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Sent via secure email
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**Cabinet Member for
Highways & Transport**

Sessions House
County Hall
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Dear Tim

I am writing in response to your concerns regarding the recent works on Sandgate High Street by Affinity Water between 11-15 July. I am sorry to hear of the impact this had on the local community.

It is the responsibility of the statutory undertakers themselves to plan and manage their works and this includes determining the length of time necessary to complete them. While we may apply overrun charges if a company goes beyond the agreed completion date without proper notice or a justifiable reason for doing so, we unfortunately cannot dictate how long a job should take and can only assess whether the necessary road space is available for the period that has been requested.

While I greatly appreciate the frustration that may be caused by witnessing a worksite that is seemingly empty with no apparent works being undertaken and traffic management still in place, there can be a number of reasons as to why this may appear to be the case. A few examples are:

- The time required between different stages of work:
 - Gas mains needing to vent before they can be worked on.
 - The curing times of the materials used.
- Emergencies or urgent works elsewhere on the highway network calling crews away from the site.
- Staff absences limiting crews' planned availability.
- Waiting on parts, materials or equipment (specialist or otherwise).
- The testing of assets (this is not always carried out manually on site but may still require traffic management to remain in place).

- Hand over between crews.
 - A good number of undertakers run shifts of crews that do not conform to the 9-5 work pattern so shift changes occur at different times within the day. This means that sites can be empty for a short period between one crew clocking off and the next arriving.
 - Different crews specialising in different aspects/stages of a set of works - for example, traffic management crew, excavation crew, reinstatement crew, lining crew, ironwork crew etc. Some crews will be able to do several aspects/parts of the whole job, but this is not always the case.
- Site factors - for example, inclement weather. This does not just mean rain or cold temperatures, there are certain types of work that cannot be undertaken when temperatures are above a certain figure because it causes issues with the materials used e.g. certain types of surface treatments. Laying or using material outside of their optimum conditions can lead to an increased chance of failure (pothole/surface defects etc.) This may result in the need for remedial works and further occupation of the highway.
- Unforeseen issues - for example, assets not being where they are marked on plans or other services not being where they should be.

The cost of a permit is subject to various factors including the category of road, the traffic management being used and the duration. Sandgate High Street is designated as traffic sensitive and subject to lane rental charges (which are higher than standard permit fees) from Monday to Saturday 07:00 - 19:00. The road is banded as KLR4 and closing a lane costs £300 per day. These works completed earlier than the scheduled time and as such, were only in situ for 4 chargeable days (Sunday is outside of the lane rentals applicable times). This amounted to a total of £1,200.

It is worth noting that any streetworks activities that currently take place at the weekend are classed as 'out of hours' and require the approval of Environmental Health. For this reason, overrun fees and other penalties are not chargeable at such times. However, you may be pleased to hear that this is expected to change with new legislation due to be introduced this summer that will mean that Saturdays and Sundays will be included as part of the working week and can be treated the same as any other day.

I hope the above information is found to be useful and helps to clarify KCC's position on this matter. While some disruption may regrettably be unavoidable, please be assured that we will remain committed in our efforts to work with utility undertakers and keep the county moving.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Osborne
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Kent County Council