

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation, Councillor Ken Ellcome, at his meeting held on Thursday, 18 December 2014 at 5.00 pm in the The Executive Meeting Room - Third Floor, The Guildhall

Present

Councillor Ken Ellcome

Councillor Lynne Stagg
Councillor Stuart Potter

34. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

These had been received from Councillor Ken Ferrett, Opposition Spokesperson.

35. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no members' declarations of interest.

36. TRO 43/2014 Villiers Road - permanent closure point (AI 3)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY HEAD OF TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT)

Nikki Musson, the Operational Transport Planning Officer introduced the report by the Head of Transport & Environment, she wished to amend the report which had mentioned the closure of the west end of Villiers Road in 2013 however it was already closed in 2012 and would revise the report to read within the Background section:

"The closure point in Villiers Road was introduced in 2012 following the part-pedestrianisation of Palmerston Road, to avoid Villiers Road being used as an alternative route, for which it is unsuitable. The southern end of Lennox Road South was closed to traffic in 2013, and when it reopened, the Villiers Road closure continued under Experimental Order 24/2013 from 24 July 2013 as Palmerston Road remained closed to traffic (except buses) north of Villiers Road."

This has been linked to the Palmerston Road South pedestrianisation scheme where the northbound part of the road was now open to traffic. Having gone out to public consultation the recommendation was seen as a compromise for the use of the westbound direction of Villiers Road, which would have benefits to traffic on the local road network. Whilst the majority of residents in the area support the opening the many residents in Villiers Road would like the closure to remain.

Councillor Stagg queried the address of signatures of those writing in from Palmerston Road and it was confirmed that they were within Palm Court.

The Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation allowed the deputations approximately four minutes each to put forward their views, extending the usual provision. The deputations' main points are summarised:

- (i) Mrs Ross-Richards - there had been traffic chaos at the west end of Villiers Road with traffic turning around if Villiers Road was re-opened there should be careful consideration to which way the traffic flowed; she questioned if the traffic order had lapsed as it was for 18 months and had only been in place for 15 months; the notice had not been advertised in the effected part of the road for the full three weeks; the opening would have benefit for the area as a whole.

- (ii) Mr Watton - Villiers Road is a residential road with Grade II listed buildings and tree preservation orders. It is narrow so parking is prohibited except for the east end and there is a narrow S bend at the western end. At the east end there was only enough room for one vehicle to proceed in one direction only and there was a problem for larger vehicles to pass without mounting the pavement. Before it was closed it was a rat run for taxis day and night. The road is unsuitable for through traffic in the conservation area which also had a large care home for vulnerable adults which made it unsuitable. Instead he suggested closing the western end of Auckland Road East at the junction of Palmerston Road. If Villiers Road was re-opened there should be speed humps to stop taxis speeding through.

- (iii) Mrs Watton - She voiced concerns that this would be a major rat run with vehicles from Victoria Road South going straight over. This would benefit the taxis on their route going north as they could not go north from Palmerston Road. She was sympathetic to the residents of Palm Court and felt the closure should be moved to the end of Villiers Road so there was no turning outside Palm Court. Adults with mental health problems waiting for vehicles could be confused and put in danger by fast vehicles going through and she felt there should have been a disability risk assessment. There should be speed bumps and taxis should go via the seafront.

- (iv) Mr Haynes - now Palmerston Road is open motorists no longer have to turn around by Palm Court, they can go straight through Palmerston Road; he referred to the petition from the residents of Villiers Road and Maple Road requesting the bollards at the west end of Villiers Road are retained and made permanent which would help prevent the use by unsuitable traffic and avoid danger. The petition had been signed by 42 persons.

