



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE  
(EPSOM & EWELL)**

**UPDATE ON RESPONSES TO RESOLUTIONS  
SUBMITTED TO  
SCC CABINET MEMBERS**

**17 DECEMBER 2009**

**SUMMARY**

This report summarises the Cabinet Members Decisions to the Resolutions put forward by the Local Committee [Epsom & Ewell] meetings on 13 July and 14 September 2009

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Local Committee (Epsom and Ewell) is asked to:**

- (i) Note the report

1. **RESOLUTION AGREED AT THE 13 JULY 2009  
LOCAL COMMITTEE [EPSOM & EWELL]**

1.1 **Resolution 1 – Integrated Transport Schemes 2009/10-  
2013/14 Item 12/09**

The Epsom & Ewell Local Committee notes with concern the significant overspend on Highways works in 2008/2009. This appears to be due to having separate processes for estimating costs in advance and determining amounts chargeable after the work is complete. It understands that there are negotiations aimed at changing the system to one in which officers would be given fixed lump sum prices before the work is done. Whilst welcoming any improvement, it urges the Cabinet to ensure that any future process includes provision for comparing the rates charged to Surrey County Council with those currently being paid for similar work by neighbouring authorities.

**Cabinet Member for Transport Response**

Surrey Highways implemented a review of various aspects of the Surrey Highways Partnership Contract and one of these has been the move to fixed lumps sums instead of actual cost. This has been introduced so that there are incentives on the contractors to increase their efficiency. This change was introduced for all works at the start of this financial year. Under this process the contractors provide a lump sum price for undertaking a scheme, and that is the price that Surrey pays, unless an event that has been defined as a client risk occurs. The reason for allowing some variation in the price is that some risks are so unknown that the cost of transferring them to the contractors would be prohibitive. This is generally things such as unforeseen ground conditions or extreme weather events.

The costs charged by Ringway and Carillion are being benchmarked against each other and against neighbouring authorities as part of the review of this new way of pricing, and these figures will be included in a report that will be going to Cabinet to inform their decision on whether to extend the contracts in November. As part of this investigation, we will also be looking at the reasons for changes in the cost from the original estimate to the final amount paid. Given the nature of the work, it is inevitable that there will be some change in cost, however, by understanding the causes better we hope to ensure that any differences are kept to a minimum.

This has been a big change for us both as Surrey Highways and as a partnership, and we are continuing to review the changes to ensure they are working as intended. With regard to estimating costs in advance, officers make an estimate of costs based on previous experience, the proposed works and external influences. This has recently been the subject of an internal review within Surrey Highways to ensure all parties follow a similar process and will be reported to senior management in due course.

2. **RESOLUTIONS AGREED AT THE 14 SEPTEMBER 2009**

[www.surreycc.gov.uk/epsomandewell](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/epsomandewell)

**LOCAL COMMITTEE [EPSOM & EWELL]****2.1 Resolution 1 – Joint Parking Strategy Working Group [item 24/09]**

The Local Committee [Epsom & Ewell] notes that Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is developing its new Local Development Framework and has to prepare a Parking Strategy.

As off-street parking is a Borough matter, but on-street parking is a County matter (with enforcement delegated to the Borough) the Local Committee [Epsom & Ewell] believes this should be a Joint Parking Strategy. The Local Committee calls upon the Cabinet Member for Transport Decision Making for approval of the Surrey Parking Strategy before the end of 2009

Accordingly the Local Committee decided to establish a joint working group. It nominated County Councillors Frost, Taylor and Wood to serve on this working group and invited Epsom & Ewell Borough Council to nominate three borough councillors to it. Cllrs Neil Dallen, Julie Morris and Jean Smith were proposed.

The first task for the working group should be to agree the details of its scope and terms of reference and present them to the next meeting of this Local Committee for approval.

**Cabinet Member for Transport Response:**

The County Council is in the process of developing a revised parking strategy. It is anticipated that this will be complete early next year. This will look at future options for parking, including how we deliver the service.

It is not possible for the Cabinet Member to approve the Surrey Parking Strategy before the end of 2009, as it will not be complete by then. It is not recommended that the Local Committee approve a local parking strategy for Epsom & Ewell in advance of the County strategy.

