

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES of the meeting of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Friday, 24 October 2014 at 5.30pm in the Civic Offices, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Stuart Potter (in the Chair)
Simon Boshier
Hannah Hockaday
Phil Smith

15. Apologies for Absence. (AI 1)

Councillor Stagg sent her apologies.

16. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

No interests were declared.

17. Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

18. Review of Road Safety Around Schools. (AI 4)

Councillor Ken Ellcome, Cabinet Member for Traffic & Environment gave his views on the safety of pupils outside schools:

- Every school should be as safe as possible.
- All schools have zig-zags and some also have railings.
- It is a huge problem and the solutions revolve around the physical structure (yellow lines, warning signs etc.) and education.
- Many parents like to park as close as possible to the school entrance to the detriment of other pupils.
- There are 63 schools in Portsmouth and 105 School Crossing Patrols (SCPs). The council does not have the requisite number of School Crossing Patrols. A recent recruitment drive has had limited success and the possibility of splitting the roles so that people can work either mornings or afternoons is being looked into.
- It is difficult to ensure that people comply with the current rules and restrictions. A large number of schools have a problem with illegal parking in their immediate vicinity. This poses a huge safety hazard.
- There are not sufficient Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) to attend every school at opening and closing times. When they attend there is significantly fewer incidents of illegal parking. It would be best if schools could self-enforce this. Some parents confront others when they witness illegal parking.
- There are many initiatives to alleviate the problem including My Journey. And Park & Stride.
- More people drive to school in Winter.

In response to questions from the panel, Councillor Ellcome clarified the following points:

- The council is currently recruiting an additional five CEOs to bring the total number to 35. These extra five would not be a burden on the budget and would have a positive impact on safety around schools because there would be a larger resource to draw from. CEOs work one of two shifts with one team working in the morning and one team in the evening. It is very difficult to ensure a balance of enforcement costs and income generation. Most CEOs are self-funded.
- Feedback indicates that the public consider that there are many areas that are not enforced as well as they could be. The most obvious example is residential parking zones.
- However, he feels that it is important to recruit these extra 5 CEOs and then review the service to determine if any more are required.
- Income from Pay & Display zones is not shown in the budget.
- There is a priority list and a rota for visits to schools but those prone to problems, will receive more visits.
- There are strict criteria regarding the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs). No targets are set for issuing of FPNs as that would be illegal. The council's policy allows drivers the right to stop on yellow lines for ten minutes to load and unload. Some parents think that this means that they can leave the car to meet their children at the gate. If the driver is in the car, the CEO will first ask them to move and if they refuse, a FPN will be issued.
- Younger pupils tend to be accompanied to school.
- It might be better to extend zig-zags rather than add double yellow lines because better for residents.
- An enforcement vehicle with a camera could be useful in preventing illegal parking. Mr Eric Pickles Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government is due to decide whether local authorities can use them.
- The Chair of Governors at St Edmunds School recently wrote to him expressing concern about traffic in Arundel Street.

John Lomas Assistant Head, Springfield School circulated his written views to the panel and in response to questions, clarified the following points:

- Nearly all his pupils walk to and from school, however many do not pay adequate attention as they are engrossed in their mobile phones.
- There is no signage informing drivers that the school is there. It was requested, but the council refused. It is required as vehicles often go past the gate without noticing the school, have to turn around.
- Pupils who cycle wear helmets.
- It is difficult to say at what point the school's jurisdiction starts and ends.
- The 20mph speed restriction works.
- There is not a significant problem of parking on zig-zags.
- The CEOs carry out occasional blitzes. Some speeding because people miss the turning.
- The school car park is used by staff and sometimes taxis who drop off pupils.

- It is difficult to fit in bikeability training sessions within school times or at the weekend. This could be possibly be included as part of a safety themed day.
- Staff and pupils are informed about road safety; however, many pupils feel that they are indestructible and do not always pay attention to their surroundings.
- Road safety is discussed at the schools' forum that he attends.
- Unfortunately road safety will continue to be considered a low priority by schools, until there is an incident.
- Parking is often discussed at residents' meetings.

