
**Decision Session –
Executive Member for City Strategy**

20 October 2009

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Street Furniture Removal

Summary

1. This report seeks approval for an annual budget from the Capital Programme to reduce the amount of street furniture on the highway network and for new highway schemes to go through a street furniture audit during the design stage.

Recommendations

2. That Option C below be approved and that the Network Management Traffic Team be charged with the task of being the lead team implementing the proposals.
3. That a basic set of guidelines be compiled showing more sensitive methods of signing for distribution to other teams / organisations carrying out work on the highway.
4. That an annual review report be produced outlining the progress made and areas where further improvements may be feasible.

Reason: To reduce the:

- amount of street clutter along the city's highway network;
- maintenance burden created by traffic signs and other street furniture;
- energy consumption and associated cost of illuminated signs;

and to improve:

- the ability of those with visual impairment difficulties to negotiate their way along the footway
- the visual aspect of the street scene;

Background

5. There are somewhere in the region of 15,000 traffic signs on York's highway network. This number is increasing year on year as each new highway scheme is implemented and / or new regulations come into force. However, signs that have been in place for many years are rarely re-evaluated for their need although there may have been changes in signing regulations relating to their use or the road network.
6. Two years ago funding was made available to reduce the amount of street clutter in the city centre and this project was very successful in removing a couple of hundred signs, poles and bollards from central area. However, this project was not able to tackle all of the problems and there continues to be an ongoing increase in signing across the city from a number of sources and there

are no funds set aside each year for the removal of old redundant signs and poles.

7. The removal of long established signs that are no longer required has additional benefits to the city in that they are:
 - No longer subject to vandalism / damage requiring maintenance.
 - If the signs are illuminated there are reduced power usage cost benefits.
 - The street scene will be less cluttered.
 - There will be fewer items that could cause problems for the blind and partially sighted.
8. In addition to traffic signs there are many more thousands of item of street furniture, such as bollards, guardrails, etc that have not been quantified at this stage some of which may no longer be achieving what they were originally intended to.

The Pilot Project

9. A pilot scheme was carried out to try to resolve the issues referred to above. The starting point was to simply remove one old sign and / or pole for each new sign and / or pole put up for projects being carried out within Traffic Management.
10. The Acomb conservation area was chosen for the pilot scheme. Within this area there were:
 - 53 non-illuminated signs;
 - 17 illuminated signs; and
 - 30 poles (many of signs were mounted on lamp posts)The action taken after reviewing the signs in place was as follows:
 - 30 non-illuminated signs removed (56%)
 - 2 illuminated signs removed (12%)
 - 14 poles removed (47%)
11. These figures were higher than initially expected and may not be typical across the city's area.
12. Of the 70 signs 13 were the old redundant "At any time" type signs for double yellow lines and out of the remaining 53 signs there were 7 (or 12%) in need of some maintenance / renewal, which if reported as damaged would normally be attended to and returned to a satisfactory condition. The cost of maintaining signs would vary depending on what action was required (from simply turning the sign to face the correct direction to a full renewal). Assuming an average cost of £75 per sign repair the cost of maintaining these 7 signs would amount to £525. However, 4 of the 7 damaged signs have been removed as part of this project, hence based on the assumed average cost of £75 per sign repair the maintenance burden has been cut by £300. In addition, the annual energy cost saving due to the removal of the 2 illuminated signs is estimated at £45.
13. Because of the number of signs and poles taken out there will be a reduction in the ongoing maintenance and energy costs (fewer signs in place to be damaged and / or require power) it is likely that the cost of carrying out these works will be recouped within 2 to 3 years.

14. Whilst the cost savings within the pilot are relatively modest, if replicated across the city the potential ongoing savings would be many thousands of pounds per year.
15. The un-measurable benefits from this pilot scheme are:
 - the removal of pieces of street furniture that may have caused some difficulty for those with a visual / mobility impairment;
 - enhancing the street scene
16. More details of the work carried out are in the background document "Acomb Conservation Area Traffic Sign Reduction Pilot Project".

Proposals

17. The proposals based on the pilot scheme is that the current level of signing and associated street furniture, such as poles, is effectively "capped" at the existing level on street. There are 3 key areas of traffic / highway related work that can be targeted to achieve this outcome.
 - Establish a budget to fund the removal of redundant street furniture, combine two or more items to one location and in key sensitive areas replace with a higher quality less intrusive piece of equipment.

Annex A shows the type of sign that should be replaced (outside the Minster) along with a less visually intrusive mounting unit. The cost of this type of sign assembly is around £500 more than a standard sign assembly.

Based on the above information it suggested that a budget of £10,000 be set aside for improvements to be made the city's street furniture.
 - Produce a basic set of guidelines showing more sensitive methods of signing for distribution to other teams / organisations carrying out work on the highway. In addition, establish a street furniture audit process for new highway schemes during the design process.
 - Because the cost of removing a sign is often less than the cost of maintaining a sign there are clear benefits to reducing the burden on the maintenance budget. Hence the need to establish a rapid response to queries on the continued need for signs that have suffered damage or some other mishap. Further work on this area to establish a framework for decision making for officers is needed.
18. It is hoped that this 3-pronged approach to tackling the situation will raise the general awareness of excessive street furniture amongst those who contribute most to the increase.
19. The removal of redundant street furniture could be tackled by area, route or on an ad hoc basis, however it is suggested that in the main, priority should initially be given to the historic core, conservation areas and the main routes taken by visitors into the city.
20. Additional reductions in street clutter can be achieved through reviewing existing Traffic Regulation Orders. It is proposed that this should be tackled on an ad hoc basis when they are identified during other investigations and proposals be brought to Officer in Consultation meetings when appropriate as part of the regular review of requests for traffic restrictions.

21. It is further suggested that an annual summary report be prepared to advise the Executive Member on improvements made to the street scene.

Consultation

22. No consultation is required to remove traffic signs that do not relate to a traffic regulation order.

Options

23. The options available are:
- A. To note the report and take no further action at this time. This is not the recommended option because it does not tackle the issue of street clutter.
 - B. To gather additional information for consideration before deciding whether to proceed with the proposals put forward or a revised set of proposals based on the additional information. This is not the recommended option because the proposals put forward are considered to be merely a starting point that can be amended as and when desired or changing circumstances arise.
 - C. To implement the proposals outlined above. This is the recommended option.

Corporate Strategy

24. The proposals above contribute to the Sustainable City, Inclusive City (with regards to those with visual and mobility difficulties) and Effective Organisation aims of the Corporate Strategy 2009 / 2012.

Implications

25.

Legal	There are no legal implications.
Financial	There are no financial implications
Human Resources	There are no HR implications
Crime and Disorder	There are no Crime and Disorder implications
Sustainability	There are no sustainability implications
Equalities	There are no equalities implications
Property	There are no property implications

Risk Management

26. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy there are no risks associated with the recommendations in this report.

Contact Details

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Report Approved



Date

Date 18/9/2009

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex A – Example of type of sign that could be replaced