

KEELE UNIVERSITY PROMOTIONAL SIGNAGE

Submitted by: **Engineering Manager – Graham Williams**

Portfolio: **Regeneration and Planning**

Ward(s) affected: **Multiple wards, dependent on signage locations**

Purpose of the Report

To seek a decision from Members whether or not to authorise the addition of Keele University promotional signage to existing 'Welcome to Newcastle' gateway signs throughout the Borough

Recommendations

(a) That Members note Keele University's request to add signage announcing the presence of the University to existing 'Welcome to Newcastle' gateway signs.

(b) That subject to Members acceding to the University's request, officers be authorised to take the necessary steps to implement the additional signs.

Reasons

Keele University have approached the Borough Council to ask if additional signage could be fixed to the Borough Council owned boundary signs to promote the University, acknowledging the importance of the University both as a Higher Education institution and as a contributor to economic growth.

1. Background

- 1.1 Keele University approached the Borough Council to ask if it would be possible to add additional signage to existing gateway/boundary signs to highlight their presence and contribution to the Borough. The precise details would need to be resolved but the general intention is to add a sign that would say something along the lines of 'Home of Keele University'.
- 1.2 The existing 'Welcome to Newcastle' signs were installed in 2009 and are located at the 11 main road entrances to the Borough.
- 1.3 The University feel that the profile provided by such signage not only reflects the importance the Borough places upon them as a place of learning but acknowledges the wider contribution they make to economic growth.
- 1.4 On a separate, but related, matter the University is working with the local Highway Authorities and Highways Agency to improve directional signs to the University on the main highway routes into the area and across the conurbation. The underlying issue is that a significant proportion of the University's 'customers' have difficulty in finding the campus.

2. Issues

- 2.1 The main issue prompted by the introduction of the Keele University signage, as described above, is that it might prompt other establishments to make similar requests, thereby resulting in clutter and detracting from the main purpose of such signs.

2.2 The main arguments in favour of such an arrangement are:

- It is a unique institution in the Borough that combines the provision of higher education (to about 10,000 full time students annually) with the delivery of economic growth in a range of ways (estimated to be worth £130m p.a. to the sub-region);
- It provides a more tangible message to the visitor about the Borough's values (both educational and commercial interests) than many of the typical marketing strap-lines;
- Further to the latter point, it promotes a positive message to prospective investors and;
- It helps to provide a more tangible link between the University and the Borough given that there is no commonality between the institution and the place name of the town.

Moving to matters of detail, of course any additional signage must be in keeping with existing designs.

Given that there were no detailed records of existing signage arrangements. Therefore site visits have been undertaken to measure and photograph each sign to enable an assessment about the appropriateness and suitability of new signage to be affixed to the existing structures. Such detailed information will be used to provide the University with accurate costings.

3. **Options Considered**

- (1) Not agree to Keele University signage being affixed to existing Council signage at the main gateway entrances to the Borough,
- (2) To authorise the additional signage subject to further investigation demonstrating that it would be suitable to do so, provided that Keele University fund the works.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 That Members note Keele University's request to add signage announcing the presence of the University to existing 'Welcome to Newcastle' gateway signs.
- 4.2 That subject to Members acceding to the University's request, officers be authorised to take the necessary steps to implement the additional signs.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 Your officers consider that there is no other organisation or institution that could provide such a range of demonstrable benefits.
- 5.2 An evaluation of the sites is required before a definitive answer can be given to Keele University as it may not be appropriate or practically possible for additional signage to be added to all Borough owned gateway signs.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 6.1 Creating a Borough of opportunity - by helping to promote the University to Borough visitors and residents.

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

Roadway signage is controlled by the highways and planning law which give prescribed rights to local authorities.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 The total cost of any works will be met by Keele University.

8.2 There would be a modest staff resource implication for the time taken to visit each of the sign locations to record and photograph them, assess the survey, checking the suitability of the existing posts and design new if required, obtain the necessary quotations and commission the contractor. However this can be assimilated into the existing work programme without causing significant adverse consequences.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 It is not anticipated that there are any major risks provided that the signs are designed so as to maintain the stability of the associated supporting structures.

10. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

10.1 The climate impacts are minimal with any new signage not likely to need substantial maintenance or replacement costs for the foreseeable future.

11. **Key Decision Information**

This report is included in the Forward Plan for decision by Cabinet in October 2011.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

There are no earlier Cabinet or Committee Resolutions regarding this report.

14. **List of Appendices**

There are no appendices to this report.

15. **Background Papers**

There are no background papers to accompany this report.