



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

PUBLIC WRITTEN QUESTIONS

03 MARCH 2011

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

1. Question from Mr Andrew Winter, Chairman Sheepphouse Green Residents' Association

With reference to the dreadful state of the road surface at Sheepphouse Green in Wotton.

The road surface has been patched intermittently over forty years and has now reached a point where the road and parking bays are in such a poor state of repair that the surface is beaking up. After a recent visit from a Highways Officer to examine the potholes and missing kerbstones at the entrance to the Green, his view was that simply patching the surface will make little difference. Having examined the whole road he came the conclusion that the only sensible course of action would be to re-surface the entire road.

I would like to ask whether the committee is aware that with no street lighting to protect drivers, cyclists and pedestrians there is a real danger of damage to vehicles and people on both the road and pavements of Sheepphouse Green. The residents of Sheepphouse Green would like to know when re-surfacing or surface dressing can be carried out to rectify this rapidly deteriorating situation.

Since sending my first mail about this situation last year, I have to add that the road surface has deteriorated even further. The Highways department were informed yesterday of a dangerous man-hole cover on the road. The road surface around the cover has collapsed and is a danger to drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. There is a hole the size of a dinner plate alongside the cover and the brick construction of the drain below is clearly visible. I have to say thank you to the Highways team for their swift reaction to my report - within a couple of hours they had placed a warning cone

over the hole. My only hope is that the repair isn't an isolated patch like so many of the other repairs to the Green.

Response from SCC Highways Team

Officers would agree that the condition of Sheephouse Green in Wotton is less than desirable with the existing surface being worn and showing many repairs. It is the intention to add this site to a list of similar sites for Local Structural Repairs bids (LSR) for the new financial year 2011/12, because of the nature of the deterioration. All such sites are assessed and may be promoted to the works programme subject to available funding and the relative priorities of those sites. In the meantime the road will continue to have regular Highway safety inspections carried out to ensure there are no significant or dangerous defects.

2. Question from Mr Peter Browne, Leatherhead Resident

What advice or recommendations have been made by Surrey County Council's Cycling Officer as to the suitability of the Epsom Road footpath for use as a cycle path between the Knoll Roundabout and the bottom of the Epsom Road?

What have been the conclusions of the safety audit in respect of the use of the Epsom Road footpath as a cycle path, including by vulnerable cyclists at the junction with the Knoll Roundabout?

How have the above been reflected in the options on which consultations are being (or are to be) conducted for a cycle path to be provided in along the Epsom Road footpath?

Response from SCC Highways Team

The County Cycling Officer has expressed the view that, for the most part, the footway on the north side of the Epsom Road has sufficient width to become a cycle path. i.e. for use by both cyclists and pedestrians. The only exceptions are where the footway goes around the electricity substation (at the Leatherhead end) and at the Knoll roundabout. At these two locations the footway is too narrow to become a cycle path. With this in mind, the County Cycling Officer would recommend conversion to a cycle path from the entrance drive to St. John's school to just short of the Knoll roundabout.

For the section of footway that can be safely converted to a cycle path, the County Cycling Officer would advise on shared use. i.e. cyclists and pedestrians sharing the whole width. The alternative would be a segregated path but the County Cycling Officer is of the view that there are too many obstacles (bus shelters, pelican crossing, side road crossings, road sign poles etc.) for this to operate safely.

The following issues that would need to be addressed when converting the footway to a cycle path:

- Improved visibility at bus shelters (so that bus users can see both ways along the footway and also for cyclists to see if anyone is waiting at the bus stops.
- Surface markings across school access drives (and possibly signs) to alert vehicle drivers exiting from schools that cyclists may be coming.
- Wider dropped kerbs at minor road crossing so that pedestrians and cyclists can safely cross.

The County Cycling Officer further comments that far more people are likely to cycle if a safe crossing at Knoll roundabout could be provided together with conversion of the footway to a cycle path from the Knoll roundabout to Grange Road. This would give a safe passage for many more cyclists, especially pupils going to local schools (Downsend, St. Andrew's and St. Peter's on the Ashtead side and St. John's on the Leatherhead side).

As noted in the Internal Audit report submitted to Mole Valley Local Committee on 7 December 2010, no safety audits were undertaken for the cycle scheme in Epsom Road.

