



Annual review of monitoring of applications for Goods Vehicle Operators Licences

Surrey County Council Local Committee (Guildford)

22nd June 2011

KEY ISSUE

This annual monitoring report to the Guildford Local Committee is to inform members of applications for Goods Vehicle Operators Licences (VOLs) for the period April 2010 to the end of March 2011.

SUMMARY

All operators of heavy goods vehicles have to have an Operators Licence and have to have an operating centre where their vehicles are kept when not in use. Surrey County Council does not grant these licences but can object when there are sufficient grounds to do so. There were 137 applications for Goods Vehicle Operators Licences in Surrey in the period April 2010 to the end of March 2011. 10 of these were in Guildford and Surrey County Council objected to 3 of these. The County Council was able to reach agreement on conditions in respect of all of these applications and they were all subsequently granted. The County Council also attended a public inquiry in June 2010 in respect of several objections on the same site in Guildford made in the previous year. The County Council gave evidence but the Traffic Commissioner decided to grant the applications with conditions attached. As from 1st January 2010, all County Councillors are consulted on applications within their divisions.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to note:

- (i) There is now an established system in place for notifying and consulting Members of applications in their Divisions.

- (ii) Training for Members was carried out in September and November 2009. This was made available to all County Councillors.
- (iii) The contents of this Annual Information Report.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Leader of the County Council introduced a requirement for Officers to consult Members on applications for Goods Vehicle Operators Licences in their Divisions. The County Council's dedicated VOL officer retired in Autumn 2009 and, as a result of the change in personnel and procedure, this was implemented on 1st January 2010. It has now been in operation for approximately 17/18 months and appears to be working well. All members are now consulted on applications within their divisions. Training for Members took place in September and November 2009.
- 1.2 With very few exceptions, any person or company who uses goods vehicles above 3.5tonnesgvw for the carriage of goods on the public highway in connection with a trade or business needs an operators 'O' licence. In order to obtain an 'O' licence, the operator has meet criteria in respect of available finance, fitness to operate goods vehicles, and must also be of good repute. Furthermore he/she must have at least one operating centre to keep vehicles to be authorised on his licence, within each traffic area that he wants to operate. Operating centres must be large enough to accommodate all of the vehicles to be authorised. They should, in addition have an access on to the public highway that does not cause danger to the public. The environmental suitability of an operating centre can also be a consideration.
- 1.3 Since 1 January 1996, Operators Licensing has been governed by the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995, and the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995. Applications are made to the Vehicles and Operators Services Agency (VOSA) and are determined by the Traffic Commissioner. VOSA is an agency of the Department for Transport and the Traffic Commissioner is an appointee of the Secretary of State for Transport. All Local Authorities have a statutory right to object to applications for operators licences, under this Act. This includes the Boroughs and Districts in addition to the County Council. They also have the right of appeal against a decision made by the Traffic Commissioner. Affected individuals and organisations, who own or occupy property in the vicinity of an operating centre, have a right to make representations against applications, (but only on environmental grounds). They have no right of appeal.
- 1.4 All applications for operators licences must be advertised in a newspaper which circulates in the *locality* of the proposed operating centre. Local residents who consider that the use or enjoyment of their property will be adversely affected by the use of an operating centre, have 21 days from the date of publication of the newspaper to make representations against any such application. Local Authorities do not object to applications at this stage, even though as a result of public concern they may be aware of a particular application. This is the point at which Members and members of the public may contact officers to express concern and to make their views know. This warns Officers to keep an eye out for a specific application.

