



**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
LOCAL COMMITTEE IN EPSOM & EWELL
8 December 2010**

MEMBER QUESTIONS

Question 1 from Cllr Neil Dallen

Re: Parking problems in Delaporte Close

This road has had numerous parking problems over the years. Recently double yellow lines have been put down on the corners but cars still park on both sides blocking the road between the end of the double yellow lines number 55. Recently the road was blocked (and this is not unusual) stopping access and egress from that part of Delaporte Close (pictures attached). Cars drove on the pavement and over gardens to get out. Police were called and moved cars (report attached). Route call was unable to reach their 91-year-old client and had to walk her down the road. The solution is to extend the double yellow lines to number 55, or implement Residents Parking. Something urgently needs to be done before there is a real emergency (Fire or Medical) and someone dies because access is blocked. Can Highways use their emergency powers to temporarily stop parking immediately, then double yellow lines are implemented as soon as possible.

Officer Response:

We undertake reviews of all Borough parking problems and this particular site will be added to that list. It should be understood that if we wished to proceed with proposals for a restriction in this particular area it would have to follow the normal process of being agreed by the Local Committee and go through the statutory advertising procedure. It is noted in the comments by Route call, that the driver can normally gain access, and this was an unusual situation. In addition the Police comments did not indicate it was a common problem. We would not invoke emergency powers to deal with occasional problems as these could happen all over the County.

Question 2 from Cllr Julie Morris

Re Minimising Street clutter

Is it County policy to minimise street "clutter", in other words, to erect more than one sign on a single post and to attempt to utilise existing posts rather than erect new ones? In the course of discussing a new sign for Burgh Heath Road and with plenty of posts available, it seemed that only a new post was considered appropriate.

Officer Response

It is County policy to minimise street clutter and optimise use of existing posts and lighting columns wherever possible. However, in some cases a new post may be necessary, and below are a few examples:

- a] On an old concrete lighting column which cannot be drilled or will not receive sign brackets
- b] an elderly lighting column which may be deemed unsuitable to

- c] receive the additional wind loading a new sign might impose
- d] an existing post where there is insufficient room to mount a sign with adequate ground clearance (minimum 2.1m over a footway)
- e] a post positioned where a driver's view of the proposed sign would be poor
- f] on a post which was not connected to a power supply when the proposed sign required illumination
- g] on a post already displaying the maximum permitted number of signs
- g] on a post deemed inadequate to bear the additional weight, or wind loading an additional sign would impose.

Whilst the County regards clutter as undesirable, safety must be our prime consideration.

**Question 3 from Cllr Jean Smith
PARKING ON AND DAMAGE TO GRASS VERGES**

Would Members of the Local Committee please give consideration to the following issue?

There has been a continuing and growing concern expressed by both Members and residents in Epsom & Ewell about highway verges and their state of repair. In many residential roads there is growing pressure on the limited on-street parking space available because of the growth of car ownership. In these circumstances many motorists try to avoid creating obstruction when parking on narrow roads or on both sides of the carriageway and choose to park partly or fully on the grass verge. As a direct consequence the grass verge becomes rutted, the grass turns into a mud bath and becomes both unsightly and dangerous. It should be self-evident to motorists that if they park their vehicle partly or fully on a grass verge then the verge will be damaged, particularly during the winter months when the ground is wet. Nevertheless such occurrences are becoming an increasing problem.

Remedial measures can vary from reinstatement with temporary or permanent protection from posts or bollards or with soft landscaping or strengthening of verges with grass Crete, geogrid or similar. However, all these come with costs and disadvantages. The temporary stakes are easily knocked over and are seen as a waste of money, all stakes causes difficulty and increased costs in grass cutting and the cost of any method to strengthen the verges is considerable.

The Surrey Act 1985 controls the parking of vehicles on verges but requires that notices be provided at regular intervals along every grass verge to prohibit parking. This cannot be practical, sensible or desirable. Any contravention of the prohibition can be punished by a fine, which is kept by the courts. Legislation, however, requires evidence that a particular vehicle caused a particular piece of damage. The fact that a vehicle habitually parks in the same place and there is evidence of damage is not sufficient. It also requires a witness to attend court to testify that a particular vehicle caused a particular piece of damage and it is not surprising that most residents are not prepared to give evidence against their neighbour. It is therefore an unfortunate fact that under the present Act there is no simple legal means of countering the problem through enforcement.