- (v) Mrs Mahoney - Palmerston Road had been opened to help the retailers but the residential roads had not been designed for the level of traffic flow, though improvements were needed in the Southsea. The bend in the road was a problem by the Flint Lodge opening. Netley Road was also having problems and there should be more cul-de-sacs in this area as there was a problem with the volume of traffic at Lennox Road South. There were wider issues of health and wellbeing and more residents should be encouraged out of their cars and the need for separation of cars and pedestrians. She felt the proposed reversal was a retrograde step.
- (vi) Mr Oliver - the Owens conservation area was not designed for this level of traffic and The Vale had poor sight lines. Local traffic would be using The Vale and Villiers Road. There were problems with taxis ranking informally elsewhere other than Palmerston Road and the re-opening of Villiers Road would make the situation worse. The Summerlands Residential Care Home had adults with moderate to severe learning difficulties and it was not fair for them to have a rat run of traffic going past their front door and he queried the equalities impact assessment which stated that there would be no impact as he felt this was not the case.
- (vii) Mr Timoney felt that cul-de-sacs were designed for suburbs not a busy area of Southsea. He felt that two-way traffic passes slowly and safely in these roads and there is not a basis to ban traffic. Taxis would not be using the route during the day as they ranked at the Debenhams corner. He felt Villiers Road was wide enough for two-way traffic. All the sub roads from Palmerston Road should share the neighbourhood traffic and there should not be one road selected to be closed as it increased the rat run to other roads. There should be a 20mph coverage to ensure safe two-way traffic.
- (viii) Councillor Michael Andrewes, appeared as ward councillor for St Jude, giving apologies from his ward colleague Councillor Hugh Mason. He raised concerns that things were not being made better for the residents at Palm Court and had asked that the bollards are moved so their part of the road is not used as a turning circle. He had looked at time the opening of the road would save on taxi routes which was minimal. He did not feel the opening of Villiers Road to one-way traffic would help anyone. There was a dangerous S bend in Villiers Road whereas Auckland Road East was straighter. There was concern that people would go through the no entry sign and come head to head with taxis and he did not feel that the proposal would be solving the problem. He also

passed on complaints from residents regarding the publication of this item so near to Christmas.

Councillor Ellcome reported that he had read and received the written representations which had also been made available to the Opposition Spokespersons at the meeting which included the petition for the retention of the road bollard in Villiers Road (signed by 42 residents). The written representations included representation from Mr Wynne, Mr Cairns, Mr & Ms McCord, Mr and Mrs Deffley, Mr and Mrs Chick, Mrs Wendon, Ms McCord, Mr Kinnear, Ms Morris, Mr Jackson, Mrs Robertson and Mr Brown, chairman of the Southsea Association.

The following comments from a resident of Lennox Road South were not included in the report, but Cllr Ellcome was made aware of them prior to the meeting and they are reproduced here:

The current blockage of Villiers Road has further increased traffic on Lennox Road South, and further aggravated the safety issue, including causing refuse lorries to now drive over pavement corners, whilst performing three-point (or more) turns in Lennox Road South, due entirely to being unable to exit through Villiers Road. Therefore it is unjustifiable to block Villiers Road when the safety issue is on Lennox Road South - not Villiers Road. It is clearly illogical to block Villiers Road when the safety issue on Lennox Road South has still not been dealt with, despite being identified four years ago by the Council - and which has been exacerbated by the Palmerston Road closure, as foreseen by the Council - and further exacerbated by blocking Villiers Road.

In response to some of the points raised Ms Musson reported that notices had been first put up at the Lennox Road South end of Villiers Road and then had moved closer to the closure point so both locations had been covered and there had been a good response to the consultation. Marc Griffin, the Assistant Head of Transport & Environment reported that the recommendation had been made for one-way traffic due to the width of Villiers Road.

Councillor Ellcome revisited the history of the experimental order and the linkage with Palmerston Road. He had heard from residents both for and against the proposed removal of the road closure. He felt there were issues in the general area with the re-opening of Palmerston Road and its impact on other roads including Netley Road, Auckland Road East and West as well as Villiers Road and there may be the need to consider making some of the streets one-way and he had asked the officers to look at this.

Councillor Ellcome then asked for the views of the opposition spokespersons present. Councillor Potter favoured keeping the road closed as he believed that it had been a successful closure and Councillor Stagg felt there was a wider issue and there was a need to look for a solution for the wider area as there were narrow roads in this old part of the city. Councillor Ellcome wanted

this overview to take place. The current position was that the current temporary traffic order ended on 24 December so he needed to make a decision regarding the end of the experimental order and he was sorry that not everyone could be pleased with the outcome as indicated in the results of the consultation at paragraph 4.2 of the report. A decision was needed on the immediate issue so Cllr Ellcome would support the officer's recommendation with the proviso that this be on an experimental basis as part of the wider review.

DECISION:

That instead of continuing with the road closure on a permanent basis, Villiers Road is opened to one-way traffic in a westbound direction between the Vale and the current closure point, via an experimental traffic regulation order.

The meeting concluded at 6.00 pm.

Councillor Ken Ellcome
Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation