

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (GUILDFORD)

DATE: 8 DECEMBER 2015

LEAD OFFICER: JOHN HILDER

SUBJECT: HIGHWAYS UPDATE

DIVISION: ALL



<p><u>SUMMARY OF ISSUE:</u></p> <p>This report provides an update on the 2015/16 programmes of highway improvement and maintenance works funded by this committee.</p>
<p><u>RECOMMENDATIONS:</u></p> <p>The Local Committee (Guildford) is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Note progress and outturn cost for the 2015/16 programme of highway works funded by this committee and described at Annex 1. (ii) Having reviewed the objections to the advertised closure of the A31 central reservation gap at East Flexford Lane at Annex 2 agree that it be physically closed to motorised vehicles.
<p><u>REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:</u></p> <p><i>The committee is to agree to the gap closure in the interest of road safety.</i></p>

1. UPDATE

2015/16 Budgets and Forecast Expenditure

- 1.1 The 2015/16 budgets, allocations, forecast expenditure to the year end for individual schemes and initiatives are set out at **Annex 1**.

A31 Hog's Back central reservation crossing at East Flexford Lane

- 1.1 The Road Safety Working Group (RSWG) for Guildford comprises SCC highways officers and Police road safety officers, and meets several times a year to review accident clusters and consider what might be done to reduce collisions.
- 1.2 In May 2014 the group reviewed accidents at the central reservation crossing point the A31 Hogs Back at East Flexford Lane. In the three years since 2011 there had been seven accidents involving drivers using the gap and the group recommends that it is permanently closed to traffic.
- 1.3 At the March 2015 meeting the committee agreed to advertise the closure of the central reservation crossing point at Flexford Lane.
- 1.2 The committee were advised that there are likely to be objections from residents who are directly affected and such objections would be reported to a future meeting of this committee for a decision on whether to proceed with the proposed closure.
- 1.4 Details of responses from residents are set out at **Annex 2** each with the comments of Road Safety Working Group officers.
- 1.5 All 15 respondents strongly objected to the proposed closure and it is understood the local Surrey County Councillor has received further objections.
- 1.6 It is worth noting that a number of other central reservation gaps on the Hog's Back were closed 14 years ago, in 2001. Closing this gap was proposed at that time, but was not progressed, thought to be due to the strength of objection.
- 1.7 The above was reported to the committee meeting in September. In view of the strength of objection the Area Highway Manager undertook to review possible alternatives to full closure and come forward with recommendations at the December meeting of the committee.

Improve signing and conspicuity

- 1.8 Advance signing is absent on the A31 westbound approach to the crossing and it is difficult for drivers on both carriageways to discern where the crossing

is due to the dense screen of trees and shrubs within the central reservation. Signing could be improved and vegetation removed say 20m either side of the crossing. However there is the possibility that this could result in more drivers attempting to use it and consequently exposing themselves and others as they brake to very low speeds in the offside lanes in order to turn into the crossing and then either cross or join (u-turn) two lanes of high speed traffic on the opposite carriageway.

Prohibit entry from the eastbound carriageway and East Flexford Lane

- 1.9 The crossover is narrow and at a steep gradient since the two carriageways are at markedly different levels. Making it 'one way' from the westbound carriageway to the eastbound carriageway may improve safety as it should remove the possibility of a vehicle slowing and entering from the A31 encountering a vehicle waiting within the crossover to exit in the opposite direction. However, drivers may risk ignoring the signed restriction and the above scenario could still occur.

Provide offside deceleration lanes on the A31

- 1.10 Deceleration lanes such as that on the westbound carriageway at White Lane near Ash Green have been considered. These would allow turning vehicles to diverge from the main carriageways before braking. However the level difference between the two carriageways would be accentuated and the crossing would be unacceptably steep.
- 1.11 Westbound traffic joining the A31 from the A3 would need to cross into the offside lane to use a deceleration lane, as it does now to use the crossing. The distance between the A3 merge and the crossing is well below that required by national standards to allow this manoeuvre to be made safely.

Conclusion

- 1.12 Having reviewed possible alternatives the Area Highway Manager recommends that the crossing is physically closed as advertised and the committee is asked to agree this having considered the objections at Annex 2.
- 1.13 The police have pointed out that many accidents have happened due to the existence of the crossing since it was originally proposed to close the crossing in 2001. The alternatives described above either will not remove the current hazard or are not workable.
- 1.14 At the September committee meeting the area manager agreed to meet objectioner representatives before the December meeting and intends to do so and give a verbal update at the meeting.
- 1.15 Note at 1.2 that closure was originally put forward by the Road Safety Working Group who are expected to meet the full cost of implementation. These may include the need to modify the two side road junctions.

Guildford High Street Setts

1.16 In November advance exploratory works were carried out in the High Street and a trial panel of setts was relayed. As reported to the committee in September the contract for full relaying is expected to start in January or February with a works duration of around six months.

Customer Enquiries and Reactive Repairs

1.17 The total number of enquiries received between January and September 2015 is 93885, an average of 10400 per month. This is slightly down from 11000 in the first 6 months of the year but consistent with the summer months, when reports tend to reduce slightly.

1.18 All enquiries are categorised at the point of logging, either automatically through the website or by officers, safety defects are directed to Kier with the remainder passed to the SCC local office for further investigation. During 2014 the average split was 44% SCC and 56 % Kier, for the year to date this has shifted to 36/64. This can be partly attributed to improvements to the online reporting and additional information available on the roadwork web page.

1.19 For Guildford specifically, 11335 enquiries have been received since January of which 4234 (37%) were directed to the local area office for action, of these 97% have been resolved. This response rate is slightly above the countywide average of 96%.

1.20 For 2015, 377 complaints were received of which 69 stage 1 and 13 stage 2 were for the South West area, including Guildford. The main reasons for these complaints were roadworks and lack of contact. The service was found to be at fault in 2 of the stage 2 complaints following independent investigation. We continue to work closely with the corporate customer relations team and have created corrective action plans for all outstanding action.

2. OPTIONS:

2.1 Officers seek to implement the most cost effective measures which meet scheme objectives.

3. CONSULTATIONS:

3.1 Appropriate consultation will be carried out for all schemes.

4. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

4.1 Works will be carried out by SCC's term highways contractor, Keir, who won the term contract in a competitive tender process.

5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 None

6. LOCALISM:

6.1 Works and schemes are designed to improve and make safer the facilities for local communities in the borough.

6.2 The Lengthman initiative allows parish councils to undertake enhanced maintenance of the public highway.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 None

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

8.1 As set out in the body of the report.

9. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

9.1 Officers will continue to progress the programme of schemes agreed by the committee.

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Consulted:
 As described within the report

Annexes:

1. Highways budget and forecast expenditure for 2015/16
2. East Flexford Lane Consultation Responses

Sources/background papers:
 Local Committee for Guildford Wednesday 30 September 2015: Item 15: 'Highways Update Report'

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