

Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on 4 December 2008 at 4pm in the Guildhall.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting).

Present

Councillors Frank Jonas
Jim Patey
April Windebank

Lynne Stagg, Cabinet Member for Transport & Transportation.

Officers

Charles Stunell, Head of Transport and Street Management
Simon Moon, Simon Moon, Traffic & Road Safety Manager.
Angela Gill, Team Manager Traffic Engineering.
Jayne Rodgers, Sustainable Transport Officer.
Stewart Agland, Local Democracy Manager.
Jane Di Dino, Scrutiny Support Officer

1 Declarations of Interest (AI 1).

No interests were declared.

2 Apologies for Absence (AI 2).

Councillors Caroline Scott and Mike Blake sent their apologies.

In the absence of the Chair, the Scrutiny Support Officer asked for nominations for a member to stand in as Chair until her arrival. Councillor Lynda Windebank proposed Councillor Jonas and this was seconded by Councillor Patey.

RESOLVED that Councillor Jonas stand in as Chair for this meeting.

3 Review of Cycling in the City (AI 3).

Jane Di Dino, Scrutiny Support Officer explained that the new scrutiny arrangements were ratified by the Full Council on 25 November. The Panel was reminded that this is a stage 1 scrutiny review and the aim is for the Panel to decide if an in-depth review is necessary. If the Panel decides to move into the second stage of the scrutiny process, a full review will be undertaken and all interested parties will be invited to contribute.

The Panel considered the project brief for the review of Cycling in the City that was circulated prior to this meeting.

RESOLVED that the project brief be agreed.

An information pack was circulated to members containing;

1. Flagship article on public consultation on 4 options on seafront cycling improvements.
2. Consultation leaflet.
3. Seafront cycle ride trail leaflet.
4. Circular ride around Langstone Harbour Trail.
5. A chart showing the rate of cycle crime over the last calendar year
6. A map showing locations of cycle crime.

Officers gave a presentation during which the following points were clarified:

Councillor Caroline Scott is the City Council's cycling champion.

The traffic and transport team supports the Portsmouth Cycling Forum and has a very good relationship with it.

£2.4m of the capital budget is spent on transport.

The Sustainability Transport Officer was relocated to the Road Safety Team as recommended by the scrutiny review of road safety in Portsmouth (published in 2007).

Past surveys have indicated that people are reluctant to cycle because of the perceived danger on the roads and the risk of cycle theft. Officers confirmed that Portsmouth does have a relatively high rate of bicycle theft.

Councillor Lynne Stagg, Cabinet Member for Transport & Transportation explained that she would like to see introduced the following measures in order to improve cycling:

1. The reinstatement of cycle lane markings when roads and paths are resurfaced.
2. Improve existing cycle paths and signage.
3. Installation of secure cycle racks.
4. Increase the number of one-way roads in the city, with priority given to cyclists.
5. The creation of cycle routes rather than shared pavements.
6. The installation of a cycle route from Southsea to the Mountbatten Centre in the North of the city. This has been designed by Mr Carl Lee Roy Smith and local bus companies and will be launched in April 2009.
7. Higher priority given to cycling in the City Plan.
8. The provision of cycle hire.
9. Cycling provision on the promenade.
10. The introduction of residential roads where only residents' cars and cyclists are allowed.

The Panel was asked to note that work was already underway on a number of these issues.

Charlie Stunell left the meeting at 5pm.

Councillor Jonas explained that although members of the public were not invited to speak at the meeting, they were welcome to speak the Panel afterwards.

In response to questions from the Panel, officers clarified the following points:

The preliminary findings of the 2008 MORI highways and transport public satisfaction survey were considered by the Cabinet Member for Transport and Transportation at her decision meeting on 6 November. Overall, Portsmouth compared well with other authorities. Further analysis is currently underway, particularly with regard to cycling.

It would be very expensive to stop traffic in order to survey travellers.

National research indicated that there are generally three types of cyclist: commuters, families, utility cyclists (those who use their bicycles to travel to the shops or social visits) and sports & leisure cyclists. It is not clear if this is reflected in Portsmouth.

Over the last 5 or 6 years, the number of cyclists in the city has decreased.

The University of Portsmouth is conducting two research projects for the City Council this year into traffic congestion and road safety. The Panel suggested that a study could be carried out into the promotion of cycling in the city.

COLAS considers businesses' applications for on-street furniture and consults with Portsmouth City Council, as the highway authority.

Most cycle lanes in the city are classed as advisory, which means that vehicles are permitted to park in them for up to 10 minutes to load or unload.

The city lacks East to West cycle lanes.

The Highway Code contains both legislation and guidance.

Cyclists are not required by law to wear helmets.

Feedback indicates that most cyclists feel safe using shared bus and cycle lanes. However, good communication with both cyclists and bus companies is essential to encourage respect and care for each other.

Portsmouth has a 20mph speed limit on almost all its residential roads. A member of the Panel suggested that cyclists be given priority in these areas. These zones create shared spaces where car drivers are encouraged to feel like visitors and to expect other road users. Portsmouth City Council does not have the authority to give cyclists the right of way in these areas.

Every school must have a School Travel Plan by 2010 setting out measures to encourage and enable children to walk or cycle to and from school. 93% of schools already have plans in place. The Government will then give £5,000 to each school to fund cycle storage, buggy parks and waiting areas. It is likely that this funding will be matched by the City Council.

Officers from the Road Safety Team run cycling proficiency schemes in schools and children are given hi-visibility jackets when they pass.

The Panel agreed that it was important that pupils be encouraged to cycle to school in terms of combating obesity, easing traffic congestion, making the roads safer, improving air quality etc. It also noted the importance of identifying the needs of the cyclists prior to the implementation of further schemes.

Councillor Stagg said that in her opinion the first step for schools was to discourage parents from taking their children to school by car and then to encourage children to cycle to school.

In some roads, cycle lanes are often blocked by parked vehicles and the City Council has in the past investigated what options it has regarding punishing taxis that are persistent offenders. However, the problem is caused by private hire taxis, lorries, vans and cars too and so it would not be fair to only punish hackney cabs. Councillor Stagg suggested that loading and unloading of vehicles into premises that have rear access areas should be banned.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions.

The Healthy Community Challenge Award sets the direction of travel for the next three years.

Councillor Stagg suggested that the strategy be rewritten and an action plan produced. This scrutiny panel could then review the progress made.

Competing demands in the city for parking spaces and cycle lanes means that difficult decisions must be made.

The cycle strategy will be rewritten in the next 6 months, which will involve extensive consultation with the public.

RESOLVED that the Panel contribute to the new draft cycling strategy in March 2009.

4 Date of Next Meeting (AI 6)

Thursday 29 January at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 5.30pm.