



SPEED LIMITS UPDATE

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
LOCAL COMMITTEE (GUILDFORD)**

24th JUNE 2009

KEY ISSUE

This report updates the Committee on discussions regarding the County Council's Speed Management Policy.

SUMMARY

Following discussions at the last meeting of the Committee, this report sets out questions put to the Executive Member for Transport at the meeting of the County Council on 24 March, together with his replies. It also reminds the Committee of the road safety consultation being undertaken by the Department for Transport.

Report by

Surrey Atlas Ref.

LOCAL HIGHWAYS MANAGER

N/A

GUILDFORD B.C. WARD(S)

COUNTY ELECTORAL DIVISION(S)

ALL

ALL

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to agree:

- (i) that the report be noted.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1 At its last meeting on 11 March 2009, the Committee considered a report covering progress made on the speed limits programme over the previous year, together with requests for new limits which had been considered by the Transportation Task Group on 27 November 2008. The officer and Task Group recommendations were approved.
- 2 There was a discussion at the meeting concerning the Committee's desire to progress a number of speed limits which had been assessed and found not to comply with the current speed management policy. Three particular schemes (Papercourt Lane, Ripley, Tannery Lane, Send and Wodeland Avenue, Guildford) remain on the programme but are shown as 'on hold'. There is a clear desire to respond more positively to public requests and petitions seeking lower limits, notably 20 mph limits in parts of Guildford town.
- 3 Some Members expressed the view that the SCC Speed Management policy had been amended by a resolution of the County Council on 2 May 2006, in favour of introducing more 20 mph limits. Officers responded that the Committee could not compel officers to act against SCC policy, which they felt had not been changed by the Council resolution referred to on 2 May 2006. Members could ask officers to review the policy.

QUESTIONS TO FULL COUNCIL

- 4 It was suggested that the Chairman should write to the Executive to ask for a discussion in full Council explaining the position in relation to the decisions taken by the Committee on speed limits but not called in by the Executive. In the event, both Councillor Barker and former Councillor Sarah Di Caprio put questions to the former Executive Member for Transport at the County Council meeting on 24 March 2009. These, together with the responses, are appended as **ANNEXE A**.
- 5 The key points in these two responses are as follows:
 - The prime purpose of the Speed Management policy is to contribute to Surrey County Council's challenging casualty reduction targets
 - There is a need to work with Surrey Police who have to enforce Surrey County Council's decisions
 - There is a need to maintain consistency throughout Surrey
 - The policy is based on national guidance

- There is no county policy to specifically promote 20mph zones.

- 6 The Executive Member acknowledged the many requests received for lower limits, and stated “I believe that it is now an appropriate time for the Council to review its speed limit policies, in particular to address two issues:
1. Should the policies themselves be altered?
 2. What discretion should be given to local committees within these policies?”

‘A SAFER WAY’ - CONSULTATION BY DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT

- 7 In April 2009, the Department for Transport (DfT) launched a consultation on how to make Britain’s roads the safest in the world. It acknowledges the progress that has been made in reducing casualties, but despite this, almost 3000 people die on the roads each year.
- 8 Two particular proposals in the consultation document received national media attention. The first concerns rural single carriageways where the road is derestricted, and the national speed limit of 60 mph applies. The DfT proposes to review its guidance to local authorities, recommending that lower limits are adopted where there is evidence that a lower limit would reduce casualties. This is welcome, but it should be noted that this will bring a requirement for greater levels of signing, with consequent impact on the environment and street clutter in rural areas, together with the capital and revenue costs of installation and maintenance.
- 9 The second concerns pedestrians in urban areas, where pedestrian and cyclist deaths tend to be concentrated. The DfT proposes to amend its guidance on speed limits, recommending that local authorities, over time, introduce 20 mph zones or limits into streets which are primarily residential in nature, or other areas where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high, for example around schools, and which are not part of any major through route.
- 10 The consultation also includes proposals relating to vehicle safety, the way in which people learn to drive, road safety education for children and young adults, and tackling irresponsible road use. The consultation period closes in mid July. It will take some time for the results to be analyzed and for decisions to be made regarding the way forward, together with any necessary legislation. Officers would expect any national changes to be reflected in the review of the County Council’s own policy.

