

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Highways Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 9 April 2014 at 9.30 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor G Bleasdale in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Kay (Vice-Chairman), J Allen, B Armstrong, D Bell, D Freeman (substitute for R Ormerod), H Bennett, O Gunn, D Hicks, K Hopper, S Morrison, P Stradling, R Todd, J Turnbull and R Young.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I Geldard, D Hall and O Milburn.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor D Freeman substituted for Councillor R Ormerod.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of interest

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

5 The County Council of Durham Claypath & A690 Claypath: One Way & Two Way Slip Roads, Durham City - Traffic Regulation Order 2014

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development which proposed to make an experimental traffic regulation order on the one way and two way slip roads at Claypath, Durham City, permanent (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Committee were shown a location plan of the area with the two slip roads highlighted. The Strategic Traffic Manager informed the Committee that the current experimental traffic management order was introduced 18 months ago. The Claypath area of Durham was a lively, vibrant area with bars, nightclubs and a number of fast food outlets. The nature and location of the area meant that there were often large volumes of people seeking transport home.

The increased activity in the night time economy in the area had been positive but had brought about many concerns about traffic movements in the area, mainly associated with taxi provision during the evening.

The Strategic Traffic Manager informed the Committee that it was imperative for the Council to try and balance the needs of visitors to the city with that of a safe environment and it was usual to have taxis queuing late at night into the early hours of the morning which presented traffic management issues.

Under the older system it was not unusual to observe taxis queuing up Claypath, past Providence Row and into residential areas. This had generated numerous complaints from local residents and concerns from the Police.

Discussions with local stakeholders took place and a number of alternatives had been considered. The proposal which appeared to best fit the area was to move the evening taxi rank to the slip road by the Prince Bishops Shopping Centre and the daytime taxi rank on the slip road nearest to the gala theatre.

There had been 25 objections to the advertisement of the permanent order, principally from the taxi trade. The principal objection was that whilst the majority of taxi drivers queue in the correct location, there were others who decided to park elsewhere. The Committee were informed that a reasonable amount of enforcement was carried out at the initial inception of the experimental order and there was now a camera in the location enforcing parking restrictions.

Other objections centred on an apparent lack of capacity for taxis, capping of taxi numbers, provision for personal hire taxis and alternative sites for taxi ranks.

In response, the Strategic Traffic Manager informed the Committee that the Council could simply not provide enough parking spaces until 3am for use by all taxis. The reduction of taxi numbers was not a highways issue and other suggestions put forward for the ranks would cause potential safety issues. Both ranks were also located either side of a well-lit, zebra crossing and it was felt that the experimental order in place now was much safer in terms of reducing vehicle and pedestrian conflict.

Councillor Freeman, one of the local Councillors for the Elvet and Gilesgate area, which included Claypath, commended the report and explained that prior to October 2012 the Claypath area had serious problems with taxis and pedestrians queuing well into residential areas which had been completely unacceptable to local residents and the Police. Officers from the Council, local residents association and the Police had all worked together in devising a temporary scheme which had worked extremely well and Councillor Freeman wished to see the temporary arrangements made permanent. Councillor Freeman also hoped that the small element of drivers who continued to abuse the regulations would be penalised for doing so.

Councillor Turnbull commented that he was in favour of the scheme overall but expressed concern about the number of taxis being 'backed-up' around the corner from the Prince Bishops Shopping Centre to the Swan and Three Cygnets pub.

The Strategic Traffic Manager accepted that such instances did occur and this wasn't unusual however, in view of the benefits of the overall scheme this was being tolerated.

Councillor B Armstrong referred to the suggestion made by one of the objectors about the use of Walkergate and queried why the car and coach park behind Millennium Place in the Walkergate/Sands area could not be used to alleviate some of the problems being faced and particularly more so with the expanded development taking place in that location.

The Strategic Traffic Manager informed the Committee that the Council had tried siting an additional rank in the area, however, the Police were concerned about the control of people from mainstream CCTV areas to much quieter areas with the added problem of it being near the riverbanks. The Police also preferred for the rank to be in a more contained space. The Committee were also advised that there were no plans for any additional leisure activities in the area of new development.

Councillor Gunn expressed her support for the scheme but was unhappy with the queuing traffic issues raised by Councillor Turnbull.

Councillor Wilkes commented that all locations were 50-100 metres within each-other and could not understand why everyone had to queue in the same place and present the problems highlighted by Councillor Turnbull and queried why the Council could not have 4-5 different locations.

The Strategic Traffic Manager explained to the Committee that the Council were looking at providing a better overall solution for the area with the preference being to have taxis queuing for people, rather than people queuing for taxis which happened prior to October 2012. This had presented issues of public safety and incidents of disorder. The Council were essentially restricted with options because of the limited highways network in the area.

Councillor Todd felt that the situation presented was difficult but the temporary scheme in place had proved effective in the main and was the best attempt at resolving the problems encountered previously.

Resolved

That the objections be set aside and the restrictions held by way of the experimental traffic management order be made permanent.

6 Crook - Parking and Waiting Restrictions Order

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development regarding a consultation concerning changes to a traffic regulation order in Crook (for copy see file of Minutes).

The main changes to the traffic order would see the introduction of parking bays on Church Street and Hope Street with parking restrictions being removed on Sundays and between 6pm and 9am during the week.

The proposed changes had come about following discussions with Crook Community Partnership and business owners who felt that the proposed restrictions would be far more beneficial than what was currently available. It was also considered that the current arrangements in the area were having a detrimental effect on trade within the town. Given

the concerns expressed the Council had taken a proactive view and engaged in discussion in an attempt to provide a solution to their needs and formally consulted on the proposals.

The Committee were shown a location plan of the area together with the restrictions that were in place at present which included a length of Hope Street which contained a single yellow line for which general parking was not available with the area being used mainly for loading and unloading. The Committee also viewed images of Hope Street, Church Street and North Terrace.

A small number of objections were received to the proposals which were detailed in full in the report and summarised for the Committee.

Councillor Kay agreed with the recommendation contained in the report and understood the logic of the changes and felt a degree of sympathy with those residents living in Hope Street. Councillor Kay also referred to the amount of cars being parked all day in Crook Market Place for free and asked if any consideration had been given to imposing some restrictions on the area to allow people to park in the market place for a couple of hours.

The Strategic Traffic Manager informed the Committee that Councillor Kay was correct in that there were currently no time restrictions on parking in Crook Market Place and there were legal issues as to whether this could be introduced and would welcome discussion with local Councillors regarding the issue.

Resolved

That the recommendation in the report be agreed.