

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a meeting of **Highways Committee** held in Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 19 April 2012 at 11.30 am.**

Present:

Councillor G Bleasdale (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors B Arthur, S Hugill, A Naylor, P Stradling, R Todd, J Turnbull, R Young and J Blakey (substitute)

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Robinson, A Bainbridge, D Burn, N Foster, D Hancock, D Marshall, J Maslin, J Shiell, T Taylor, L Thomson, E Tomlinson, C Woods and A Wright

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 8 and 23 March 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 Declarations of interest

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

3 Unc. South Burns, Chester le Street, Proposed Prohibition of Motor Vehicles and Permit Parking Scheme

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services regarding a proposed prohibition of motor vehicles and permit parking scheme at unclassified South Burns, Chester-le-Street (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that consideration of the proposals for South Burns had been deferred from the previous meeting of the Highways Committee following representations made by representatives from a local taxi company and the owner of an Indian restaurant. Following those representations Members expressed concern that the proposed restrictions could have a detrimental impact on local businesses in a town that was already struggling economically and agreed to inspect the site.

The Committee were informed that under existing arrangements three vehicles were not permitted outside the taxi premises and there should be no customer parking for the Indian restaurant. The taxi company operated a private hire business and therefore all bookings should be made in advance. It was hoped that the scheme would reduce the amount of traffic using the area by way of better enforcement, which would benefit the business community and other businesses in the area had supported the proposals.

The Committee debated the amount of space available generally in the market place area and the large amount of public space between the civic heart sculpture and market stalls, commenting that their appeared to be scope to make further improvements that may benefit those businesses concerned about any potential loss of trade.

Councillor Stradling commented that he was minded to agree with the proposed scheme with a caveat that due consideration be given to look at the feasibility of utilising some of the public space.

Councillor Blakey referred to those cars observed reversing outside the nearby supermarket and asked if the installation of bollards on the corner would prevent such instances occurring.

The Committee were informed that the installation of any bollards would be subject to a statutory procedure but it was hoped these instances would be reduced given that each property would receive one parking permit. In relation to the possible utilisation of space outlined by the Committee, the Strategic Highways Manager commented that the issue would need to be discussed with the Head of Environment, Health and Consumer Protection who would need to review current market practices.

Resolved:

That the recommendations detailed in the report be agreed and that a review of the market trading practices is carried out in due course.

4 Unc. Rotary Way, Pity Me, Durham

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which had been considered at a meeting of the Highways Committee on 23 March 2012 (for copy see file of Minutes). A decision had been deferred to enable a site visit to be carried out in order for the Committee to familiarise themselves with the layout of the area and to see at first hand some of the issues discussed at the previous meeting.

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that Members had now had the opportunity to visit Rotary Way, where they crossed the road, walked the area and observed visibility at key locations. Following comments made at the previous meeting by Councillor Wilkes, the Strategic Highways Manager accepted, following the site visit, that the planted area did obscure visibility at the roundabout of the crossing area identified as an alternative in the Equality Impact Assessment. In the event of any footpath being constructed in the location concerned, removal of vegetation would need to occur.

Referring to the Equality Impact Assessment, Councillor Todd accepted the issue that traffic speed would be lower at the crossing point towards the roundabout which the proposed footpath would lead onto, however, the reality of the situation was that if a footpath was constructed, people would still attempt to cross the road at the junction to Hag House development rather than walk the length of the footpath.

Councillor Stradling echoed the points raised by Councillor Todd and commented that he felt a great deal of sympathy with the residents of the properties at the Hag House development. Councillor Stradling felt that a speed restriction should be imposed on the length of the road, given the traffic speeds observed during the site visit, adding that the

volume of traffic was more reminiscent of that of a town centre road, rather than a rural road.

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that road was classed as being rural in nature, because it was a single carriageway with no frontage development. Advice from the Department for Transport was that motorists tended to drive to the environment and the reality of the situation was that even if a speed limit was imposed, the likelihood would be that traffic would continue to travel at the same speed as they do at the present time.

Councillor Blakey suggested that an additional traffic survey be undertaken over and above the survey already carried out, given the fact that traffic was moderate during the site visit, however, it was her view that the road could be a lot busier at other times and this needed to be taken into consideration.

Concerns were expressed by Councillors Naylor and Turnbull that the installation of a pedestrian island would potentially pose more of a danger and encourage people to cross into a local pet shop service area, which would be an added danger.

On balance, the Committee felt that some issues raised had not been given due consideration and researched within the equality impact assessment. The Committee suggested that further research and deliberation would need to take place before the Committee could conclude the issue.

Resolved:

That further research be undertaken on other possible options available, together with a further traffic survey and be reported back to the Committee in due course.

5 B6277 Speed Limit Review, Cotherstone

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which updated the Committee of representations received in relation to proposed speed limits on the B6277 at Cotherstone (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Highways Manager informed the Committee that a decision to to extend the length of the 30 mph speed limit in the area was deferred pending a possible compromise agreement between Durham Constabulary and Cotherstone Parish Council. Given that a compromise position had now been reached by both parties and the objection of Durham Constabulary withdrawn, no further legal processes would be required and the scheme could be implemented as soon as possible.

Resolved:

That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.