

Central Bedfordshire Council

COMMITTEE: Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny

Date: 15 March 2018

Report title Overview and Scrutiny enquiry into schools parking – update on recommendations

Report of: Executive Member for Sustainable Communities

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Purpose of this report

1. To provide an update on progress towards implementing the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Force enquiry into school-run parking pressures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Note the update on the delivery of the Task Force's recommendations regarding school-run related parking pressures.
2. Give consideration to reviewing and updating the authority's Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy in preparation for Issue 4 of the Local Transport Plan.

Background

1. At the meeting on 12 January 2017, members of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SCOSC) recommended that the Council's Executive give consideration and support to sixteen recommendations designed to help mitigate school-run related parking pressures.
2. These recommendations were considered by the Executive at their meetings on 4 April 2017 and 20 June 2017. At the second of these meetings, the Executive determined:

- a. Two of the recommendations were not accepted, specifically 7 and 14. It was noted that the timing of no-stopping restrictions and liaison with local transport providers were a matter for local decision making, taking into account the specific circumstances of individual schools.
- b. Eleven of the recommendations related to existing practice and would be progressed as 'business as usual' by the responsible directorate.
- c. Three of the recommendations required specific action. Of these:
 - i. Recommendations 5 and 6 related to enforcement, with a deadline of 25 April 2017 set for their implementation.
 - ii. Recommendation 16 related to the use of community-based car parking capacity, with a deadline of 31 March 2018 set for its implementation.

The Executive's response to each recommendation is reproduced at Appendix A.

3. This report provides an update on progress in delivering recommendations that are not considered 'business as usual' and offers additional comment and observations for members' consideration.

School Travel Plan support

4. The most recently school travel census was issued in September 2017 and completed by approximately 60% of schools. The results showed that the share of pupils driven to school has climbed above 30%.

WALK	CYCLE	CAR	CAR SHARE	SCHOOL BUS	PUBLIC BUS	TRAIN	TAXI	OTHER
12189	1118	8031	425	2601	127	81	137	72

5. The Task Force report acknowledged the impact of the previous partnership work undertaken with schools to promote sustainable travel. The momentum behind this work largely dissipated when the authority's four-strong Sustainable Transport Team was disbanded, with individuals being allocated to new roles.
6. Very recently, the post of Travel Plan Officer was re-established within the Highways Development Management team and an officer recruited to the role. A key responsibility for this officer will be to encourage schools to update and reissue their Travel Plans as some of these, particularly those completed voluntarily and outside of the planning process, are out of date.
7. Support from Ward Members in requesting updated copies of School Travel Plans from the schools directly would be of considerable value.

This would signal to schools the continued importance placed by the authority on collaborative travel planning as a mechanism for promoting road safety and sustainable travel choices.

Information sharing and promotion

8. The production and distribution of a parking leaflet has been programmed for the summer of 2018 to coincide with the start of the new school year. This initiative is being coordinated by the Highways Road Safety Team and is linked with the first-year's implementation of the parking management strategy for the period 2018-2021.
9. An externally-funded 'Sustainable Travel Access at Railway Stations (STARS) initiative indirectly benefits schools through the work of a Promotions Officer. STARS funding was secured from central government via a competitive bidding process in collaboration with Luton and Bedford Borough Councils. The funding supports local sustainable transport developments and runs to March 2020.
10. The authority promotes 'Modeshift', a national scheme that recognises schools who have demonstrated excellence in supporting walking and other forms of sustainable transport. Schools are also encouraged to participate in Living Street's 'Walk to School Week', which runs annually in May.
11. The authority also funds (through the STARS initiative) the Sustrans 'Bike It' programme. Two Bike It officers have worked intensively with 34 schools to promote cycling and will extend their engagement to a further 10 schools in the Ampthill and Flitwick area over the period 2018-20.

Minimising risk and prioritising safety

12. The SCOSC report made reference to the various types of restriction used by the authority to help regulate parking pressures outside schools, specifically 'No Stopping at any time' - yellow zig zags - and 'No Waiting at any time' – double yellow lines and 'No waiting between defined times' – single yellow lines.
13. With reference to 'zig zags', members recommended that these restrictions be placed along the entire frontage of all schools and are *“fully enforced”*. With reference to double and single yellow lines, members recommended they are *“robustly deployed and enforced, taking into account existing resources”*.
14. In its response, the Executive noted that the layout of the highway will often constrain the maximum extent of zig-zag lines and that their review / extension would need to be completed in line with available resources and

priorities. Also, they noted that schools and local members have an important role to play in feeding back to the parking team where restrictions are regularly flouted.

