



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
(MOLE VALLEY)**

PUBLIC WRITTEN QUESTIONS

07 DECEMBER 2010

The following question was submitted in accordance with Standing Order 66.

1. Question from Mr Ron Billard, Chairman of Mole Valley Cycling Forum

SCC recently created and then obliterated a cycle pathway in Epsom Road, Leatherhead, at a cost reported as £70,000 and with much adverse publicity. Would members please explain what steps they intend to take to ensure that proper consultation takes place in advance of such projects, between officers and recognised bodies of expertise within the voluntary sector? When, for example, will they arrange the reconvening of the East Surrey Cycle Forum, the last meeting of which took place on 27th April 2009?

It is noted that officers claim to be too busy to attend such meetings; would the members consider that one reason officers are too busy is that they are fully occupied rectifying failures caused by lack of proper consultation as required by their own codes of practice?

Response from SCC Highways Team

Consultation for roads and transport projects is intended to be based on a good practice guide published on the County council's website. The aims of the good practice guide are to :

- publish our broad principles of consultation and engagement when developing or delivering transport or work on Surrey's roads/highway.
- provide consistency on consultation and engagement for transport and roads work and activity across Surrey.
- keep relevant customers informed and for encouraging expression of views or ideas.

There are no agreed plans to reconvene the East Surrey Cycle Forum, but communications with cycling groups across the County will be kept under review.

2. Question from Mr Paul Fairweather, Chairman of Fetchham Residents Association

Will the Council please state how it intends to reduce its costs and potential liabilities and respond to residents' expressed concerns by extending enforcement of the existing verge-parking legislation to Fetchham?

Response from SCC Highways Team

Typically the most common method of preventing verge parking is to install posts or similar to act as a deterrent. This is relatively low cost and simple to install/maintain.

Waiting restriction can be installed if there is a safety issue, as these can be enforced to the highway boundary which includes the verge or footway behind the kerb. It is also possible to impose a restriction (or alternatively allow) on verge parking, however the signing required to do this is more onerous than installing waiting restrictions. Typically either of these methods would cost several thousand pounds and require regular enforcement to be effective.

Each location would be considered on its merits and the type of preventative measures prescribed would be dependent on the resources available and the scale of the problem.

Although verge parking is a problem in area's of the County there is no simple legislative solution available to the Council that would allow a wholesale ban on footway or verge parking without incurring significant costs in the placement of signs warning of the offence. Surrey Highways have discussed this problem with the DfT and will continue to seek a cost effective solution.

3. Question from WR Burdon, Resident and member of Blackbrook Speedwatch Team

In the light of the excessive speeds recorded by the Blackbrook Speedwatch team, will the County Council please urgently consider the reduction in speed limit from 40mph to 30mph in the most sensitive areas of Blackbrook Road?

Response from SCC Highways Team

Verbal response.

4. Question from Mole Valley District Councillor Caroline Salmon

For safety reasons, cyclists are using the southbound A24 footpath (rather than the road). Cycle useage has recently increased, especially since Surrey Highways recent flay back, which removed hazardous branches and undergrowth from beside the path throughout the Holmwoods Ward. However, this has left a potentially dangerous slippery surface in winter, due to grass growing over the path. Following a report to this committee of October 2008 about turning this footpath into a dual use cyclable track, recently test patches have been cleared of the encroaching grass, thus proving the existing path's base to be up to 6 foot. This cleared width is adequate for a dual useage cycle and pedestrian path. All local organizations and the MV Cycle Forum are supporting the clearing of this path and making the southbound footpath into dual useage for both Cyclists and Pedestrians. The intention is to do any work on this path at as low a cost as possible.

Would the committee be able to instigate appropriate action to make this path into a dual useage path for cyclists and pedestrians and can the committee suggest a process of how, once cleared of encroaching grass, the path might be maintained?

Response from SCC Cycling Team

As a need has been identified in terms of people wanting to cycle into Dorking alongside the A24 then Surrey County Council could propose providing a shared use footway on the east side of the A24 from the Holmwoods into Dorking.

In locations where there is very low pedestrian use a 6 feet (2 metre) wide shared footway, constructed to a standard whereby cyclists and pedestrians can use it easily and safely, is acceptable. If the Local Committee had agreed to support a proposal to convert the footway alongside the A24 into shared use the next step would be to undertake a feasibility study in order to identify the works (and costs) required to implement it and then to consult with affected organisations and individuals.

This would involve more than putting up signs and Surrey County Council has a duty to provide a good cycling (and therefore walking) surface and safe crossing points of access drives, minor roads etc. It would be hoped that the Mole Valley Cycle Forum could help in providing an appropriate design. A decision would need to be made where it would start and finish.

This work would require funding and we won't know the cost until completion of any feasibility study and the production of an outline design.

5. Question from Mr David Burton, Dorking resident and parent of children attending Westcott School

We have raised over 300 signatures of support for the Westcott - Dorking bike path in just 4 days. We have a "dream route" along the hedgerow line agreed in co-operation with the landowner, for free. We also have a bridlepath connection to Lince Lane (and hence the Westcott Sports Club), again with the goodwill of the landowner, again for free. If we build before next April (end of the financial year) we have a very high chance of getting the lost Sustrans funding (50% of the cost).

SCC Officers say that the best time to build to minimise disruption to wildlife is in the dormant period - winter. Now.

The Hedgerow Route is the only one out of the other possibilities considered that meets all criteria. The other options seem to have major drawbacks. The Hedgerow Route, therefore, seems the only viable option. I have been informed that this is also the expressed opinion of the SCC Officer in charge.

SCC Officers estimate the cost at £24K (£12K with the Sustrans grant). We estimate the cost to the taxpayer of 'doing nothing' at £6-8K/year. It is as cost-effective to build as to not build.

There have been years of informal discussion and there are no objections of any seriousness or substance. (The flooding is now well understood and separate flood measures are well in hand).

A schoolchild was knocked down by a car on the A25 walking home from Dorking to Westcott yesterday.

What reasons can the Council give for not debating and approving this route as a matter of the utmost urgency?

Response from SCC Cycling Team

To follow

6. Question from Ms Lucy Lawrie, resident and local business person

In 2002 SCC carried out a Feasibility Study for a Westcott-Dorking cycle path. Seven years later, in December 2009, the Council were asked to agree to the cycle route. They did not agree to the route but did agree to further consultations with residents. In the year that has passed since this date there have been no formal consultations with residents. A flooding report was then commissioned and was due in April 2010. It finally appeared in September 2010. Our Councillor Hazel Watson says that she "has not yet determined...the route that [she] will support" because "it will be necessary to consult Westcott residents". There have been seven years of consultation now - what more is there to learn?

I have been a local resident all my life. Since this was first proposed, I have seen my older child go from Westcott to Ashcombe School (Year 7) and have had a younger child who is now in Year 3 at Westcott (Surrey Hills Primary). Every day that the Council procrastinates is another day that the children are forced to use the A25. At this rate they will grow up and we will still be campaigning for this bike path

for their children! There is landowner agreement, a "dream route", massive public support and no serious technical obstacles. There was even a grant to pay for half of it. The remaining cost is minimal - at approx £12K (with grant) - probably less than some Councillors annual expenses.

Why is this taking so long? Why is there no political will to see this completed? What sensible reasons can the Council possibly give for this cycle route having not been built yet?

Response from SCC Cycling Team

To follow

MVLC 07 DECEMBER 2010