

TITLE OF REPORT: **The Council and Partners Approach to Roads and Highways – Interim Report**

REPORT OF: **Paul Dowling, Strategic Director, Communities and Environment.**

Summary

The report summarises the content of the four evidence gathering presentations concerning the Council and Northumbria Police approach to roads and highways. It identifies actions to be undertaken and highlights issues that may still need to be resolved.

Background

The Committee considered 4 evidence gathering presentations during 18/19.

At the meeting on 11 September 2017 Committee received a report and presentation which provided a summary of the overall approach to transport funding. The report gave a detailed examination of the current position in relation to duties relating to highway maintenance.

At the meeting on 7 November 2017 Committee received a report and presentation which provided a summary of the overall approach to traffic congestion and the Council's response to it. Committee were advised where congestion occurs now, where future problems may arise and what options are available to mitigate such problems.

Committee also received an update on the impact that traffic congestion is having on residents and businesses in Gateshead and how the problem can be managed to support delivery of wider economic and environmental objectives.

At the meeting on 4 December 2017 Committee received a report and presentation on road safety. The diverse and traumatic effect on communities as a result of road traffic accidents was considered and the strategies employed by the Council in terms of engineering intervention, education, training and promotion were described. Such strategic interventions are underpinned by analysis of the road traffic accident data base which is managed on behalf of the Tyne and Wear Authorities by the Traffic and Accident Data Unit which is based in Gateshead Council. Committee was advised that Highways enforcement, which is another essential contributory to road safety was to be the subject of a future meeting.

At the meeting on 29th January 2018 Committee received a report and presentation concerning Civil Parking Enforcement and the Council's emerging Bus Lane

enforcement strategy. Detailed information was presented in relation to the number of Penalty Charge Notices that were issued and the process by which this issue could be appealed.

A second report and presentation concerned speed management strategies and associated enforcement employed by Northumbria Police.

Agreed Actions

Committee requested that a seminar be arranged to look further into the issues of funding and in particular the issues of potholes and their repair across the Borough. Possible dates for this are being investigated.

Committee also requested that a schedule be provided to all Councillors on road repairs completed. The format and approach to this is under consideration.

There were no matters arising from Committee consideration of the Traffic Congestion Report and Presentation.

Officers were asked to consider whether casualty information held by insurance companies could be a useful road safety tool. Companies are guarded about releasing such information but it is generally held to be consistent with data derived from Police held data.

Officers were asked to investigate means of preventing Council personnel from engaging in phone related activities whilst driving. Fleet vehicles are issued with handbooks detailing their responsibilities in this regard.

It was noted that traffic calming generally was welcomed but that there was potential for traffic to divert to surrounding streets. Streets around Saltwell Park were cited as an example. The Council's 20mph zone roll out strategy is to be reviewed and refreshed in the near future. This concern will be referenced within a revised strategy document.

The Council's strategy relating to the introduction of vehicle activated speed management signs was questioned. The Council's Speed Management Strategy document and associated protocols are to be revised and updated in the near future. This challenge will be addressed within the revised protocols.

Committee sought information regarding success of the camera enforcement strategy in Gateshead. This information will be made available in the near future.

Committee sought information regarding roll out of Civil Enforcement strategy within each ward. It was agreed that site specific information related to identified streets or areas would be provided to ward members. This approach would be piloted in the Chopwell ward.

Committee requested that public records be researched to establish numbers of convictions for speeding offences and dangerous driving, especially during the hours of darkness, in Gateshead. Officers are pursuing this request.

Bearing in mind the soon to be introduced bus lane enforcement strategy Committee was concerned at bus lanes which were set out inappropriately leading to abuse, conflict and safety issues. Durham Road at Shipcote lane was cited as an example. Layouts will be reviewed prior to the introduction of an enforcement regime.

Councillors noted with concern the increasing incidences of Civil Enforcement Officers who were verbally or physically abused on the streets of Gateshead. Prosecutions have ensued. It was suggested that such outcomes should be publicised. Officers are acting upon this suggestion.

Outstanding Issues

Committee was concerned that it was not able to scrutinise strategic elements of Police Speed management protocols as the Meeting had not been attended by an officer of sufficient seniority.

It was noted that in the past there had been regular joint meetings between Councillors and Police to provide regular updates on issues affecting Wards. Committee wished to explore reinstatement of such meetings at a senior level.

There was concern that management of speeding traffic, particularly during the hours of darkness, needed to be more effective and Committee felt that this remained an outstanding issue that needed to be explored further. It is suggested that this should await Cabinet approval of the aforementioned revision of the Council's Speed Management Strategy.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- Note the content of this report and agree that the Council's approach to Roads and Highways is generally approved.
- Seek attendance of a Senior Police Officer at a future meeting of this Committee.
- Request a joint report of Gateshead Council and Northumbria Police specifically in relation to the content and roll out of a revised Speed Management Strategy.
- Request the Service Director, DT&PP to arrange regular joint meetings between Councillors and Senior Police Officers to explore identified issues of mutual interest.

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