

**REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT & HIGHWAYS SELECT
COMMITTEE'S GREENER FUTURES REFERENCE GROUP**

Item under consideration: Referred Council Motion 'Advertising & Sponsorship Policy'

Date Considered: 7 February 2023

The Community, Environment and Highways Select Committee received a report on the outcome of consideration by the Greener Futures Reference Group (GFRG) of the Original Motion regarding Advertising and Sponsorship policy submitted to the meeting of the County Council on 11 October 2022. The report was presented by the Chairman of the GFRG. The report summarised the conclusions of that group following their consideration of the Motion and the briefing and recommendations provided to them by Council officers. The report noted that:

The issue was discussed by the GFRG on 8 March 2023 and 30 November 2023. A service briefing was requested and officers invited to address the points made in the motion and make recommendations as to whether the motion could be endorsed.

Concerns were raised about the commercial implications and viability of any change to the existing advertising policy. Officers argued that imposing any restrictions on content would make potential contracts unfavourable to the markets. An alternative was put forward to utilise the income gained from advertising (c.£0.5m per annum) to progress and implement projects to expediate the attainment of Greener Futures objectives.

The GFRG concluded that the assessment was unduly negative and did not take account of any benefits that a change in approach could bring. The focus was on commercial costs and concerns and not on the opportunities presented in discouraging consumption of high carbon products or seeking to advertise instead green or neutral carbon products and services. The GFRG felt strongly that having declared a Climate emergency and committed to a NetZero target for Surrey by 2050, Surrey County Council should show leadership, even where this

proved detrimental to revenue in the short to medium term. It was undesirable to enable advertising for commercial benefit by companies or products in direct opposition to the Council's net zero goals and aims.

In light of the discussion the following conclusions and recommendations were agreed by GFRG for Cabinet to consider.

RESOLVED

That the Communities Environment and Highways Select Committee's Greener Futures Reference Group:

- a) did not endorse the recommendation of officers. The GFRG rejected the proposition that the current advertising and sponsorship policy remain in its current form and that no steps are taken to restrict advertising of fossil fuel related or high carbon products.
- b) noted its support for the Motion and suggested that the issue be looked at further by Cabinet Members, including the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Cabinet Member for Highways (with responsibility for the current advertising and sponsorship policy) to ensure that environmental as well as commercial concerns are taken into account in future decision-making. Cabinet members might invite officers to review and test their initial proposition.
- c) recommended that the issue be considered by the Cabinet prior to award of contract for small format advertising in 2024.

LANCE SPENCER

**Chairman, Communities, Environment & Highways Select Committee's
Greener Futures Reference Group**

ORIGINAL MOTION**ORIGINAL MOTION – ADVERTISING & SPONSORSHIP POLICY****Item 9 (iv)**

Under Standing Order 12.3 the Cabinet Member for Environment, Marisa Heath, moved a proposal. The proposal was as follows:

That the motion below by Jonathan Essex be referred to the Greener Futures Reference Group - a Task Group of the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee - for consideration.

This Council notes that:

- Advertising is successful in encouraging demand for the products advertised. For example, research by Purpose Disruptors showed that the UK advertising sector, through increased product sales had the impact of increasing UK carbon emissions by 28% (186 MtCO₂) in 2019. Similarly, research by the New Weather Institute indicates that the carbon emissions resulting from the increased demand, for cars in the EU, generated by advertising, are more than Belgium's total greenhouse gas emissions.
- The [2022](#) Climate Mitigation Report published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlighted the potential for behaviour change to support carbon emission reductions. It lists regulation of advertising as an example of a policy measure that can have a “*major influence on mitigative capacity*”.
- In an Attitudes to Advertising poll in the UK by Opinium Research in 2022 of 2000 people, 68% of UK adults said they would support restrictions on advertising of environmentally harmful products.
- Advertising prohibitions and restrictions already exist; these include prohibition on advertising all tobacco products and e-cigarettes, guns and offensive weapons, ‘obscene material’. Rules also affect marketing aimed at children; high fat sugar and salt products; medical and health claims.

This Council believes that:

- Banning advertising does not ban the products themselves; people are still free to buy the products.
- Surrey County Council has committed to work in partnership to reduce carbon emissions across Surrey. A baseline report by Surrey University on behalf of the Surrey Climate Commission showed the extent of scope 3 emissions (in what we buy and import from outside of Surrey). One area where these can be reduced in Surrey is through the impact of advertising in public spaces.
- Some advertising content undermines the Council's objectives. For example, petrol and diesel car adverts, especially for Sports Utility Vehicles, undermine air quality objectives. Airline advertising undermines carbon emission targets.

This Council resolves to call upon the Cabinet:

- I. To 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.
- II. To 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.

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