

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 8 September 2022 at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT:

Cllr Roger Whyborn	Cllr Phil Awford
Cllr Susan Williams	Cllr Sajid Patel
Cllr Chris McFarling (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Dr David Willingham
Cllr Gill Moseley	Cllr Vernon Smith (Chair)
Cllr Alan Preest	

Officers in attendance: Simon Excell, Philip Williams, Jason Humm, Alexis Newport and Gillian Pinder

Cabinet Members in attendance: Cllr David Gray (Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning)
Cllr Dom Morris (Cabinet for Highways and Flooding) (**virtually**)
Cllr Philip Robinson (Cabinet member for Education, Employment and Bus Transport)

Apologies: Colin Chick

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2022 were approved.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

4. DRAFT ROAD SAFETY POLICY

4.1 The Chair invited Philip Williams to present this item. Members received a written report in advance and the following points were noted:

- Whilst road safety had often formed part of other Council policies (such as the Local Transport Plan), it had long been felt that it needed a more substantial review. The draft Policy had allowed the opportunity to review and refresh the Council's approach to road safety.
- The attached report set out the background to the Policy, the reasons why and importance of this review.
- Officers provided a workshop back in 2021 to help shape some of the core themes, plus worked with experts for an independent review on proposed policies.
- Members would be aware of the additional £600,000 that had been provided to support the Community Speed Watch scheme (jointly with the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner). The first phase of this scheme

had ended on 31 August and had 109 different organisations bid for the funding, with a good spread across the county.

- The newly established Gloucestershire Road Safety Partnership was allowing better cooperation and joined up working across those organisations who had a statutory responsibility for road safety.
- The public consultation was due to close on Sunday evening (11th September 2022). There had been really good engagement with the consultation, with over 450 completed survey responses received, which also allowed respondents to add comments to their answers to provide further detail.
- Overall, there was significant support for the policy's 10-year vision and 9 key themes, people understood why it was important to review at this stage.
- The ambition for the county was Vision Zero by 2050 but it was important to also have an interim target which was to half fatalities and injuries by 2032, which itself was extremely challenging.

Questions

- 4.2 There was a lengthy discussion about the effectiveness of 20mph zones as a tool to reduce road safety. The report referred to research and existing studies that 20mph zones which were reliant upon signage only had very low compliance levels, and that you were more likely to have a bigger impact with schemes that included physical traffic calming measures. A Department for Transport (DfT) study in 2014 also found that there was no real value for money on signage only schemes as there was no tangible evidence that they reduced casualties.
- 4.3 Whilst some members agreed with this, other members were of the strong opinion that the low cost of implementing signage only 20mph zones meant that you could cover a much wider area and push to achieve an overall change of culture. Whilst accepting not all drivers would immediately drop down to 20mph, there was still a tendency to at least drive slower than 30mph. There was also a huge financial issue for communities being able to afford traffic calming measures compared to the signage only schemes.
- 4.4 Looking at the feedback from communities, it was noted that those who had 20mph schemes already in place often found them ineffective or became frustrated that there was little to no enforcement from the police. Whereas those that did not already have them, were the ones who spoke largely in favour of them. Officers added that they would not class driving between 25-30mph as effective compliance with a 20mph speed limits.
- 4.5 Some members stressed that such decisions should not be entirely data driven but should also consider the wants from communities. In response, officers stressed that if the data was not present, you could sometimes run the risk of a making a problem worse. There was also a risk here of 'treating the worried well' which meant the Council's limited funding a resource ended

up being allocated to communities who shouted the loudest, to the detriment of others where the data clearly evidenced safety concerns.

- 4.6 Support from the local policing teams was paramount on this issue. The police have been clear that they would be unable to enforce widespread, signage only 20mph zones purely due to officer resource. This added to the Council's reservation to apply them in locations without other measures to enabling them to be self-enforcing e.g. speed bumps.
- 4.7 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Flooding added that all members and officers agreed on the need for improvements to road safety. It was absolutely paramount to understand from the data what was actually causing the KSIs in order to implement the correct measures and avoid wasting funding on actions that did not bring about the change everyone wanted and needed.
- 4.8 Several members commented on the need for a sufficient budget to sit behind this policy document to ensure the required changes were possible. It was noted that the capital budget for road safety in recent years had been around £400,000 per year (with an additional £250,000 being committed this year) and £300,000 for the revenue budget. There were also other budgets that indirectly improved road safety such as resurfacing schemes and highway maintenance.
- 4.9 Officers explained that capital budget could only be used where an asset would be created or enhanced and would normally be spent on hotspot schemes (e.g., where a dangerous junction had been identified). This identified a problem in itself as collisions were no longer clustered in the county, so it was not as straight forward as identifying a large capital scheme to address that particular area. The challenge for road safety going forward would also have to focus on behavioural change, which could not be financed through capital budgets. The review of this policy had allowed officers and Cabinet Members to understand the budget pressures in this area and it was something they took very seriously.
- 4.10 A member questioned whether there was more central funding that could be accessed to use on road safety. It was advised that wherever Government funding was available, officers spent a lot of time and resource trying to secure it. The team had done very well in securing a high level of central funding for segregated cycle ways and major road schemes for example. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning added that this was all part of a holistic approach to addressing road safety, by thinking about it in everything that we do e.g., reducing the number of cars on the road through sustainable development and bus improvements and providing safer cycling routes.
- 4.11 In reference to the Community Speed Watch Fund, a member raised concern that this had been targeted at areas who had very active parish or community groups, which had left some areas unable to bid for funding.