15. The SCOSC report also stressed the importance of enforcing parking discipline during the school-run period. Reference was made to the appointment of an additional enforcement officer, enabling this area to be given a specific focus. However, this appointment did not proceed because of budgetary constraints.
16. A report of the visits made to schools over the eight-month period 1 June 2017 to 31 January 2018 is provided at Appendix B. This report shows:
 - a. 57 schools¹ received a visit from a civil enforcement officer (CEO) over the period. On an average school day² there were 3.25 visits and 4.41 penalty charge notices (PCNs) issued. The value of these PCNs is ~£28,000, assuming all are paid promptly.
 - b. 2 schools were visited at least weekly on average. 22 were visited at least monthly.
 - c. The mostly frequently visited school was Icknield Lower in Dunstable, with 33 visits and 50 PCNs issued.
 - d. Nearly 50% of visits were made to schools in Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard
 - e. Of the 556 PCNs issued in total, 18% were for parking on 'School Keep Clear' markings and 69% were for parking on a yellow line.
17. Central Bedfordshire continues to operate without an explicit policy on the enforcement of waiting restrictions, providing discretion to the Parking Team to direct its resources in response to reported pressures. This is likely to change with the adopted of a Parking Management Strategy, as agreed by SCOSC at its meeting of 14 September 2017.
18. In response to the publication of the Task Force report, highways officers programmed a rolling review of safety outside of the school gate. This review, funded from the Local Transport Plan Integrated Programme, is being undertaken over a 3-4 year cycle and involves:
 - a. Documenting the nature and extent of restrictions at each school.
 - b. Checking consistency between restrictions and associated traffic regulation orders (TROs).
 - c. Instructing small works to resolve issues such as incorrectly laid or worn markings, missing / inadequate signage.
 - d. Measuring vehicle movements and speeds outside of schools and reviewing data on collisions over the most recent 3-year period.

¹ Not all schools have restrictions in place, or have parking issues.

² The period covers 126 school days, excluding holidays and training days.

- e. Developing improvement scheme proposals to address issues such as excessive speeds.
19. The Highways Integrated Programme has ring-fenced funding for 'Safer Routes to School' schemes. Priorities are (re)assessed yearly as part of the Highways Annual Plan process. Improvements schemes planned, in progress or completed since the Task Force report was published include:
- a. New waiting restrictions and 20mph zone, Alameda School, Station Road Ampthill.
 - b. New waiting restrictions and extension of 20 mph zone, Clipstone Brook and Leedon Lower Schools, Brooklands Drive, Highfield Road Leighton Buzzard.
 - c. New waiting restrictions and removal of guard railing, Leighton Middle School, Bridge Street Leighton Buzzard.
 - d. School Safety Zone, Greenleas School, Kestrel Way Leighton Buzzard.
 - e. Extension of 'School Keep Clear' markings and new waiting restrictions, Southcott Lower School, Bideford Green Leighton Buzzard.
 - f. School Safety Zone, Biggleswade Academy, Mead End Biggleswade.
 - g. Safety Camera installation and 'School Keep Clear' markings, Arnold Academy, Hexton Road Barton-Le-Clay.
 - h. New waiting restrictions and related measures, Greenfield School, Pulloxhill Road Greenfield.
 - i. Footway widening and shared use path provision, All Saints Academy, Houghton Road Houghton Regis.
 - j. Various measures, Silsoe Lower, Chestnut Way, Silsoe.
 - k. School Safety Zone, Roecroft Lower, Buttercup Road, Stotfold.
 - l. School Safety Zone, Cranfield Lower School, Braeburn Way, Cranfield
 - m. Cycle route enhancements, Etonbury School, Arlesey Road Stotfold.

Partnership working

20. The requirement to agree a Travel Plan is a powerful mechanism for facilitating partnership working with those schools seeking a planning permission. However, once permission has been granted, there are few incentives for schools to follow up agreed actions. In the past, the authority has invested in a system that automatically prompts when milestones become due. However, this has proven too resource intensive to maintain. Issues are compounded where schools opt not to nominate a Travel Plan coordinator as a point of contact. Officers are of the view that Travel Plan responsibility should also be vested with the Governing Body.
21. The delivery of travel plan actions and the measurement of their efficacy are of considerable importance to the authority. When actions are not implemented, or prove ineffectual, this can undermine the soundness of the transport assessment on which the original development decision was predicated. Underperformance has cost and reputation implications for

the authority, particularly where the outcome is to add to delays on the local road network. This issue is equally applicable to the travel plans approved for commercial and residential developments.

22. For this reason, officers are keen to explore the possibility of making the publication of travel plan performance reports a condition of a planning approval. Performance reports would be required one year on from commencement and annually thereafter, ceasing on the five year anniversary following completion unless agreed otherwise.
23. Officers also propose that consideration be given to securing a bond to fund the compilation of travel plan performance reports for sites over a certain threshold, where these are not provided by the developer. Such funding would be held in escrow and could contribute towards the cost of additional mitigating measures should travel plan actions prove ineffectual.

Design principles

24. It is part of the planning process to consider the design of school gate arrangements, including provision for school buses. The positioning of new school sites within a wider development is an important consideration, accepting there is a tension between opting for a central and highly accessible location and an edge site where land has a lower intrinsic value.