- 1.5 Traffic Commissioners have to publish applications for operating centres within their Traffic Area. Surrey is covered by the South Eastern and Metropolitan Traffic Area, which used to be based at Eastbourne and is now based in Leeds. The publication entitled "Applications & Decisions", (informally known as "A's & D's"), is issued fortnightly. On publication the local authorities, as statutory objectors, have their opportunity to object to such applications. The Traffic Commissioner must receive such objections no later than *21 days* after the date of publication of "A's & D's".
- 1.6 Objections may be made on a number of grounds, but these basically fall into three categories.
- 1 Fitness, repute and financial standing of an operator, which could affect the ability to hold an operators licence.
- 2 General suitability of an operating centre. This can include such matters as:
- a) The adequacy of maintenance facilities.
 - b) Road safety, which can include visibility off and from the access, the geometry of the access, and the nature and adequacy of the public highway in the immediate vicinity of the operating centre, and also the adequacy of any private road or track leading from the operating centre availability. Is the site available for use? Does the public highway leading to the operating centre have a weight restriction?
 - c) The capability of the operating centre to accommodate adequately the vehicles to be authorised. (Taking into account all other activities taking place on the site) An authorised vehicle is one which is operated by the applicant under his 'O' Licence, and is specified on that licence.
- 3 Environmental suitability of an operating centre. This can include such matters as:
- The proximity of an operating centre to residential properties, and other sensitive site. E.g. Common Land, SSSI's, Nursing homes, Schools.
 - The times of use of an operating centre, and the resulting disturbance and/or nuisance caused to local residents.
 - The visual intrusion of an operating centre, resulting from parking of authorised vehicles at, or in the vicinity of an operating centre.
 - The unsuitability of the access to the operating centre, due to disturbance caused by the passage of authorised vehicles to or from that centre.
 - Fumes and dust caused by the use of the site as an operating centre, and/ or the passage of authorised vehicles to and from the operating centre.
 - Environmental unsuitability of the highway in the vicinity of the site e.g. intimidation caused by the passage of authorised vehicles to and from the operating centre where the road is very narrow, and/or is a recommended cycleway. Also damage caused by authorised vehicles to verges etc. Does the public highway leading to the operating centre have a weight restriction?
- 1.7 The Traffic Commissioner has the opportunity to review Operating Centres every 5 years. The Traffic Commissioner will only do this if a complaint has been made within the preceding 5 years. It is therefore essential that local residents and local authorities complain to the Traffic Commissioner about problem sites.

ANALYSIS

- 1.8 Surrey County Council can only object to applications for O'Licence applications on the grounds outlined in Section 1.0 above. This is defined in statute and case law. Objections can often be resolved by the imposition of conditions that have been negotiated and agreed with the applicant. SCC has a proactive approach to resolving concerns and will only pursue an objection to a Public Inquiry as a last resort as it is very resource hungry. During the period April 2010 to the end of March 2011, the County Council has objected to 27 applications for Operators Licences and has attended 7 Public Inquiries, 1 in Dorking and the remainder in Eastbourne. In addition to the 27 objections, there were 14 objections outstanding from the previous year. Some of the Public Inquiries relate to these objections and 1 was in respect of a review of an operating centre that the County Council had requested.
- 1.9 The majority of applications for operating centres relate to existing sites or existing commercial/industrial premises. With the exception of a small number of problem sites within the County, the majority of these existing sites do not generate any issues. Applications to which the County Council objects are often for new sites which have not previously been used as operating centres before. Most, although not all, objections relate to residential or rural areas. Objections to existing sites often result in the imposition of conditions which restrict either the number of HGV movements or, more likely, the hours of HGV operation in order to protect residential amenity.
- 1.10 There are some Divisions in the County where there have been no VOL applications and therefore these Members will not have had any notification.

CONSULTATIONS

- 1.11 Every County Council Member is consulted on VOL applications within their Division. In addition, the vice-chair of the Elmbridge Local Committee is notified of all applications in Elmbridge, at his request.
- 1.12 It has been suggested previously that the Local Committee and Parish Councils are formally consulted by the County Council in respect of O'Licence applications. Given that the period for response is so short, 21-days including weekends and bank/public holidays, with the resources currently available for this work area, there is not enough time in the process to consult either Local Committees or Parish Councils on individual applications.
- 1.13 The applications in Guildford over the period April 2010 to the end of March 2011 are as follows:
- May Gurney Ltd – 25 vehicles
West House, Merrow Lane, Guildford GU4 7BQ
- Surrey Hills Removals Ltd – 4 vehicles & 1 trailer
Unit A, Send Business Centre, Tannery Lane, Send GU2 7EF
- Blue Dragon Transport Ltd – 1 vehicle

Drive Assist UK Ltd, Normandy Business Park, Cobbett Hill, Normandy,
Guildford GU23 2AA

Automobile Association – 12 vehicles (increase)
BT Guildford, Moorfield Road, Slyfield Industrial Estate, Guildford GU1 1RU

Furniture Village Limited T/A Furniture Village – 6 vehicles
Unit 3, Cobbett Park, Slyfield Industrial Estate, Guildford GU1 1RU

M.C. Commercial Vehicles Ltd – 2 vehicles & 2 trailers
SITA Site, Station Road West, Ash Vale, Aldershot GU12 5QD

Waterline Ltd – 6 vehicles
Unit 5 Quadrum Park, Old Portsmouth Road, Peasmarsh, GU3 1LU

Petro Gabel Duduman – 1 vehicle
Hansons, Farnham Quarry, Runfold GU10 1QJ

RCD (Contractors) Limited – 5 vehicles
Cobbett Hill Estates, Normandy Business Park, Normandy, Guildford GU3
2AA

Tristan Thorpe T/A TT Transportation – 1 vehicle
Newmarsh Farm, Horsley Road, Cobham KT11 3JX

1.14 The County Council objected to the following applications:

Tristan Thorpe T/A TT Transportation – 1 vehicle
Newmarsh Farm, Horsley Road, Cobham KT11 3JX
(Objection on highway safety grounds – granted by the Traffic Commissioner
with conditions limiting the vehicle to turning left into and left out of the site
only)

May Gurney Ltd – 25 vehicles
West House, Merrow Lane, Guildford GU4 7BQ
(Objection on residential amenity grounds, requesting hours conditions –
application withdrawn as the address of the site was incorrectly published.
This licence is to replace the carillion/ringway vehicles on the SCC highways
contract)

Surrey Hills Removals Ltd – 4 vehicles & 1 trailer
Unit A, Send Business Centre, Tannery Lane, Send GU2
(Objection on suitability of the local highway network & access grounds –
agreed conditions with the applicant in respect of where the vehicles would
park and limiting access to and from the south)

1.14 The County Council attended a Public Inquiry at Eastbourne in June 2010 in
respect of several objections that had been made in 2009. The operators
were The Baleman Services Limited, Smoking Dog catering, Alan Pidgley
and Braye Demolition & Plant Services Ltd and the site was Newmarsh Farm,
Horsley Road, Cobham. This site has been a continuing cause of concern to
local residents and both the District and County Councils. There has been
planning enforcement action by both Authorities. The County Council is

concerned about the suitability of the access to the site, the capacity/availability of the site in the light of the enforcement action and the environmental suitability of the site for this type of use.

- 1.15 Although the Traffic Commissioner accepted the County Council's evidence about highway safety, the Commissioner considered that this could be overcome by a condition on each of the licences limiting the vehicles to turning left into and left out of the site only. Additionally, the Traffic Commissioner considered that the site was environmentally suitable and that there was adequate capacity within the lorry parking area on the site, although accepted that the rest of the site was unavailable. All licences at this site are now granted with the condition limiting the direction of access and egress and the acceptance that only the existing lorry parking area, not the entire farm, is available for HGV parking ensures that the use of this site as an operating centre cannot grow unchecked.

2 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 There is no full-time dedicated Officer to this work area. It is managed by the Transport Development Planning Manager East with support from other colleagues within Transport Development Planning (TDP) and Legal Services when required. It is managed alongside other workloads. There is no specific budget for this work area.

3 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no significant equalities and diversity implications.

4 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no significant crime and disorder implications.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The requirement to consult County Councillors on operators licence applications in their Divisions has worked well so far. Members have provided officers with useful background information about some sites and drawn their attention to problems at others. Members have also taken the opportunity to express support for applications and given their backing to local businesses. It is therefore recommended that this continue. Letters of objection can be copied to Members on request.
- 5.2 Training for Members in respect of this matter was previously carried out in September and November 2009. All Members were invited to these events, although not all have attended. It is accepted that this was some time ago so further training can be arranged if required, alternatively officers are happy to discuss this matter individually with Members.

Contact officer: Caroline Smith, Transport Development Planning
Telephone number: 020 8541 9975
E-mail: carolinedrinkwater@surreycc.gov.uk