Officers requested to be made aware of any particular localities that had difficulty accessing funding. It was confirmed that the team were currently looking closely at the bids received within Phase 1 and would contact the committee with further information on the numbers received and sums spent. Work was underway on Phase 2, allowing officers time to consider any improvements to the process.

ACTION: Philip Williams/Alexis Newport

- 4.12 Noting the table provided in the report regarding KSI numbers between 2012-2021, a member requested more breakdown data on areas such as: where the accidents occurred, the speed, vehicle maintenance, age of the driver, were pedestrians involved etc. This would allow a better understanding of the causation of these accidents and where to target particular campaigns. It was queried whether there was an assumption within society that all KSIs were mainly caused by speeding.

ACTION: Philip Williams/Alexis Newport

Casualty Statistics - Highways (gloucestershire.gov.uk)

- 4.13 Officers added that when a collision happened, the police would attend and review causation at the scene. One of the challenges therefore was if information came to light later e.g., via toxicology reports and changed the initial understanding of the causation. There were currently higher causation rates in failing to look and careless/reckless driving.
- 4.14 A member asked what officers believed was the reason that Gloucestershire currently had the 6th highest KSI rate in the country. It was explained that, based on what had been understood from the data so far, there are two main aspects. Gloucestershire had previously been 'ahead of the pack' for a long time and a significant level of casualty reduction had been achieved prior, meaning there was an element of others catching up. In addition, when looking at areas with lower rates, they had overtime implemented lower speed limits, more pedestrian crossings, more traffic calming which had a cumulative effect over a long period.
- 4.15 Officers added there were still things that could be done in Gloucestershire, the opportunity for improvements had not yet been exhausted. It was also worth bearing in mind that there was a theme of more rural areas finding it harder to make sustained improvements due to the difficulty in working with a rural road network.
- 4.16 A member highlighted a couple of points that related both to road safety and climate change, such as, the opportunity to measure air pollution in 20mph zones to see if they were effective enough to roll out in particularly polluted areas or, the reduction of car numbers and increase in public transport use.
- 4.17 In response officers stressed that there were other Council strategies that would refer to these areas in much more detail such as the LTP or Bus

Service Improvement Plan. This specific policy was focused on casualty reduction and could not cover all areas in the same detail.

4.18 Officers welcomed comments from members on areas they felt needed further consideration and the following were noted:

- Review of speed limits on higher speed roads – acknowledging the majority of KSIs occur on A roads. This should not be limited to urban areas.
- Include reference to improving safety for horse riders on the highway, as well as improving the access and upkeep of bridle ways.
- More detail on use of personal electric vehicles, particularly e-scooters. There was a noticeable issue of the current legislation and technology not being at the same level.
- Better use of social media to prompt campaigns. It was highlighted that the DfT campaign, for example, on recent changes to the Highway Code to allow more right of way for pedestrians had not run long enough to reach everyone in society.
- More emphasis on the importance of monitoring before and after implementation of measures to ensure they are working effectively.
- Listening to community voices and not just following the data. If a community are particularly worried about a road safety issue but the data does not indicate a problem, precautionary or prevention measures may be needed.
- Ensuring new development did not compromise road safety and making sure developers are paying for the most appropriate safety measures.
- Residents and drivers being able to feedback/report on near miss collisions to help better identify safety issues before an accident occurred.
- Ensure that variations in the weather are considered, for example, something that is safe on a dry summer day may be dangerous on a foggy winter night.
- Consideration of low-cost solutions such as anamorphic road paint (optical illusions) to slow down traffic and preventing vehicle access to pedestrian areas.

5. WORK PLAN

Members noted the future items in the attached work plan and made the following additions:

- Review of the Traffic Regulation Order process and delivery
- Sheep mess in the Forest of Dean – information on whether GCC has any responsibility in addressing this issue such as through Trading Standards (animal welfare)
- Future update on the Electric Vehicle Charging point rollout

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

6. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

The report was taken as read and noted.

CHAIR

Meeting concluded at 12:22