

HIGHWAYS SERVICE BRIEFING ON ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP POLICY MOTION

Purpose of report: To brief members of the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee on the Original Motion regarding the Advertising and Sponsorship Policy submitted to the Council meeting on 11 October 2022.

Introduction and background:

1. Jonathan Essex raised a two-part Council Motion (see below) relating to the Advertising and Sponsorship Policy in October 2022.
2. Cabinet Member for Environment, Marisa Heath, moved a proposal that the motion be referred to the Greener Futures Reference Group
3. Jonathan Essex confirmed that he was in support of the referral of the motion to the Greener Futures Reference Group.
4. The motion is directed at advertising for the whole County but EIG, specifically Highways, has taken on responsibility to respond to the Motion as the service is the most advanced in progressing advertising opportunities.
5. Any recommendations from the Group would apply to all the County Council functions and not be restricted to just Highways

Part 1

Amend its Advertising and Sponsorship Policy to ban advertisements specifically for fossil fuel companies, flights, petrol and diesel vehicles, and wording the amendment to ban other as yet unidentified high carbon products.

6. If the content restrictions imposed by the Council effectively remove too great a proportion of potential advertisers, then either costs will need to be lowered (via

a reduction of income to the Council) or in some cases the project abandoned altogether.

7. If restrictions are imposed mid-term of contract this will have legal consequences as they will effectively undermine commercial terms and the assessments that informed them.
8. If the restrictions render a site unviable, unless central government were to legislate against the advertising category in question (as they did in the case of tobacco) a media owner will simply fulfil its needs via the development of an alternative site.
9. Most car companies still producing diesel/petrol cars have their own Carbon targets which are mirrored in the adverts they produce.
10. Commercial “holiday” flights are high carbon impact but so too are the flights that, for example, bring fruit and vegetables into our country out of season.
11. Airfreight is responsible for less than one percent of total UK food miles but it produces 11 percent of the carbon dioxide emissions from UK food transport, according to SOAS University of London.
12. The energy and media industry are self-regulating and acutely aware of sensitivity around the promotion of fossil fuel products.
13. Often organisations that engage in fossil fuel extraction and supply of associated products, choose only to promote their other forms of green and renewable energy products to encourage the market/behaviour shift that is required to make these sustainable”.
14. The advertising policy already stipulates that all advertising must comply with the following:
 - 1.1 Guidelines laid out by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)
 - 1.2 The rules laid out in the [UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising](#)
 - 1.3 Follow the [Code of recommended practice on Local Authority publicity](#)

Part 2

Implement this revised Advertising and Sponsorship Policy internally and wherever possible promote its adoption by other partners committed to Surrey’s Climate Change Strategy. This should include restricting advertising of high carbon products on bus stops, billboards and advertising spaces, plus all publications by Surrey County Council.

15 The comments above are also valid for the second part of this motion. If the conclusions below are agreed, it would be inappropriate for the County Council to promote its adoption to other partners

Conclusions:

- 16 There is a significant risk that a too strict and prescriptive approach to content will result in a greatly diluted commercial offer or media owners not bidding at all.
- 17 The Council needs to take a pragmatic approach and balance the financial advantages with being mindful of advertising content. If we deviate from national policy as detailed by the ASA, media companies will likely choose not to bid.
- 18 Not only will the Council have lost both a potential income and control of the site (which would be greater as landlord than that afforded by the statutory process) but the content will simply be displayed elsewhere, so rendering the exercise largely ineffective.

Recommendations:

19 A summary of the recommendation for each resolution in the motion is detailed in the table below:

Resolution	Service recommendation
<p>Amend its Advertising and Sponsorship Policy to ban advertisements specifically for fossil fuel companies, flights, petrol and diesel vehicles, and wording the amendment to ban other as yet unidentified high carbon products.</p>	<p>The Council recommends that the policy remains in its current form. The policy states that all advertising has to comply with Guidelines laid out by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), the rules laid out in the UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising and follow the Code of recommended practice on Local Authority publicity.</p> <p>Any further products that are added to the list of prohibited products to advertise would subsequently also be banned by the media owners.</p> <p>There is the option of utilising the income gained from advertising to progress and implement projects that improve or expediate the attainment of our Greener Futures objectives</p>

<p>Implement this revised Advertising and Sponsorship Policy internally and wherever possible promote its adoption by other partners committed to Surrey's Climate Change Strategy.</p> <p>This should include restricting advertising of high carbon products on bus stops, billboards and advertising spaces, plus all publications by Surrey County Council</p>	<p>As per the above.</p> <p>Some advertising is managed by others and whilst it maybe on the public highway it is beyond the County Council's direct control. Examples include some Bus shelter contracts (managed by Districts & Boroughs) and telecommunication hubs with advertising, permitted through their rights as a utility operator</p>

Report contact

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Sources/background papers

Presentation delivered to Greener Futures Members Reference Group on the 30th November 2023

BBC new article published October 2023- [Why some foods have the same carbon footprint as 5 miles in an SUV - BBC Food](#)