



SCC LOCAL COMMITTEE IN ELMBRIDGE – 5 December 2019

AGENDA ITEM 04

WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS

Question 1 (supplementary): Gaby Brocking
Re: New cycle lane – Queens Road, Weybridge

(Re. The section of Queens Road, Weybridge, between the Seven Hills roundabout and Sir Richards bridge).

The pavement is well used by cyclists - understandably, due to its proximity to Walton station. There are a few Cleves school children who brave the pavement on bikes, but only a mere handful - also understandably, due to the very narrow pavement and speed of traffic which puts people in such a dangerous situation.

Traffic congestion is choking Weybridge, and the pollution is choking our residents.

Without adequate and safe cycling / walking infrastructure, this situation will not improve.

Therefore, my follow up question is, what can be done to increase the Committee's Programme of Work capacity limit, to allow this project to proceed?

Please detail both what the Committee can do, as well as what the public can do.

Officer Response:

We have a capacity constraint that limits the number of projects we can take on at any one time. Fundamentally this is due to the number of engineers / designers that we employ for this kind of project. One could make an argument that we should therefore simply employ more engineers / designers, but unfortunately it is not as simple as that.

The budgets for these kinds of projects are not stable. The County Council's total budget allocation for transport improvement schemes has fluctuated over the years according to the Council's overall financial position. In addition the budgets for these kinds of projects are delegated to eleven Local and Joint Committees (one in each of the eleven Boroughs and Districts in Surrey) who may spend the budget on transport improvements schemes or capital maintenance schemes. These Committees' find it difficult to maintain a long term (and therefore predictable) programme of work due to their fluctuating budgets and also fluctuating pressures from their respective local communities.

What this does is to create a context where it is very difficult to forecast the resource needed to support a programme of work, as it is near impossible to commit to a long term programme of work. This in turn means that if we were to recruit sufficient engineers / designers for today's workload, we might find these colleagues with no work to do in one or two years' time. We employ a workforce that we believe to be

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sustainable – it is very difficult in Local Government to take on and release human resources in short timescales to cater for fluctuating workloads.

Even if we knew there was going to be a steady supply of work for a number of years, it is very difficult to recruit good engineers in the South East at the present time. This is partly because the salaries are such that unless you already live in the South East, it is impossible to buy a house in the South East on a typical engineer / designer salary. This is also partly because other players, who can afford to pay more, are sucking all the talented people out of the employment market. Highways England's capital programme in the South East, together with Crossrail, HS2, Heathrow expansion, etc, etc, mean that there is not enough talented people to go round.

We try to manage this with professional services contracts with consultants, and this can help to manage some of the fluctuations in work load, as generally speaking large consultants have more flexible workforces than we could achieve in a small Council design team. However the down side is that the cost of scheme development would increase by about 3 to 10 times the cost of using our in house team, which means that we simply couldn't afford to develop as many schemes.

So in this context we aim to develop the highest priority schemes using our in house resource, to make the funding go as far as it possibly can, and accept that timescales can sometimes be quite long.

Question 2: Lucy Wright **Re: 20mph speed limits in Elmbridge**

We are in discussions with Surrey Highways and Claygate Parish Council regarding the results of the speed reduction survey on Hare Lane including consideration of the best solution for traffic calming on Hare Lane and its funding. We are very aware of the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in our neighbouring borough of Kingston upon Thames (as well as other London Boroughs) with significant, associated traffic calming measures. What consideration has Elmbridge and Surrey Highways given to a borough wide 20mph speed limit in residential areas?

Officer Response:

Any project to introduce new 20mph limits or zones – for individual roads or areas – would need to be promoted by the Local Committee. Contrary to popular belief 20mph limits (with just signs) are not effective at reducing vehicle speeds, and have no demonstrable road safety benefit. 20mph Zones (with appropriate traffic calming) can be very effective at reducing both vehicle speeds and frequencies of casualties. However the traffic calming needed for a new 20mph Zone can be very expensive, with costs of up to £25,000 every 60m for new road tables.

From a technical point of view, officers would only recommend the implementation of new 20mph Zones if there was evidence of a significant pattern of speed related casualties. Even in these cases, we would need to weigh up other possible solutions, and also consider the negative impacts of traffic calming.