**2.2 Resolution 2 - Maintenance of VAS signs [item24/09]**

The Local Committee [Epsom & Ewell] welcomes the fact that a number of Vehicle Actuated Signs (VAS's) have been installed in the Borough over the last few years, funded in a variety of ways.

Whilst they cannot stop motorists deliberately speeding, they seem to have reduced speeding generally, by warning motorists who are speeding accidentally.

However some of them have stopped working. It is unacceptable that there are no plans to repair them, because there is no budget for maintenance of VAS's.

The Local Committee urges the Cabinet Member to consider whether it is a better use of public resources to repair unserviceable VAS's or to replace them, then make arrangements accordingly.

### **Cabinet Member for Transport Response**

Surrey has taken full advantage of vehicle activated signs (VAS) since their inception a few years ago which has helped develop understanding of where they are most effective, how reliable they are and how long they can be expected to last.

The deployment and performance of VAS to date has been considered when creating a list of terms, conditions and a select list of future suppliers so that we can be assured of optimum performance and a full 2-year guarantee. We trust this will ensure a high level of reliability and prolonged working life from the apparatus we purchase. However, it is recognised that a VAS cannot be regarded a permanent piece of highway furniture, as in the case of a standard sign, as it will inevitably wear out and require a capital sum for replacement.

Due to the financial constraints imposed upon the Council, we are forced to identify in which areas savings may be available. In the case of Highways, maintenance funding is targeted at those issues, which may be perceived by the travelling public as most important and will include such items as pothole repair and drainage. Perhaps because the true value of VAS has still to be formally evaluated and placed in the public domain, it does not feature highly on our list of priorities for maintenance and, for the moment, no budget for VAS maintenance has been identified.

Whilst I applaud the enthusiasm that has been demonstrated in Epsom and Ewell to embrace this new technology and empathise with the case you make, I am unable to offer specific funding to address this matter.

### **2.3 Resolution 3 - Epsom & Ewell High School – Building Schools for the Future [BSF] Item 27/09**

The Local Committee [Epsom & Ewell] registered its dismay that Epsom & Ewell High School is 7th on the list in Building Schools for the Future. Epsom and Ewell High School should be prioritised on its own merits i.e. that it is adjacent to areas of deprivation, and standards of the buildings are poor. The Local Committee recommends that this school be in the first network of schools that will benefit from the programme in Surrey.

### **Cabinet Member for Children and Learning Response**

I thank the Local Committee for its resolution. I understand and have great sympathy with the sentiment in it. However, we have not had a free hand in the prioritisation process for the schools in the BSF programme.

At the time of putting together the Expression of Interest, Surrey County Council (SCC) looked to prioritise its estate on an assessment of 'need'. Prior to the submission of the Expression of Interest, the Government released guidance stating that it would prioritise the national programme against a definition of need as deprivation (using tax credit data) and attainment (the proportion of pupils achieving 5 A\*-C GCSEs including Maths and English). In accordance with government guidance, SCC prioritised its

estate using these criteria, as this would increase the likelihood of Surrey successfully joining the national programme at the earliest point possible.

Given the large number of schools in Surrey, we were asked to put together an initial project (with an expected capital value of about £80m) that need not be geographically coherent as well as a series of 'follow on' projects that *must* be geographically coherent.

Whilst it was possible to have an initial BSF project that is not geographically coherent such that SCC could prioritise investment for the worst performing schools or schools with the worst buildings, a view was taken that any changes to school provision through the BSF programme will be best taken in the context of a particular area or group of schools when planning for strategic investment. It is this principle that is crucial to the way we have grouped and prioritised our BSF projects. The list and priority order of investment was arrived at from an aggregated assessment of 'need' by deprivation and attainment data across the schools in each of the 14-19 learning networks in line with national prioritisation criteria.

I would greatly prefer to have a free rein in the prioritisation decisions for BSF. Regrettably that is not the case. I am hopeful that a change of government next year might allow greater flexibility in the BSF process which might then allow us to prioritise on the basis of need in the county as we perceive it. In that circumstance it is very possible that Epsom & Ewell High School will benefit at an earlier stage in the process.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** Local Committee [Epsom & Ewell] Minutes of 13 July and 14 September 2009, & Cabinet Member decision papers, 16 September and 14 October 2009.