The internal auditor recommended that Mole Valley Local Committee should provide a definitive, public statement as to the future of any cycleway in Epsom Road. To assist in the decision making process, Officers were tasked with undertaking an informal consultation process with local people, organisations and businesses. In order to provide Members with a complete picture of the views of those consulted and to ensure the process could not be open to the criticism that some measures had been discounted by Officers without asking the public for their opinion, it was agreed that all options should be included for consultation. Officers will then report to a future meeting of Local Committee both the results of the consultation and the feasibility of each option to allow Members to make an informed decision on the future of any cycleway in Epsom Road.

3. Question from Cllr James Friend, Mole Valley District Councillor for Westcott

At the December 2010 Local Committee meeting the committee received a petition from residents and voted 7 members to 1 in favour of four amendments with respect to the Westcott to Milton Court cycle link, with only the County Councillor for Dorking Hills voting against, with the first amendment seeking the implementation of flood relief works at the north end of Bailey Road. Has this work now been completed and if not at what date will it be completed?

What was the majority feedback from the consultation of residents to the proposed route?

Has the county council re-applied to Sustrans for matched funding for this scheme? Following the December meeting, SCC officer Paul Druce has confirmed to me that the £15,716.73p of section 106 monies reserved for Transport qualifies for use towards this scheme. Has this money now been formally set aside for this use?

With the section 106 money, the investments made in the enabling flood relief works and the connecting Watson Road footbridge and the Sustrans matched funding, what level of additional funding, if any, is required to enable the work to be implemented?

Response from SCC Highways Team

The flood alleviation work is due to begin shortly. It is our intention that the works will be significantly completed by the end of the financial year. However this is dependent on the forthcoming weather conditions. High levels of rainfall in March may result in the work being delayed.

Officers have consulted with the community using a number of methods. A guided walk on 11th February attracted approximately 25 people. The public display at The Hut on 17th February where over 150 people attended between 2.30pm and 7.45pm. New consultation notices were put on site on 3 February 2011 with the final date of 23rd February 2011. Local members, Mole Valley District Council, Westcott Residents Association, users groups and other local interested residents were written to directly.

The majority of the people on the walk and who visited the display were in favor of the proposal. The two most frequently asked questions concerned how soon could it be built and where the money was coming from. Some residents came with specific requests that will be factored into the scheme if possible.

Objections have been received from three individuals concerned with the loss of the footpath, safety and environmental issues as well as it not being in the interests of one objector. We have also been asked to consider the petition submitted in 2007 with 340 signatories. However the advice from our Legal section is that the signatories would need to know what was in mind when they signed it. They would not have seen the plans showing the current proposals, as the scheme is now different from 2007. Therefore there would be concerns about how relevant their views are. We also have concerns that the wording on the petition could be construed as misleading as it states “ you would be unable to walk safely to Dorking...” Therefore the 2007 petition is not relevant to the current proposal. Five individuals wrote either in support or not objecting but making comments on the proposal.

Sustrans has recently announced that they are now taking applications for grant funding. Alan Fordham of the Safer Travel Strategy Team is presently putting a bid together for funding. This will encompass both the ‘hedgerow’ route and the section beside the A25.

The £15,716.73 of available section 106 monies have been informally earmarked for this proposal. Confirmation will depend on there being no other competing interest. We do not expect to require any additional funding at this time if Sustrans continue to accept the money that has been spent to benefit the surrounding rights of way network as match funding.

The following question(s) had not been received within the Local Committee’s protocol deadline and so a written answer might not necessarily be available at committee. Officers would endeavour to provide a verbal response at committee with a formal written answer to follow.

4. Question from Peter Seaward, Chairman of the Bookham Residents Association

Proposed new SCC parking charges for Bookham High Street and Church Road. MVDC in its recent LDF planning document adopted a policy CS 9 which states that no action will be allowed that affects the viability of Bookham High Street. Fetcham will be exempt from these new SCC charges so shoppers will migrate there so causing revenue to be lost in Bookham. Bookham has demonstrated that there are alternative ways of saving SCC money (Bookham Youth Centre at around £15,000 per annum). SCC states that local shops will not suffer by these new parking charges so were all of the above issues taken into account and if so would SCC produce their evidence to support their statements specifically in relation to Bookham (not Surrey generally)?

