

## SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

## LOCAL COMMITTEE (SURREY HEATH)

DATE: 13 March 2014

LEAD OFFICER: Duncan Knox

SUBJECT: Road Safety Policy Update

DIVISION: N/A

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

To present to the local committee a draft update to the county council's policy on setting local speed limits and a new draft policy to address road safety outside schools, including school crossing patrols.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:****The Local Committee (Surrey Heath) is asked to:**

- (i) review, and provide comments on the draft policies. Comments will be taken into account prior to the policies being submitted to county council Cabinet for approval.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Local Committees are responsible for most highway and transport matters in their areas, including speed limits and road safety measures outside schools. This report presents new road safety policies with respect to speed limits and road safety outside schools for comment by the local committee prior to submission to county council cabinet for approval.

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1 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 procedure.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 The county council's policy on school crossing patrols has also been reviewed and updated, and forms part of the "Road Safety Outside Schools" policy. The new policy has been designed to ensure that the county councils limited resources for the provision of school crossing patrols is maintained and prioritised at sites where they are most needed.

## **2. ANALYSIS:**

### **Setting Local Speed Limits**

- 2.1 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).*
- 2.2 The new draft policy "Setting Local Speed Limits" is included within Annex A. 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.
- 2.3 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  
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existing policy where 20 mph speed limits using signs alone are only allowed where existing mean speeds are 20 mph or less.

- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 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**

- 2.8 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).
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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

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road feel safer in order to improve the attractiveness of walking and cycling to and from schools.

- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 The new draft Road Safety Outside Schools Policy incorporates the council's policy on school crossing patrols. The aim of the policy is 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.
- 2.13 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 with an existing budget 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.
- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 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.
- 2.16 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 school crossing patrol. Where there is insufficient funding for new or vacant sites then a waiting list will operate and future funds will be allocated on a priority basis. 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.
- 2.17 If a 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 if they wish.

**3. OPTIONS:**

- 3.1 The draft policies are presented to the local committee for comment. Options for changes to the policies will be taken into account before the policies are submitted to county council cabinet for approval.

**4. CONSULTATIONS:**

- 4.1 Surrey police Road Safety and Traffic Management Team have been consulted on the draft policies. As well as being submitted to all 11 of Surrey's Local Committees for comment, the policies will also be subject to public consultation.

**5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:**

- 5.1 The draft policies aim to ensure an efficient process for considering changes to speed limits, or additional road safety measures outside schools. The new policies also aim to ensure that new highways measures are selected that will be effective in tackling the identified problem. The cost of a change in speed limit or new highway measures will always be presented to local committee for decision on whether to invest their local allocation.

**6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:**

- 6.1 An equalities and diversity impact assessment has been completed for the "Setting Local Speed Limits" policy. Consequently the policy has been amended to include specific mention of vulnerable road users such as children, older people and those with mobility impairment within road casualty analysis which is completed in order to inform upon the need for speed management measures. The policy has also been amended to include the fact that speed reducing features could also form part of improved facilities for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, children and older people.
- 6.2 An equalities and diversity impact assessment is being completed for the "Road Safety Outside Schools Policy", and will be completed before the policy is submitted to county council cabinet.

**7. LOCALISM:**

- 7.1 The draft policies highlight the fact that it is the local committee within each area who will decide upon any changes to local speed limits, and whether to invest in any additional highway measures outside schools.

**8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

<b>Area assessed:</b>	<b>Direct Implications:</b>
Crime and Disorder	Effective speed management and road safety improvements will help to tackle antisocial driving as well as reduce road casualties.
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	Improving safety and reducing the fear of traffic in the vicinity of schools and on the journey to school will help encourage more walking and cycling to school, and so will help reduce carbon emissions from vehicles.

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Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	None
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	None
Public Health	Effective speed management and improvements to safety outside schools will reduce the risk of road casualties. Reducing the fear of speeding vehicles and the fear of traffic will encourage more walking and cycling which improves the health of participants.

### **9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 9.1 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 policy "Road Safety Outside Schools" has been developed to tackle concerns over road safety outside schools. As part of this 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.

#### **The Local Committee (Surrey Heath) is asked to:**

- (i) review, and provide comments on the draft policies. Comments will be taken into account prior to the policy being submitted to county council cabinet for approval.

### **10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

- 10.1 Comments from local committees, and comments received following public consultation will be taken into account prior to the policy being submitted to county council cabinet for approval.

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#### **Contact Officer:**

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#### **Consulted:**

Surrey Police

#### **Annexes:**

Annexe A: Setting Local Speed Limits

Annexe B: Road Safety Outside Schools

#### **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

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