



Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11 July 2024

Item

Public



Report of the Banners, Bunting, Christmas Lighting & Temporary Signage policy review in Shropshire – Progress update July 2024

Responsible Officer: Gary Parton			
email:	gary.parton@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258786
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Dan Morris		
Scrutiny Chair:	Councillor Joyce Barrow		

1. Synopsis

An update on progress and next steps on implementing recommendations relating to Banners, Bunting and Illuminations, and Temporary Directional Signage.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. This report follows on from the key recommendations being followed by the Economy and Environment Overview Committee, regarding both a review of the current policy and process involved in administering and licencing applications for Banners, Bunting and Illuminations to be sited over and alongside the highway, and a review of the policy and process for temporary directional signing on the highway.

2.2. The report acknowledges progress made since the previous discussion and includes an action plan for the remaining necessary work.

3. Officer Recommendations:

- A. That committee considers the progress in delivering the recommendations regarding “Banners, Bunting and Illuminations” and provides feedback on the submitted action plan.
- B. That committee considers delivery of the recommendations relating to “temporary signage” and provides feedback on remaining actions to review and remove legacy and un-licensed / redundant signage.

Report

4. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications directly related to this report.

5. Climate Change Appraisal

A Climate Change Appraisal has not been completed. However, little negative or positive impact is expected as a result of these recommendations being implemented.

6. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 6.1 For Banners, Bunting and Illuminations the opportunity to utilise detailed local knowledge and input on suitable positioning, content and design which also takes account of local area aesthetics and community sentiment.
- 6.2 For Banners, Bunting and Illuminations the opportunity to build further relations with Town and Parish Councils, allow greater local input and allow better and more efficient alignment of Shropshire Council resource.
- 6.3 Revised policy and procedure for Banners, Bunting and Illuminations would need to align with other approved policies and procedures such as the “Highways Assets Advertising” scheme.
- 6.4 For Banners, Bunting and Illuminations there is a risk that any significant differences in proposed local approach could create difficulties in drafting a singular County-wide policy.
- 6.5 For Temporary Signage there is an opportunity to significantly increase and improve the monitoring and enforcement process, control proliferation and enforce the timely removal of unlicensed signage.
- 6.6 For Temporary Signage there is a risk of the current available inspection resource ably accommodating further inspection schedules.

7. Background

Banners, Bunting and Illuminations.

- 7.1 The current application and approval process to display community event banners, bunting or festive lights falls within the remit of Shropshire Councils Street Works team. The team were restructured in 2013 to better align to the objectives of the “Traffic Management Act 2004” and the Shropshire Council Permit Scheme (West and Shires Permit Scheme).
- 7.2 On review of existing tasks within the team the application and approval process for Banners, Bunting and Christmas Illuminations was highlighted as a task with minimal value in meeting the primary team objectives of “minimising disruption caused by roadworks” and was generally an administrative process with set conditions only.
- <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/roads-and-highways/road-network-management/application-forms-and-charges/banners-bunting-or-christmas-lights-on-the-highway/>
- 7.3 The current application and approval process is handled by the street works team who look to ensure banner content is community based and not for general business advertising and that the positions of said items cause no potential hazard or hindrance to highway users.
- 7.4 An application is made containing details of the required banner, bunting or lighting type, location and confirmation of sufficient public liability insurance (£5m) to protect the council in the event of any possible incidences resulting from the placement of said items on the highway. Items which are placed on or over the highway that are fixed to a non-council owned property, fence or railing require permission from the owner.
- 7.5 The application is then assessed and given approval or refusal. A consideration of the applicant is of the load-bearing tolerances of the fixing points, council owned locations should be tested annually, and this information will be made available upon request, private properties are responsible for the maintenance and suitability of their fixing points. In this respect there exists some inconsistency in county-wide process. For example, Shrewsbury has specific, historic, and approved fixing locations that are regularly tested by the Town Council - whilst other Towns and villages may not.
- 7.6 Following recommendations in 2018 to carry out an initial engagement exercise with Town and Parish Councils (on possible devolvement of process and enforcement) subsequent recommendations from the “Task and Finish” of 2020 and the Place Overview Committee of 2021 included that Shropshire Council retain the licensing powers for permitting Banners, Bunting and Illuminations, but also look to engage and consult further with all Town and Parish Councils in order to identify ‘best practice’, provision for specific retail centres and any local conditions that could be included as part of the licensing process.

