres in the Borough and in almost every local shopping parade.
- 1.6 The removal of such obstructions has the support of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, Surrey Police, Surrey Business Partnership and Surrey Chamber of Commerce.

- 1.7 On occasions certain establishments employ casual labour to stand at a prominent location holding a sign. This is more difficult to control. The sign cannot be removed and Surrey Police are unlikely to act unless the individual holding the sign is obstructing the Highway. Discussions will continue with Surrey Police to agree the most appropriate means of enforcement.

2. DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The removal of A Boards is likely to be contentious. Many retailers suggest that they are dependent on passing trade and rely on A Boards to attract customers. However their more local customers are often those who object to the presence of the A Boards.
- 2.2 A joint approach to dealing with this Community issue will be taken in partnership with Surrey Police and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. Enforcement will be undertaken by the Highway Stewards, who will initially take photographs and deliver a letter to the business concerned requesting that they remove the A Board. A copy of a suggested standard letter is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.3 Where appropriate, legal proceedings will be taken against persistent offenders.
- 2.4 There will be a need to re-prioritise the finite stewardship resources, which will result in a reduction in stewardship available for other matters.
- 2.5 There are insufficient resources available to increase the level of enforcement throughout the Borough. It is therefore proposed that the areas are prioritised based on complaints received from both the public and groups such as the Access Forum, the number and extent of obstructions, pedestrian use of the footway and the width of footway available.
- 2.6 It is proposed that, following Local Committee consideration and agreement to the enforcement strategy, arrangements are made to publicise the strategy to the business community and to the public at large. This will hopefully reduce the extent of the obstruction, prior to commencement of enforcement action.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The costs involved in undertaking the removal of advertising boards can be found from the existing budget available for Highway Stewardship and from the Highway Maintenance Revenue budget.

4. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The number of Advertising Boards located on the Public Highway and creating obstruction is growing. This results in an increased number of complaints from both the public and groups such as the Access Forum.
- 4.2 Surrey County Council has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway and to prevent obstruction of the highways for which they are the highway authority.
- 4.3 Therefore there is a need to adopt a strategy to control the use of Advertising Boards on the public highway.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:
