

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Highways Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 1 November 2011 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor G Bleasdale in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Robinson (Vice-Chairman), B Arthur, A Bainbridge, D Burn, A Naylor, J Shiell, T Taylor and R Todd

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Foster, D Hancock, S Hugill, D Marshall, J Maslin, P Stradling, E Tomlinson, J Turnbull, C Woods, A Wright and R Young

Also Present:

Councillor D J Southwell

1 Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 Declarations of interest, if any

There were no declarations of interest in relation to the item of business on the agenda.

3 Public Right of Way Crossing of A690, Gilesgate, Durham

The Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development and Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services following a recent public consultation in relation to a public right of way crossing on the A690 at Gilesgate, Durham (for copy see file of Minutes).

The consultation had been carried out following a fatal accident which had occurred earlier in the year when a child was killed crossing the north-eastbound carriageway of the A690 at Kepier Lane, Gilesgate, Durham City.

The Committee were provided with the history and legal issues governing the public right of way and were shown a number of maps illustrating the route and photographs of bridleway 114 which showed the:

- route heading west towards A690;
- gate at highway boundary;

- path on, along and crossing the eastern verge of eastern carriageway;
- stepped crossing of central reservation;
- bridleway to Kepier Farm west of A690;
- view west of the western carriageway and central reservation steps.

A site investigation carried out by the County Council and Durham Constabulary following the accident had paid particular attention to vehicular speeds, visibility, pedestrian useage and routes to and from Durham City centre. As a result of the investigation a number of control measures had been identified.

The Committee were informed that the public consultation exercise sought the views of interested parties in relation to use of the path, whether it should be closed, or how the crossing could be made safer. Representation to the consultation had been good and those representations received during the consultation period were summarised in Appendix C to the report. Amongst the responses received were suggestions for making a retained crossing safer including the construction of an underpass or bridge, improved signage and road markings, lighting the crossing area and a reduction in the speed limit from the current 70 mph.

The Committee were informed that the costs associated with the construction of a footbridge would be considerable with a potential for additional costs due to the unstable nature of ground at the location. The types of works that could be undertaken included the installation of hazard bollards and reflectors, additional warning signs, additional footway construction and changes to road markings.

Mrs Walker, the mother of the child involved in the tragic accident made a statement to the Committee which acknowledged the high useage level of the public right of way. She was appreciative for the resultant investigation and consultation work undertaken by the County Council since the accident. Mrs Walker acknowledged the difficulties with regard to the current financial climate and fully appreciated that the installation of a subway or bridge was not a viable option, however, she hoped that some control measures could be introduced as soon as possible to make the crossing safer all round. Mrs Walker also made reference to the possibility of improved lighting and asked that this matter be given serious consideration.

The Business Manager informed the Committee that representation had also been made by the Member of Parliament for Durham City, Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods. She requested that improvements to the signage and related crossing works should be given priority by the Council and carried out as quickly as possible, given the importance of the issue.

Dr Blackman-Woods also commented that any new signage should be highly visible and that improvements to the lighting should be progressed as a priority. She hoped that the improvements to the crossing would prevent any future tragedies and thanked the Council for the work undertaken to date.

Councillor Southwell, local councillor for the Gilesgate Electoral Division supported Mrs Walkers comments and informed the Committee that both himself and Councillor Thomson, the other local councillor, had previously expressed concern about traffic speed on the section of the A690 in question. Councillor Southwell commented that that there

could be an extremely strong case for the introduction of a 50 mph speed limit. In relation to possible improved lighting, Councillor Southwell acknowledged that this area would need further technical investigation and commented that both of the local councillors would fund money for improved lighting from their respective member funds and supported the recommendations detailed in the report.

The Business Manager informed the Committee that further investigation would need to take place in relation to improvements to lighting. The possible reduction of the speed limit would also require further investigation and consultation in due course.

Mr Gilroy, a local resident, informed the Committee that he had no objection to the additional hazard signage but expressed concern that the view of those motorists travelling alongside buses occupying the bus lane could potentially be obscured, and sought clarification in relation to the positioning of the signage. In response, the Business Manager indicated that any additional signage would be doubled and exist on the verge side and central reserve, acknowledging that two signs side-by-side gave more prominence.

Councillor Shiell supported the comments made by both Mrs Walker and Councillor Southwell and remarked that the suggestions made in the report were both sensible and practical, given that evidence suggested that closure of the public right of way would be difficult to achieve, would not resolve anything in the short term and would only serve to extend the process into a matter of years for which a favourable outcome would possibly not be achieved. Councillor Shiell stated that the single most important step would be to avoid any further accidents as soon as possible and duly supported the recommendations detailed in the report.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee requested that an update be provided to the Highways Committee meeting scheduled for 21 February 2012 to provide reassurance to Mrs Walker that the Highways Committee had taken the issue very seriously and to monitor progress with the scheme.

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved and that officers undertake the necessary investigations into the possible reduction of the speed limit. The Committee also agreed that an update be brought to its meeting on 21 February 2012.