Peter Laggan Business Director, Milton Cross Academy asked the panel to note his views on road safety around schools:

- Road safety is not a low priority for all schools. It is very high on the agenda at Milton Cross Academy.
- SCP and CEOs carry out splendid jobs in often difficult circumstances.
- A pedestrian crossing on Cotton Road has been requested from the council to assist the 500 or so pupils who cross it.
- There were speed bumps in Cotton Road originally but these were removed.
- There is a blind corner leading into the estate.
- There are no school signs at all.
- The zig-zags are respected but people do park on the double yellow lines.
- School staff assist at the gates but the traffic comes from three directions and there is nothing to slow it down or school signs.
- Up to 100 pupils cycle to and from school every day. Bikeability sessions were held at the school but pupils were not taken onto Milton Road as it is considered dangerous. There have been complaints about pupils riding on the pavement and the police ask them to walk their bicycles to the nearest cycle lane. This is despite the pavement being marked on the council's cycle plan as a shared space for pedestrians and cyclists. The cycle lane is not ideal as it is not signposted nor clearly marked and does not continue very far.
- Issue cycling on the pavement. Shared but police don't allow cyclists to use it. Despite it being on the council's cycle plan. Obstacle midway - bus shelter. Could be moved a few feet.

In response to questions from the panel, Michael Robinson, Parking Manager clarified the following points:

- There are three priorities for the enforcement team: 1) ensuring the safety of the most vulnerable in society particularly regarding parking on zig-zags outside schools and by crossings. 2) Keeping main routes clear and 3) revenue protection for the council's Pay & Display car parks.
- CEOs earn their own salary and pension but not the administration costs of issuing FPNs and appeals.
- How much enforcement is carried out and in what locations is a decision for members.
- 80% available resources are used for enforcement at schools.
- Some people have unrealistic expectations regarding what the council can achieve.

- At the Solent Schools today there were many cars, all legally parked but Although the large number of cars moving around the Solent Schools that day gave the impression that it was unsafe, all the cars were parked legally and the traffic slow moving.
- If a vehicle parked next to zig-zags is blocking visibility, the council could consider extending the zig-zag zone.
- Speed bumps at Milton Road may have been put in for contractors working on the housing estate.
- All council deployed vehicles have been clearly warned that they must park legally or will be issued with FPNs.
- Many parents misunderstand the rules regarding parking on zig-zags.
- CEOs receive more abuse outside schools than anywhere else in the city. There are 4-5 assaults reported per year and daily abuse. Many incidents are unreported. The nature of the job is made clear to candidates during the recruitment process. Most CEOs who quit do so in the first few months, predominantly because of abuse or the weather.
- He prepared a report on the potential benefits of using enforcement vehicles with cameras to Cabinet.

Councillor Ellcome explained that it might be possible to move the bus stop in the middle of the shared pavement on Milton Road a few feet when it's due to be upgraded by the bus company.

In response to questions from the panel, Marc Griffin, Assistant Head of Service, Transport and Environment explained that:

- Outside some schools there are railings on one on one side and zig-zags on the other. The layout of each school could be assessed to determine whether the introduction of railings would help improve safety.
- The area around Milton Cross Academy has a mix of residential, school and hospital traffic.
- The Department for Transport encourages local authorities to de-clutter roads and reduce the number of signs. However, he is keen to have school signs where they are required.
- Arundel Street is a high speed road.

The panel discussed the issues that had been raised and concluded that:

- The council's guidance regarding the ten minute discretionary period given to drivers who are unloading should not be used to allow parents to park whilst dropping off or collecting their children.
- Any changes to restrictions, extension of zig-zags or increase of signage comes under this panel's remit.
- The potential benefits of using an enforcement vehicle with a camera should be investigated.

The Chair informed the panel that a new City App is being looked into. This will enable anyone who comes across a problem in the city to send a photograph directly to the council for action.

The Chair also explained that he had met with Gavin Greene, CEO on 9 October to observe the issues outside a primary school in Paulsgrove. At the

beginning of the morning visit, the parents did not seem to notice the officer but after three tickets had been issued and several drivers cautioned, parents stopped parking illegally. However the end of the school day was different because as agreed, there was no enforcement officer present. There seemed to be a total disregard to all the parking and stopping regulations that are in force outside the school. Additionally, it was very obvious that the majority of vehicles were not observing the 20mph speed limit which is in place but sadly not enforced. He encouraged other panel members to arrange to observe the situation for themselves.

Actions Agreed.

The following information be brought to a future meeting.

- The reason why Devonshire Infants is classed as a high priority and Fernhurst Junior a low priority despite sharing the same gate.
- A copy of the council's guidelines regarding enforcement.

RESOLVED that the following dates be agreed:

- **Monday 17 November**
- **Monday 15 December.**

The meeting concluded at 7pm.

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Councillor Stuart Potter
Chair.