

At a meeting of the ENVIRONMENT AND ATTRACTIVE CITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on MONDAY, 14th DECEMBER, 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Miller in the Chair

Councillors E. Gibson, Tye, Vardy, Wakefield, Whalen and Wood

Also Present:-

Councillor Tate, Chair of Management Scrutiny Committee

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Kelly and Stephenson.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Environment and Attractive City Scrutiny Committee held on 16th November, 2009

Councillor Wood advised that in addition to declaring a personal interest as a member of the Integrated Transport Authority he had also declared a personal interest as a member of the board for Compass Community Transport and asked that this interest be recorded.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of the declaration of interest made by Councillor Wood.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Policy Development and Review 2009/10 – Evidence Gathering

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which enabled Members to consider the report produced by Jacobs Consultants regarding their review of national implementation of 20mph zones in residential areas along with an update from Acting Sergeant Emmerson from Northumbria Police regarding the approach of the police to 20mph limits and the issue of their enforcement. There was also an update by Councillor E. Gibson on the work of the Committee's Task and Finish Working Group.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Richard Hibbert, Director of Jacobs Consultants, presented the report. He advised that speed reduction was a means of road safety. The review had looked at all accidents over a five year period, this information had then been broken down into the number of child accidents and took into account the positions of schools, this information was shown in the maps included in the report. On major roads 20mph speed limits were not suitable.

There were two types of 20mph restriction; these were 20mph speed limits and 20mph zones.

The 20 mph speed limits were the same as other speed limits, there was an order in place along with legal signage and it was an offence to travel in excess of 20mph. The 20mph speed limits were most effective when the average speed was already at or below 24mph before the speed limit was introduced. There would not be a reliance on the police to enforce these limits. There were few locations where 20mph limits were preferable to speed zones.

The 20mph speed zones were backed up by traffic calming features designed to prevent people from driving over 20mph. The traffic calming could include speed humps, speed tables and parking management. These zones would be self enforcing.

The British Medical Journal had published an article showing the effect of 20mph zones in London over the last 10 years. There had been a reduction in Killed and Seriously Injured figures of 40 percent.

Councillor E. Gibson presented the feedback from the Task and Finish Working Group. She advised that other areas of the country had 20mph limits and zones. Limits were low impact given the cost of implementing them due to it being unlikely that there would be the resources for enforcement. For speed zones to be implemented there needed to be an order in place to create the zone. Temporary speed limits were a possibility however flashing signs and crossing patrols would be necessary to ensure that speeds were reduced.

The group had requested a report to be presented which would suggest potential areas for pilot 20mph zones.

There was a need to educate parents of the dangers caused by parking around schools and there would be another meeting of the group after a visit to North Tyneside had taken place.

Councillor Tye commented that in Concord there was a lack of footpaths and this was evident in the figures, the area had the highest number of casualties. Silksworth had a high number of injuries, he felt that this was possibly because there were three schools in the area and there had been a reduction in the number of crossing patrols.

Councillor Tye then stated that this was an excellent report and that the statistics for the number of child casualties were frightening. There was a need for 20mph zones to be implemented. There were flashing speed signs and speed camera vans and the issue was regularly reported to the LMAPS groups.

Councillor Wood commented on the report from Jacobs; it was necessary to find the reasons why there were more child casualties in less affluent areas. 20mph limits were not recommended as they were largely ineffective as they were unlikely to be complied with. 20mph zones were a very effective way of reducing collisions and injuries. He asked for clarification of the meanings of Mass Action and Route Action.

Mr Hibbert advised that Route Action was where the transport route was considered using a systematic approach and was engineering based. Mass Action was community based; it involved the community acting together in a way that affected those who were not acting in the same way. This could include walking buses to schools which would slow the traffic down.

Councillor Wood then stated that he would welcome the adoption of a policy that resulted in more 20mph zones being introduced within new housing developments. He had concerns over the information provided regarding Leechmere and Hill View; the information stated that there were no schools in the areas however Hill View Infants School fell within the area outlined as a prospective pilot area. The 20mph zones around schools would help to reduce concerns regarding accidents involving children however there was also concern over accidents involving the elderly.

The chairman commented that 20mph zones would improve safety for people of all ages.

Councillor Wakefield commented that there would not be regular enforcement of the 20mph speed limits and queried why there was a need for signage to be in place when the engineering works would reduce the speeds.

Mr Hibbert advised that the legal orders and signage helped to manage the risk of claims from motorists for damage to vehicles and would allow police enforcement if there were still problems with speed.

Councillor Wakefield then raised the issue of traffic around Newbottle Primary School. The school was based on the A182, a major trunk road, time based temporary 20mph speed limits could be used to reduce speeds during the peak times however it would not be possible to install any traffic calming measures and would therefore need to have police speed enforcement.

Mr Hibbert advised that the protocols would allow for a temporary 20mph speed limit, these temporary speed limits would need to be reinforced by speed limit signs with amber flashing lights and school crossing patrols.

