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## **MANAGEMENT OF VEHICLE ACTIVATED SIGN**

### **Introduction**

At its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March the Amenities Committee received an initial report from Councillor Barry Rogers on the Community Speed Watch Group in Cranbrook following which, it was resolved to receive regular updates and for the management of the Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) used as part of the Speed Watch Monitoring to be subject to Risk Assessment and further report, (Minute A/23/18 refers).

### **Background**

In recent years, Highways Authorities have experimented with various types of signs in which approaching vehicles trigger an electronic display providing a warning message. These have evolved broadly into two main types of speed warning signs; namely the Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) which displays the speed limit when the approaching car exceeds the limit and the Speed Indicator Device (SID) which displays the speed of approaching vehicles.

Permanent VAS's are sited according to the Department of Transport guidance only at locations with a history of road casualty collisions and mobile speed warning signs can be used at sites where speed is a concern even though there may not be a history of collisions or incidents. It is worth noting that research suggests that their effectiveness reduces over time, with little or no speed reduction after about two weeks at any one location.

The Town Council received approval from Devon County Highways Authority and was fortunate to receive County Council Community Grant Funding for the purchase of a battery operated Vehicle Activated Sign to be sited at either of two approved locations within Cranbrook. The sites being Younghayes Road and Tillhouse Road.

### **General Operation and Management of the VAS**

1. The VAS will ideally be placed at either of the locations for two weeks and should not exceed longer than one month to retain the maximum effectiveness in managing speed.
2. A deployment at a site constitutes a two week presence facing in one direction. Turning the unit to face the opposite direction is considered a separate deployment.
3. The VAS operation will be dependant on the frequency and number of times the sign is activated. In general, the battery life usually manages a two-week deployment.
4. The VAS will only be deployed on the highway by suitably trained operatives or contractors acting on behalf of the Town Council. Please refer to Risk Assessments for the Deployment of the VAS and Battery Check annexed to this report (Annex 1 and 2). The risks to be considered as a minimum, include:

- The operative falling, being struck by a vehicle or injured through lifting.
- Member of the public injured by road traffic incident associated with the works.

### **Financial Commitment**

Whilst the purchase of the equipment was fully funded by virtue of Devon County Council, Community Fund, the Town Council is responsible for the ongoing costs of maintenance and for the insurance associated with operating the equipment. Therefore, the Council is responsible for the cost to maintain, repair if vandalised or other similar occurrence that would prevent its use.

The Committee may recommend outsourcing the deployment and maintenance to a suitably qualified contractor and this is estimated to be charged at £50 per fortnight. The annual cost being in the region of £1300.00.

### **Training**

Given the proximity to the road Devon County Council require operatives to have completed the 'Chapter 8' Training. The regulations are a code of practice to maintain safety whilst working on the highway.

The Town Council does not currently have any officers or councillors with the necessary training. At present Devon County Council will fund up to three members of town and parish councils, on the Chapter 8 course, which is the module Signing Lighting and Guarding Training and also requires the completion of Devon County Council's online Highway Safety Awareness Course prior to any other training. This is aimed at providing the background information regarding factors to be considered when working on or beside the highway. The completed training will provide the operator with cover for five years after which it will need to be renewed.

### **Summary**

The Committee is asked to consider the implications for the ongoing maintenance and management of the Vehicle Activate Sign in Cranbrook.

The VAS sign and battery are heavy and the deployment requires the operator to work at height in close proximity to the highway.

The Town Council has a duty to take all appropriate steps to minimise the risk to its operatives, pedestrians and other road users when carrying out tasks associated with the VAS.

In conclusion, despite the challenges to operate and deploy safely, the signs are recognised as a worthy deterrent to excessive speeding and a reminder to passing motorists to remain within the speed limit.

### **Recommendation**

1. To note the report.
2. To recommend to Council the approval and adoption of the Risk Assessments:
  - a) VAS Risk Assessment
  - b) VAS Battery Check

3. To delegate to the Clerk in conjunction with the Chairman of Amenities Committee to arrange training for up to three nominees to undertake the Devon County Council approved Chapter 8 Training and Online Highways Awareness Training and to act as operative on behalf of the Town Council to deploy and maintain the VAS equipment.

Or

4. To delegate to the Clerk and the Chairman of Amenities to explore the potential for sharing a qualified contractor for deployment and maintenance of the VAS equipment with a neighbouring parish at an approximate annual cost of £1300.00