Head teacher, parent and resident engagement

25. A high-performance school travel planning process is key to meeting aspirations for the effective engagement of head teachers, parents and governors in dealing with school-run related parking issues. This process is the vehicle for discussing staggered start times, walking buses, lift-sharing, park and stride schemes and other sustainable travel initiatives. Members may therefore be concerned that the authority's knowledge and expertise in this area is at risk of being lost.
26. It is also of concern that there is no readily available source of information for members on the number of residents' complaints and requests related to school-run parking. This is in most part because of the difficulty in collating the data given complaints are routed via multiple channels.
27. To address this issue, officers will in future ask residents to complete a request form when seeking measures to address parking pressures. As part of this procedure, members will be alerted to requests affecting roads in their ward. The proposed form for registering new requests is provided at Appendix C.

Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy

28. The Task Force report referenced the 'Education and Inspections Act 2006' (EIA 2006), which placed a general duty on local authorities to assess travel and transport needs of all pupils and to promote sustainable travel choices to children and young people of compulsory school age receiving their education in the local authority's area.
29. In 2011, the authority published its Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy (SMoTS), providing the policy framework for discharging its statutory responsibility. It contained a vision of Central Bedfordshire as...

"... a place where every school, college and other centre of education provision is easily accessible by sustainable modes. Every education provision will benefit from a network of walking and cycling and bus routes linking to nearby conurbations to make sustainable travel to schools and colleges a realistic alternative to the car, particularly for journeys of less than 5 miles."
30. The document set out four elements for the promotion of sustainable school travel within Central Bedfordshire, namely:
 - a. Assessment of the travel and transport needs of young children and young people.
 - b. Audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority that might be used when travelling to, from or between schools/ institutions.

- c. Strategy to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within Central Bedfordshire so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for.
- d. Promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from and between schools and other institutions.

31. At the time the strategy's publication³, some 76.3% of pupils travelled by sustainable modes. As previously noted, this figure has since dropped to 67.6%, based on the latest available survey data.

32. What is unclear is the extent to which the increase in car use mode share is attributable to a rise in pupils travelling out of catchment rather than attitudinal or behavioural change. Members may therefore wish to endorse action to model the interaction of the various policies that impact individual travel behaviour choice. This work would inform a refresh of the SMoTS strategy as the guiding framework for the authority's investment in promoting sustainable travel choices.

Reason/s for recommendations

33. It is appropriate that the Council periodically reviews its effectiveness in discharging its statutory responsibility to assess travel and transport needs of all pupils and to promote sustainable travel choices to children and young people of compulsory school age receiving their education in the local authority's area.

34. In response to members' concerns, the Task Force recommended a range of actions to mitigate school run-related parking pressures stemming from increased car use. Recommendations focused on strengthening the application of current measures and policy levers, including the consistent and robust enforcement of waiting restrictions. The Task Force report also called for the development of a closer working relationship between Council officers and schools to address current issues and to minimise their occurrence for new build or expanding schools.

35. Progress on delivering a number of the recommended actions has been made within the confines of available resources. A new Travel Plan Officer has recently been recruited and this should see further progress made.

³ Survey data collected in January 2010

Council Priorities

36. Addressing parking pressures outside of schools directly addresses the Council's priority of Enhancing Central Bedfordshire and ensuring it is a 'Great Place'.

Legal Implications

37. As was noted in the Task Force Report, The Highway Authority has a wide discretion as to the circumstances in which it can make new Traffic Regulation Orders. Whether new Orders are required will depend upon specific aims and individual site circumstances. All new orders involve a process of statutory consultation, the procedures for which are prescribed by regulation. Where restrictions are in place they can be enforced, subject to available resources.

Financial and Risk Implications

38. The ability to progress several recommendations has been constrained by the loss of dedicated resources and restrictions on recruitment. This situation is likely to continue into 2018-19.

Equalities Implications

39. The Traffic Management Act 2004 allows the authority to take any action which will contribute to more efficient use of its highway network including reducing congestion and other disruptions to the movement of traffic⁴. This action may involve the exercise of any power to regulate or coordinate the uses made of any road.
40. The duty this Act places on the authority is to 'make the best use of existing road for the benefit of all road users'. In performing its duty, the authority must at all times act fairly and without discrimination.

Conclusion and next Steps

41. The Committee are asked to note that progress has been made and give consideration to:
- a. supporting a review and update of the authority's Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy, in preparation for Issue 4 of the authority's Local Transport Plan.

⁴ 'Traffic' includes pedestrians as well as vehicles.

Appendices

- Appendix A:** Executive Response to Overview and Scrutiny Enquiry on School Parking – Copy of Appendix 1
- Appendix B:** Schools Parking Patrols Report for 1 Jun 2017 to 31 August 2018
- Appendix C:** Proposed Parking Request Form

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Background Papers

A – School parking Task Force Enquiry, Report

<http://centralbeds.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s69452/170112%20Item%2014%20SC%20OSC%20Schools%20Parking%20Task%20Force%20report.pdf>

B – School Parking – recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Enquiry Executive, Report

<http://centralbeds.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s71534/School%20Parking%200Recommendations%20from%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Enquiry.pdf>

C – Executive Response to Overview Scrutiny Enquiry on School Parking - Report

<http://centralbeds.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s72654/Executive%20Response%20to%20Overview%20Scrutiny%20Enquiry%20on%20School%20Parking.pdf>

D – Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy -

http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/sustainable-modes-travel_tcm3-13388.pdf