Response from SCC Parking Team

We understand the concerns of local residents and businesses about the proposed on street parking charges, however there are a number of sound reasons for introducing 'pay and display' parking charges in many of the shopping centres around the County :

- On street parking areas outside shops are currently very difficult to enforce effectively as number plates have to be recorded and checked at repeated intervals. This is very cumbersome and not very efficient, meaning Civil Enforcement Officers are not able to enforce these areas as effectively as we would like. The more time they spend checking parking bays the less time is available to patrol areas with yellow lines where parking could pose a safety or obstruction hazard.
- The difficulty of enforcing on street parking bays (some towns have more than 100 spaces) means compliance with parking time limits is poor and many cars remain parked for longer than they should in short term parking areas.
- A 'pay and display' system makes enforcement much easier as parking attendants can see instantly if a car is parked legally. Compliance improves as enforcement become effective.
- The real benefit of this is that parking spaces near shops are turned over more quickly which can help local businesses by making them more accessible. Customers will be more likely to find a space due to the increased turnover which is particularly important on routes with passing traffic (or trade)

The key factor is getting the tariff levels right. We are therefore consulting on a range of proposals, with varying charges in different areas. As we go through the consultation a lot of suggestions are being made, particularly the idea of having a free 15 or 30 minute period in some locations and we are looking seriously at this. If the parking tariff is set at an appropriate level in Bookham High Street then it should improve the viability of the High Street rather than harm it.

It is not straightforward however, as we are trying to move away from a position where we subsidise parking enforcement in Surrey by approximately £500,000 a year from the highways budget. A free parking period that is too long or widely available could mean the income from parking tickets would not cover the cost of maintaining the machines and enforcement. In other words it would continue to need a subsidy that could otherwise be used to maintain the roads.

We are however looking at all the options and seeking ways of making this initiative work, as there are benefits for local business and Surrey residents.

5. Question from James E Smith OBE, Bookham resident

We understand that in order to reduce overall revenue expenditure Surrey C.C. are proposing to enter into bilateral agreements with each of the District/Borough Councils to continue to combine the use of Traffic Wardens for on-street and off-street parking. Can you confirm that this is so, and that the proposed introduction of metered parking in Bookham High Street and Church Rd. have been based upon realistic case studies? What were the assumptions made for Labour Costs, Overheads, and initial Capital Costs to demonstrate the financial viability of the proposals and how do they compare with suggestions made in the Report by Bookham Vision ?.

Response from SCC Parking Team

Discussions have been taking place between the District and Borough Councils and Surrey County Council to look at ways of improving the efficiency of the on street Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) operation in Surrey from April 2012. A decision has not yet been reached as to how this will work, however it is anticipated that there will be efficiencies by sharing back office costs etc by the District and Borough Councils in the administration of on street parking enforcement. 2011/12 is a transitional year, however Surrey County Council is expecting that the current annual cost in operating CPE of about £500,000 will be significantly reduced as our enforcement agents start to bring in some more efficient ways of working.

The assessment of how parking charges could work in Bookham is based on an initial appraisal of the area that is subject to a consultation process. Surrey Highways would be happy to look at suggestions about parking needs in Bookham, particularly by Bookham Vision as part of this process, which will formally start in Mole Valley later in the year.

6. Question from Debbie Cameron, Dorking resident

Could you please consider speeding up the process of the promised speed reduction of the A24 from Denbies roundabout to Swanworth Lane to 50 mph in order to make it safe in time for the impending explosion to tourists and training cyclists in the lead up to the Olympics as this stretch of road is now part of the route to be taken by the Olympic Cyclists during the 2012 games?

Response from SCC Highways Team

At the last formal Mole Valley Local Committee in December it was agreed by the Members that they would seek additional funding to investigate the speed management from Denbies to Burford Bridge with the Members views to a reduction to 50 mph.

At the most recent Informal meeting of the Mole Valley Local Committee it was decided to dedicate funding for the A24 Corridor and officers will be investigating with the Members views to a reduction to 50 mph.

Officers will be bringing a report to the next Formal Mole Valley Local Committee on the 3 March seeking approval to start the investigations/consultation to implement any measures this financial year.

Once the investigation/consultation is completed we will bring a report back to the June Formal Committee.

MVLC 03 MARCH 2011