



Environment & Transport Select Committee
23 January 2014

Road Safety Policy Update

Purpose of the report: Performance Management/Policy Development and Review

To present to the committee draft updates to the county council's policy on setting local speed limits and school crossing patrols. A new policy has also been created to address concerns over road safety outside schools.

Introduction:

1. In January 2013 Central Government issued new national guidance for local authorities on setting speed limits (Circular 01/13). Consequently the County Council's own policy has been reviewed to take into account the latest national policy, and to improve Surrey's existing policy and procedures.
2. One of the most frequently expressed road safety concerns is that of the safety of children outside schools. Fortunately the number of child casualties in the vicinity of schools is comparatively small, however the perceived danger to children on busy roads on the school journey, especially in the vicinity of a school, can prove to be a barrier to more walking and cycling. Consequently a new policy "Road Safety Outside Schools" has been created to set out how the council will respond to such concerns. This may become especially important in light of the schools expansion programme.
3. The County Council's policy on school crossing patrols has also been reviewed and updated. The new policy has been designed to ensure that the County Council's limited resources for the provision of school crossing patrols are maintained and prioritised at sites where they are most needed.

Setting Local Speed Limits

4. It is proposed that with respect to setting speed limits, the County Council's scheme of delegation will remain the same (repeated below for easy reference), but that the speed limit policy be updated.

*“Local Committees will be responsible for the following:
To agree local speed limits on county council roads, within their area and to approve the statutory advertisement of speed limit orders, taking into account the advice of the Surrey Police road safety and traffic management team and with regard to the County Council Speed Limit Policy.”* (SCC Scheme of Delegation Part 3 Section 2 paragraph 7.2, b(iii)c).

5. The new draft policy “Setting Local Speed Limits” is included within Annex A.

Main changes compared to the existing policy

6. The new policy highlights the key point that simply changing a speed limit with signs alone will not necessarily be successful in reducing the speed of traffic by very much if the prevailing mean speeds are much higher than the proposed lower speed limit. For the first time the new national guidance (Circular 01/13) provides formulas that can be used to predict the likely change in mean speeds from a change in speed limit using signs alone. The new policy contains tables that have been generated using these formulas, and a threshold is shown within the tables, below which a new lower speed limit with signs alone would be allowed. For cases where existing mean speeds are above the threshold shown in the table, then supporting engineering measures will need to be considered alongside any reduction in speed limit.
7. The new policy indicates that new 20 mph speed limits using signs alone will be allowed where existing mean speeds are 24 mph or less. Additional supporting engineering measures will need to be considered where existing mean speeds are above 24 mph in order to get speeds down. This is the same as the new national guidance (Circular 01/13), and is a change to Surrey's existing policy where 20 mph speed limits using signs alone are only allowed where existing mean speeds are 20 mph or less.
8. With regard to speed limits outside schools, the new policy advises that there should always be an overall assessment of the safety issues outside a school to investigate and define the problem rather than consideration of the speed limit in isolation. For example the problems being experienced may be associated with inconsiderate parking or difficulties in crossing a road that will not be solved through a change in speed limit on its own. The new policy advises that the new “Road Safety Outside Schools” policy should be referred to instead (see Annex B).
9. The new policy contains a requirement that the Surrey Police Road Safety and Traffic Management Team are consulted on all proposed

speed limit changes, and that their views are contained within any report to the Local Committee considering the change in speed limit. The Police Road Safety and Traffic Management Team have been consulted and are supportive of the new policy.

10. Following speed surveys and feasibility work, the Area Highway Manager will present a report to the Local Committee with recommendations for a change in speed limit, or not, along with supporting engineering measures, if required, based on the new policy. If the Local Committee disagree with the recommendations presented to them by the Area Highways Manager, and wish to proceed with an alternative option, then the issue must be submitted for decision by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Highways and Environment.
11. The new policy advises that speed surveys should be undertaken after a new speed limit has been introduced to check whether it has been successful. If it has been unsuccessful in reducing speeds to a level below the threshold in the table, then another report will be submitted to the Local Committee for them to consider whether any further engineering measures should be introduced. An alternative could be to remove the new lower speed limit and return to the original or different, higher speed limit. Again if the Local Committee disagree with the recommendations presented to them by the Area Highways Manager, and wish to proceed with an alternative option, then the issue must be submitted for decision by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Highways and Environment.

