



**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S
LOCAL COMMITTEE IN
EPSOM & EWELL
SIGN CLEANING**

10th APRIL 2006

KEY ISSUE:

To advise Members of the present arrangements for cleaning highway signs in the Borough and explain how these may change in 2006/07.

SUMMARY:

This report sets out the present arrangements for cleaning highway signs in the Borough. It details possible improvements to these arrangements that may be implemented in 2006/07.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee notes the report.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 The standard of sign cleaning in the Borough is becoming an increasingly high profile issue. The main areas of concern are:

- Signs and bollards are dirty through lack of washing
- Graffiti on signs and bollards
- Posters and stickers are affixed to signs and bollards

2. TREATMENT PROCESSES

2.1 Routine removal of dirt and general detritus is by means of washing with a water/detergent solution. This may be hand or may be by power washer.

2.2 Removal of graffiti is by means of chemicals and/or power washing. Occasionally graffiti is painted over. Because of the effect that cleaning solvents have on reflectivity of the sign face, there is no alternative to replacement with a new sign.

2.3 Removal of stickers and posters is done by hand or by means of a specialised power washer.

2.4 All of the above have health and safety at work implications for the operatives and for both pedestrians and drivers. The processes have to ensure that appropriate traffic safety and control measures are put in place and that the regulations relating to working at height are complied with.

2.5 These requirements add considerably to the costs of carrying out the treatments. To ensure work is as cost effective as possible, it has to be batched or carried out under traffic safety measures that have been put in place for other highway works. Some reactive, ad hoc treatment of urgent situations is carried out, but the ability to do this is reducing.

3. CURRENT PROCEDURES

3.1 Illuminated Signs and Bollards

Approximately half of the highway signs and most of the bollards in the Borough are illuminated. As part of the conditions of the County Council's Street Lighting Contract, the Street Lighting contractor is required to clean all illuminated signs and bollards once per year. The cost of this cleaning regime is funded centrally. The Local Transportation Service instructs all other sign cleansing work. Routine works are normally carried out by the Street Lighting contractor or by specialist contractors in the case of graffiti or steam washing.

3.2 Non Illuminated Signs

Limited sign cleansing programmes are carried out on most high-risk sites. In addition, some ad hoc work is carried out in urgent situations. The work is mostly carried out by Carillion's Community Gangs under the Surrey Highways Partnership. As with illuminated signs, specialist contractors are used when required.

4. CHANGES IN PROCEDURES

- 4.1 The funding available for this work is increasingly limited (see Financial Implications).
- 4.2 The BDR re-organisational changes will amalgamate the districts of Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead, and Tandridge into an East Area unit for the delivery of highway maintenance. This will offer increased opportunities to combine operations such as sign cleansing across the new Area.
- 4.3 Discussions are taking place with Carillion to explore options for using dedicated gangs for this function. The five areas would generate enough work to ensure continuous employment throughout the year.
- 4.4 In addition Carillion are considering the option of training and equipping their own operatives to carry out the more specialist cleansing operations that are currently carried out by outside specialist contractors. This should provide a more responsive and hopefully cheaper resource.
- 4.5 Negotiations are still taking place in respect of the proposed PFI contract for Highway Street Lighting and Illuminated Signs, which are scheduled to commence in early 2007. It is anticipated that the successful contractor would provide a significantly improved cleansing regime for the County Council's lighting stock, including illuminated signs and bollards.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Signs cleansing costs are found from the Aids to Movement revenue budget. The allocations for this budget over recent years are:

2003/04 £83,000

2004/05 £75,900

2005/06 £73,000

2006/07 £72,000

As can be seen these allocations do not even reflect the cost of inflation.

- 5.2 In the present year £3,000 from the above budget has been allocated for the cleansing of illuminated signs and bollards (in addition to the central funding for one routine clean by the Street Lighting contractor).
- 5.3 A further £3,100 has been allocated for the cleaning of non-illuminated signs.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CRIME & DISORDER, AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no implications specific to this report.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Martyn Williams,
Senior Local Transportation Manager

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01372 832297

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None