Acting Sergeant Emmerson advised that 20mph limits could be put in place however drivers often did not slow down for them and it was difficult to enforce the speed limit in these areas. A 20mph zone would force drivers to slow down.

Councillor Vardy asked for clarification of what accidents were shown on the maps, did they show all road accidents including vehicle and pedestrian accidents.

Mr Hibbert advised that the map showed all casualties regardless of whether they were pedestrians, cyclists, bus passengers or car occupants.

Councillor Vardy then asked whether the final maps were produced using the same dataset as the initial map. Had the cause of the accidents been analysed, time of day and weather conditions could have been factors in causing the accidents.

Mr Hibbert confirmed that the same dataset was used for each of the maps. The causes of each accident had not been analysed and there had not been any pilot schemes designed.

Councillor Vardy then commented that accidents at night on unlit roads might not be caused by speed. He also suggested that railings be installed outside of school gates to slow down the children; there was also a need to educate the children about road safety.

Mr Hibbert advised that the best schemes would implement many different elements, particularly around schools. An engineered 20mph zone would be accompanied by education. Safety fences would help reduce accidents around the school gates however the inconvenience to pedestrians could have an effect on the willingness of people to walk to school. There were areas which already had traffic calming and these could be turned into 20mph zones, this would be a cheap and effective way of introducing the pilot.

Councillor Vardy then stated that in Manchester there had been a road with high vehicle speeds where chicanes had been installed to reduce speeds and that there had been head on collisions as a result of this.

Mr Hibbert commented that traffic calming on major roads would be advised against and that speed would be reduced gradually when moving from the city boundaries towards the city centre.

Councillor Vardy then asked whether the penalties were different for motorists who were speeding and caused an accident in 20 or 30mph zones.

Acting Sergeant Emmerson advised that if an accident was caused by a driver exceeding the speed limit then this would be careless driving and the incident would be treated the same regardless of the speed limit.

Councillor E. Gibson commented that there was a need to look at areas with children's play areas as well as schools as play areas were a magnet for children.

Councillor Tye commented that there had been 56 accidents and only 4 of them had involved children. There were areas with parking problems and these problems lead to accidents. The part time 20mph speed limit on Grindon Lane had been changed to a permanent limit as the variable limit had not worked as there was no engineered speed reduction measures in place. There had been a need to reduce speeds on Premier Road and there was a need for traffic calming in Plains Farm as traffic was entering a 20mph zone from a 40mph zone.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hibbert and Acting Sergeant Emmerson for their attendance. He felt that the report was excellent and it was pleasing to see the study of accidents in relation to the deprivation index. He was also happy to see that the report took into account all ages. He felt that the driver was always at fault in accidents and that there was a need for drivers to slow down and there was a need for education. There had been a study published by the British Medical Journal which had shown that there had been a 40 percent reduction in accidents over the last ten years in the areas of London covered by 20mph zones.

Councillor Wakefield commented that when planning applications for housing developments were submitted there should be a requirement to incorporate speed management measures into the application.

The Chairman stated that in the New Year there was a need to look at bringing forward pilot schemes.

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted, consideration be given to the evidence received as part of the Committee's study and a report be brought to the committee in the New Year detailing the proposals for the pilot 20mph zones.

Flood Planning – Implications for the Scrutiny Function

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which requested Members to agree to include flood planning within the remit of the Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

The Chairman advised that the report had been withdrawn from the agenda as the presenting officer had been unable to attend the meeting. The report would be presented to the committee in January.

Sunderland City Council Local Development Framework: Annual Monitoring Report 2008/09

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which allowed Members to consider the report of the Deputy Chief Executive that was considered by Cabinet on 2nd December, 2009 which sought approval of the Council's Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2008/09 and also sought approval for submitting the AMR to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Neil Cole, Planning Policy Manager, presented the report and advised that this was the 5th annual report. This would be the last report to be produced in December as from 2010 the report would be submitted in the Summer which would allow more up to date information to be provided to Members.

Councillor Vardy commented on the renewable energy developments. He stated that there was currently 7.4MW capacity and that there was the potential for 19MW. He queried where this additional capacity was located.

Mr Cole advised that there was 7.4MW able to be produced from existing developments. There were other schemes, including wind turbines at schools, which were being developed.

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st December, 2009 – 31st March, 2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which enabled the Members to consider the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1st December, 2009 to 31st March, 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, advised that the item regarding the Seafront Regeneration would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Tye expressed concerns regarding the lack of officers present who would be able to answer any queries from Members. He felt that this was not acceptable and that it showed a lack of respect for the Committee, the Senior Officers needed to be present.

The Chairman advised that Mr Lowes was in another meeting and that the Chief Solicitor and Directorate of Financial Resources representatives had been informed that their presence was not required at the meeting. He agreed that there was a need for more relevant officers to be present.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted and consideration be given to the Forward Plan.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) G. MILLER,
Chairman.