Road Safety Outside Schools Policy

12. Fortunately the number of child casualties outside Surrey's 507 schools is comparatively small. For example in the seven year period from 2005 to 2011 there were 42,598 personal injury casualties recorded by the police (an average of 6,085 per year). Of these, 6% (2,747) were child casualties (an average of 392 per year). A total of 351 of these took place within 250m of the school gate, during school journey times (about 50 per year).
13. Nonetheless the perceived danger to children on busy roads on the school journey, especially in the vicinity of a school, can prove to be a barrier to more walking and cycling.
14. Therefore a new policy has been developed "Road Safety Outside Schools" (included within Annex B) that sets out the process that will be used by Surrey County Council for investigating and responding to concerns about road safety outside schools. The aim is to reduce the risk of collisions, and to make the road feel safer in order to improve the attractiveness of walking and cycling to and from schools.
15. The new policy highlights that Local Committees are allocated funding for highway improvements, and that the perceived problems will be investigated by county council officers who will then report back to the local councillors. The policy also highlights that schools and parents have a vital role to play in child pedestrian and cycle training, and

encouraging responsible attitudes to using motor vehicles as children grow older. Therefore an assessment of the road safety education provided within a school and the school travel plan will always be undertaken alongside an assessment of the road safety situation outside the school gate.

School Crossing Patrol Policy

16. The new draft School Crossing Patrol Policy is included within Annex C. The aim of the changes to the policy are to ensure that the provision of school crossing patrols is maintained and prioritised at sites where they are most needed, within the existing budget allocation.

Main changes compared to the existing policy

17. At the time of writing there are 69 school crossing patrols operating within Surrey, with a further 18 approved sites vacant. It is the intention of the County Council to continue to provide funding of £206,000 to support all approved School Crossing Patrol services at maintained schools. It is proposed that a charge of £3,000 per year will be made to Academies, Independent and Free schools, to cover salary and training costs.
18. National guidance advises that School Crossing Patrols should not operate where there is a light controlled crossing already in situ as this is a duplication of resources and could cause confusion. Therefore it is proposed that the small number of sites in Surrey where this is the case will be reviewed and subject to risk assessment from April 2014, and may be relocated or withdrawn.
19. If a new light controlled or zebra pedestrian crossing is installed (or installed nearby to) where a School Crossing Patrol is currently operating, then the service will be reviewed and may be relocated or withdrawn after a provisional period of 3 months. Requests for new School Crossing Patrols where there is already light controlled or zebra crossings will not be approved. If there is a request for a new School Crossing Patrol where there is a pedestrian refuge, this will be subject to risk assessment.
20. Whenever a vacancy arises at an existing school crossing patrol site or a request for a new site is received, then the site will be risk assessed before a decision is taken to recruit a new or replacement SCP. Where there is insufficient funding for new or vacant sites then a waiting list will operate and future funds will be allocated based on the assessed level of risk at a site. In the absence of central funding being available, schools will have the option to pay for the service themselves via alternative means at a cost of £3,000 per year.

21. If the school leadership disagree with a decision by the County Council in relation to a School Crossing Patrol, then a meeting will be held with the school staff and governing body to explain the reasoning behind the decision. The school staff and governing body will then have the right to appeal to the Cabinet Member for Transport, Highways and Environment.
22. Closure of a school crossing patrol site would be as a result of a change in situation, for example the implementation of a controlled crossing, a change in route which alters pedestrian flow. A final risk assessment will be carried out and the council's delegated officer will close the site.

Conclusions:

23. The County Council's policy on setting local speed limits has been updated in light of new government guidance, and in order to improve the existing assessment procedure. A new Road Safety Outside Schools Policy has been developed to tackle concerns over road safety outside schools. The School Crossing Patrol Policy has been updated to ensure that the provision of School Crossing Patrols is maintained and prioritised at sites where they are most needed, within the existing budget allocation.

Recommendations:

24. It is recommended that the Environment and Transport Select Committee comments on the new draft policies on "Setting local speed limits", "Road Safety Outside Schools" and "School Crossing Patrols"

Next steps:

The comments of the select committee will be taken into account and amendments made to the draft policies.

Following this there will be a period of consultation with relevant stakeholders including elected members and Surrey Schools.

The policies will be submitted to Cabinet in late spring.

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Sources/background papers:

Setting Local Speed Limits, Department for Transport Circular 01/2013

Speed Enforcement Policy Guidelines 2011 to 2015: Joining Forces for Safer Roads, The Association of Chief Police Officers

School Crossing Patrol Service Guidelines, Road Safety Great Britain, June 2013

Annex A: Setting Local Speed Limits Policy

Annex B: Road Safety Outside Schools Policy

Annex C: Road Safety Outside Schools Policy process diagram

Annex D: School Crossing Patrol Policy