Epsom & Ewell would have liked its own byelaw to make it an offence to park on the grass verge in the same way, as it is an offence to park on a yellow line in contravention of the time limit. The same enforcement method could be used. I believe such a byelaw is enforced successfully in the London Boroughs. Such

enforcement would lead to an improvement in the street scene, a reduction in the workload of the highway officers and the removal of the present cost of reinstatement. It would also raise the satisfaction level of residents. However, such a byelaw is not possible because a piece of primary legislation is in place, i.e. the Surrey Act 1985. Since the Borough Council does not own the land next to the highway, which is owned by SCC, the only way that a byelaw could be created to control parking on the verges would be for SCC to petition Parliament to repeal the Surrey Act 1985 in so far as it relates to Epsom & Ewell and then for SCC to create its own byelaw to control parking on verges in Epsom & Ewell.

The Chief Executive of SCC has considered the Borough Council's request for this procedure and has replied that repealing elements of the Act specifically for Epsom & Ewell is unlikely to be considered by Parliament, nor is it a priority for the County Council. He has proposed an alternative: through Civil Parking Enforcement it is possible to prohibit parking on a verge/footway in urban areas by means of a traffic regulation order. However, approval is required from the Department for Transport to erect the necessary signs. A number of trials have been undertaken across the county, and the DfT is assessing these. This would enable parking tickets to be issued through CPE, which does not require court proceedings and is far simpler to enforce. SCC would consider undertaking a trial in Epsom & Ewell but this is subject to support from Members and approval at the Local Committee.

Local Committee approval and support from Members is therefore requested.

Officer Response

By virtue of the Local Government Act 1972 which brought into force the current County of Surrey in 1974, there was a need to rationalise certain statutory provisions. The Surrey Act 1985 was therefore brought into force, which covered a diverse number of topics including control of grass verges.

This section is quite long but in effect it states that the Authority (does not state whether Borough or County) may, by notice, control driving, riding or leaving of vehicles on ornamental verges. The advice given is that ornamental means regularly cut and maintained and kept in good condition.

SCC are not aware that the Act has been used anywhere in the County, and if it was the offence would be outside the scope of Civil Parking Enforcement. It would be a separate prosecution through the courts.

Within the TSR & GD 2002 there is of course scope to introduce a TRO. This is however mainly used on rural roads subject to clearway Orders. There are a number of trials around the country prohibiting footway/verge parking in urban areas (areas like Aberdeen and Old Dogsthorpe), and these can be found on-line. These are being assessed by DfT.

SCC has mentioned at regular meetings with the Borough/District parking managers that if they have a particular bad area, SCC might consider carrying out a trial scheme, which would, of course, require DfT approval. Details have not been received from all Boroughs/Districts.

Cllr Smith requested County Members to support this – agreed by C Cllrs Frost, Wood, Kington, Taylor and Wood.

Question 4 from Cllr Michael Arthur

Re: Ewell village air quality

The Borough Council's Social Committee recently agreed on an air quality action plan for Ewell Village following discovery that levels of nitrogen dioxide pollution generated by vehicle traffic were above the government's target levels.

The majority of measure to address the identified sources of pollution to reduce NO² concentrates to more acceptable levels centre around highway proposals - the domain of the county.

The report acknowledged the support given by county officers to work towards the air quality improvements. Whilst I understand the constraints of the present financial climate, can any hope be given that in setting county 2011/12 budgets this subject may be given a high priority?

Officer Response:

Surrey Highways have been working with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to address the unacceptable levels of air pollution recorded in High Street Ewell. It is recognised that vehicle exhaust gas is a major contributor to air pollution and concentrations will rise during prolonged periods of congestion. A staged programme of initial low-cost measures has been started and will be progressively introduced until a sufficient improvement is recorded.

Using footage from traffic monitor cameras it has been identified that particular congestion occurs in the northern section of High Street during the mid afternoon period, weekdays. This can be exacerbated by parking on the east side of southern section of High Street which prevents vehicles from passing one another leading to queues backing up across the mini roundabout at Cheam Road and along High Street (north). Another factor can be stationary vehicle(s) in High Street (north) which further interrupts traffic flow.