FINANCIAL & VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

11 This report has no direct financial implications.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

12 The implementation of appropriate speed management schemes has a positive impact on safety and the environment by addressing speed related accidents and perception about safety in the communities concerned.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

13 This report has no implications for equality and diversity.

CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

14 This report has no implications for crime and disorder.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

15 Officers will bring a report to a future meeting of the Committee when the SCC policy review has been completed.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:	Local Committee Report, 11 March 2009, Item 14 Question to Full Council, 24 March 2009

(9) MR BILL BARKER (HORSLEYS) TO ASK:

Are Executive Members aware there are three speed limits on hold at the Guildford Local Committee pending SCC Executive Decision? Officers are unable to proceed with implementation 'as it is NOT Council policy.' Why is this Executive so out of tune with public opinion at least in the Guildford area?

Reply:

I understand that in a number of recent cases, the Guildford Local Committee decided against taking officers' advice.

The first two cases involved two roads between Send and Ripley. Local residents had asked for a reduction in the current speed limits from 60 mph to 30 mph. The roads were assessed using current County policy and the appropriate speed limit identified as 40 mph. Local residents made further representations in favour of a limit of 30 mph or lower. This would have been outside County Council policy, and therefore the Local Committee had no authority to implement such a limit.

The third case involved Wodeland Avenue in Guildford, a residential urban road with a 30 mph speed limit. Ways to reduce drivers' speeds have been investigated but abandoned due to a lack of local consensus on possible solutions. Most recently, it was put forward for investigation for a 20 mph limit, which was assessed using County Council policy, and found not to comply.

In both cases, officers advised that they would seek clarification but that they do not have the authority to promote solutions outside current County Council policy.

Local Committees may change speed limits in line with the County Council's current Speed Management policy, approved by the Executive in 2006. Its prime purpose is to contribute to Surrey County Council's challenging casualty reduction targets. The policy addresses the responsibilities of speed limit assessment, including working with Surrey Police who have to enforce Surrey County Council's decisions, the need to maintain some consistency or parity throughout Surrey, and is based on national guidance. Each proposal to change a speed limit is assessed locally on its individual merits, and judgement within the guidance is exercised by officers when advising committees.

A proposed change in speed limit needs to represent best value in terms of casualty reduction potential, and stand up to scrutiny when compared with other County Council priorities and requests.

I am aware that there are many requests for lower speed limits and that it is frustrating when these cannot be delivered. It is difficult to balance responsiveness to our customers with an ineffective speed limit and the ability of Surrey Police to allocate limited resources to enforcing unrealistic speed limits is a practical consideration. With this in mind, I believe that it is now an appropriate time for the Council to review its speed limit policies, in particular to address two issues:

1. Should the policies themselves be altered?
2. What discretion should be given to local committees within these policies?

(13) MRS SARAH DI CAPRIO (GUILDFORD SOUTH EAST) TO ASK:

At the Council meeting on 25 November 2008, I raised a question about the Liberal Democrat motion concerning 20mph zones not having been implemented. The Executive Member for Transport commented in a supplementary question I asked that Local Committees could look to switch budgets to support 20mph zones in their area. I understand this has happened in at least one area, but at the Guildford Local Committee on 11 March 2009, we were told that Local Committees do not have that authority and it is a decision of the Executive. Can the Executive Member please clarify the situation?

Reply:

Each local committee is allocated an annual capital budget for integrated transport schemes (ITS), and other funding sources such as Members' allocations are also available. Committees have delegated authority to draw up an annual programme balancing County Council and Local Transport Plan priorities with other local priorities. However, decisions must comply with County Council policy.

Local Committees may change speed limits and introduce 20 mph zones in line with the County Council's Speed Management policy, which addresses the complexities of speed limit assessment and which is based on national guidance. There is no county policy to specifically promote 20mph zones. Any proposed scheme needs to represent best value in terms of casualty reduction potential together with County Council and local priorities.

As my answer to Mr Barker's question on the same issue indicated, I believe it is an appropriate time for the whole question of speed limits to be re-examined and I hope this can be done as soon as practicably possible.