- 7.7 A further recommendation advised that further engagement should include the proposal that separate policies were created for banners “over the highway” and “alongside the highway”. This would gain valuable feedback from Town and Parish Councils on any logistical and practical problems with siting banners on railings, fences and walls bordering the highway in their area and raise any ownership, safety, compliance and proliferation issues or queries.
- 7.8 Whilst Shropshire Council would retain the legislative licencing function, views will be sought on a possible devolvement of the administration function/process and the proposal for Town and Parish Councils to act as sole applicant with an annual licence being issued for identified acceptable locations within the Town or Parish.

Temporary signage

- 7.9 The recommendation from the “Place Overview Committee” meeting of July 2019 recommended a Task and Finish group include the current policy and process for temporary directional signing (usually for events or housing developments) in a review of all related “street scene / street clutter” issues.
- 7.10 The current process requires an application and consent under Section 132 of the “Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984”.
- 7.11 Applications and consent are currently facilitated by the Street Works team:
- <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/roads-and-highways/road-network-management/application-forms-and-charges/temporary-signage-consent/>
- 7.12 The application form outlines the conditions and regulations for the erection and removal of signs and indemnifies Shropshire Council against any claims arising.
- 7.13 Conditions of consent currently are that signs promoting an event are taken down within one week of the completion of the event and that signs signposting developments can only be permitted for a period not exceeding 6 months following the sale of 80% of the development. This date needs to be agreed prior to the signs being erected.
- 7.14 There is a concern regarding the proliferation of such signage and regarding the enforcement of set conditions.
- 7.15 The Task and Finish Group report of 26th March 2020 recommended that Shropshire Council revise its charges for its housing development sign permit scheme, to better reflect the work required to administer the scheme effectively.
- 7.16 The group also recommended that any permit scheme limits the duration of a permit to 12 months before requiring renewal.

- 7.17 Subsequent recommendations of the Economy and Environment Overview Committee set out revised charges that better reflected officers time in dealing with applications and allowed for additional compliance inspections to take place.
- 7.18 A further recommendation was to remove the licence condition stating that directional signs can only be situated within half a mile or two junctions from the development and simplify to a maximum of 3 directional signs allowed per development.
- 7.19 A further recommendation was that a revised process and fee be implemented as soon as feasible and by April 1ST 2024 at the latest.

8.0 Additional Information:

Banners, Bunting and Illuminations:

- 8.1 Due to both the number of applications for Shrewsbury, the historical experience and current logistical issues presented, further recent discussions and liaison has taken place with Shrewsbury Town Council (STC) regarding how to resolve these contemporary issues whilst also ensuring that Shropshire Council, as designated Highway Authority, retain the powers permitting banners to be installed over and along the highway.
- 8.2 The accompanying Action Plan sets out the next steps against the recommendations from Group and Committee. The feedback from STC will greatly assist in forming key questions to be include in any further engagement exercise.
- 8.3 It is intended that views will be sought on the following:
- The possible devolvement of the administrative/booking process to Town and Parish Councils whilst Shropshire Council retain the overall licencing powers.
 - If the above is supported and feasible, that views are sought on a process whereby Town and Parish Councils act as the sole licence applicant and holder.
 - If the above is supported and feasible, that views are sought on the merits and feasibility of issuing an annual licence with applicable set and agreed conditions allowing Banners, Bunting and Illuminations to be erected at their agreed locations for a 12-month period.
 - Views sought on the proposal that separate policies are created to differentiate between banners/bunting over the highway and alongside the highway.
 - Views and feedback sought on any locations that would need to be excluded from banner installation due to safety, aesthetic or any other local issue.

Temporary signage:

8.4 As per the accompanying Action Plan, the recommendations from Group and Committee have been actioned and are largely complete.

- The agreed revised administration fee of £250 per application and extension fee of £110 has been in place since April 1st, 2024, and revised scheduled compliance inspections are taking place.
- The on-line application form, and accompanying guidance notes, reflect the amended condition to allow no more than 3 directional signs per development in order to simplify the process and mitigate any proliferation of signage.
- A review of existing licences and development signage is currently taking place with a view to contacting sign owners to remove redundant/unlicensed signage if applicable.

9. Conclusions

9.1 The findings and recommendations of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee are now being used to inform the development of a revised Policy and Process for Banners, Bunting and Illuminations.

9.2 The findings and recommendations of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been used to implement a revised Policy and Process for “Temporary Signage”.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

- Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Progress update - 09/11/2023
- Place Overview Committee - Update on Signs, Banners and Barriers Task and Finish Group – 04/08/2021
- Performance Management Scrutiny Committee - Signs and Banners Task and Finish Group Final Report – 20/05/2020

Local Member: All

Appendices:

- **APPENDIX 1 Action Plan**