On the east side of High Street (south) there are prescribed parking bays where shoppers can legally park. However, it is quite common to see vehicles parked in advance of the prescribed bays thus reducing the space available for motorists to come to a halt whilst waiting for oncoming vehicles clear. Along High Street (north), waiting restrictions exist but loading and unloading may be undertaken at any time.

The staged approach being taken comprises:

1. Enhanced enforcement of existing restrictions
2. Monitor
3. Reduction of prescribed parking bays in High Street (south) (subject to Committee approval)
4. Monitor
5. Introduction of prescribed loading times in High Street (north) (subject to Committee approval)
6. Monitor
7. Introduction of prescribed loading bays in High Street (north) (subject to Committee approval)

More elaborate measures to reconfigure junctions / network can be considered and there is optimism that funding for highway improvement may become available through developer contributions in the future. During the forthcoming year, it may be possible for officers to prepare a report for the Committee's consideration setting out proposals to carry out a consultation with Ewell residents to receive views on a

variety of potential changes to the highway within the village. The driver for such measures will be to improve the village environment, improve accessibility for pedestrians, rationalise parking provisions for visitors and, of course, help address any air pollution issues that remain.

Question 5 from Cllr Neil Dallen

Re: Empty salt/grit bin

I recently noticed and reported to SCC an empty salt / grit bin on the corner of Ashley Road and The Parade. Have all salt/grit bins been filled for the winter? Icy roads are already upon us and this needs to be done, especially if we are going to have a repeat of last year's weather.

Officer Response

At the time this question was received, most salt bins within the Borough had been filled with grit but not the one identified. I can confirm that the bin in Ashley Road on the corner of The Parade has now been filled.

Question 6 from Cllr Julie Morris

Re: Resurfacing in Burgh Heath Road

This has reduced the impact of road cushions, which have apparently become more gentle than before resurfacing. Has an audit been conducted of the works in this road and can the Highway Engineers confirm that the road cushions have not been reduced in size and angle?

Officer Response:

The County's engineers are aware that resurfacing has affected the profile of some of the speed reducing features in this road and we are working with our contractor to resolve the matter.

Question 7 from Cllr Neil Dallen

Re: Clayton Road, which does not have a footpath.

The pedestrian access and egress to houses, especially number 6, is often blocked by inconsiderate parking. On one occasion a car had to be climbed over to get into the house. This is a daily occurrence! Is it possible to put bollards either side of the access paths or yellow lines just outside the path entrance? This would stop cars parking and blocking access and allow people into and out of their houses.

Officer Response

Amendments to parking restrictions are grouped so that a single advertisement and traffic order can be made each year and help keep costs down to an affordable level. The proposed amendments for delivery during the forthcoming financial year is likely to be brought to this Committee when it meets in June and any addition to the current list may be included at the discretion of the Divisional Member.

I am not entirely clear, from the description given, precisely where bollards might be placed to help resolve the problem identified but will be pleased to arrange a site meeting, again at the Divisional Member's discretion, to explore what options could be available.

Question 8 from Cllr Julie Morris

Re: the current policy for repairing potholes

What is the current policy for repairing potholes, e.g. diameter, depth, timescale, etc. and are there to be any changes to whatever is the current policy if there are again severe weather conditions throughout the winter months?

Officer Response:

Potholes identified on the highway are prioritised for repair according to their width, depth and position on the road. Those of diameter greater than 150mm, of depth greater than 40mm and in a position where there is a high risk of vehicle interaction (within an area most frequently tracked) are awarded the highest priority. Smaller potholes and those which are on the carriageway but unlikely to be driven over will receive lesser priority or may only be monitored depending upon precise circumstances. A review of how potholes are categorised is currently in progress and the results are awaited.

Whilst categorisation of potholes remains unchanged during severe weather conditions, the Council's approach to dealing with high numbers of defects, which may appear, on our roads may be adapted to suit circumstances. Following the extreme weather conditions experienced at the beginning of this year, all of the County's resources were deployed in repairing potholes. In some cases roving gangs covered large areas filling the worst defects to make them safe whilst others were engaged on a systematic regime of visiting individual streets and repairing all defects visible deemed to be worthy of receiving a pothole repair. In this way we were able to make the network safe as soon as was practicable.