



SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL
Cabinet Highways
Committee

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Report of: Executive Director, Place

Date: 8th September 2011

Subject: 20mph speed limits – Report on the consultations with the Community Assemblies and consideration of way forward.

Author of Report: Susie Pryor

Summary:

- A report on the progress that has been made with 20mph speed limit areas in Sheffield so far, including an update on consultations with the Community Assemblies. This report will also consider the future delivery of this initiative.
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Reasons for Recommendations:

- Average reductions in driver speeds have the potential for delivering significant benefits across the road safety, transportation, environmental and health agendas.
- The potential benefits of 20 mph speed limits in residential areas include a reduction in road traffic collisions and casualties. There are also quality of life and community benefits, and encouragement of healthier and more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling.
- The forthcoming 'Streets Ahead' Highways Maintenance Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract may provide an opportunity for 20mph speed limits to be delivered across the City in a cost effective way.

Recommendations:

- Develop a strategy for City-wide 20mph speed limits, starting with areas surrounding schools and following with other suitable residential areas.
 - Investigate the feasibility of delivering City-wide 20mph speed limits in coordination with the 'Streets Ahead' Highways Maintenance Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract.
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Background Papers: None

Category of Report: OPEN

Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

Financial implications
YES Paul Schofield
Legal implications
YES Julian Ward
Equality of Opportunity implications
YES Ian Oldershaw
Tackling Health Inequalities implications
NO
Human rights implications
NO
Environmental and Sustainability implications
YES
Economic impact
NO
Community safety implications
YES
Human resources implications
NO
Property implications
NO

20MPH SPEED LIMITS – A REPORT ON THE CONSULTATIONS WITH THE COMMUNITY ASSEMBLIES AND CONSIDERATION OF THE WAY FORWARD

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 This is a report on the progress that has been made with 20mph speed limit areas in Sheffield so far, including an update on consultations with the Community Assemblies.

1.2 This report will also consider the future delivery of this initiative.

2.0 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE PEOPLE OF SHEFFIELD

2.1 City-wide 20mph speed limits would contribute to the 'Protecting and Enhancing the Environment' ambitions of the Council's Corporate Plan 'A City of Opportunity', particularly the 'Safer Roads' priority, with proposals that aim to achieve more appropriate vehicle speeds, improve residents' quality of life and reduce road collisions and casualties.

2.2 The process involved in consulting on 20mph speed limits supports the 'City of Opportunity' objectives of communities having a greater voice and more control over services which are focussed on the needs of individual customers. Our open, honest and transparent way of working with local residents has increased public confidence in our consultation process.

3.0 OUTCOME AND SUSTAINABILITY

3.1 The public consultation has contributed to the 'Putting the Customer First' objective of the 'City of Opportunity' plan, with proposals that respond to customer requests to provide highway schemes to benefit users. 20mph speed limits provide road safety benefits for customers.

3.2 The implementation of 20 mph speed limits will have the potential to reduce the number and severity of the road traffic collisions in Sheffield. The reductions in vehicle speeds would be particularly beneficial to vulnerable road users such as children and elderly pedestrians.

3.3 Introducing a reduced speed limit could result in an area being perceived to be calmer and safer, which could encourage more people to walk or cycle, thus helping to reduce the city's carbon footprint and improving personal health.

4.0 REPORT

20mph Background

4.1 The City Council received two petitions on the 6th November 2009 requesting the introduction of 20 mph speed limits on all residential roads in Sheffield, and on all City centre roads contained within the inner ring road.

4.2 At a meeting of the Cabinet Highways Committee on 8th July 2010, a report was submitted outlining the potential benefits and limitations of introducing a widespread 20mph speed limit across much of the City in response to the

two petitions, and to seek the Committee's endorsement to progressing an initial phase of such a scheme.

- 4.3 One of the key decisions made by the Cabinet Highways Committee, was that 20mph speed limit initiatives be developed and implemented, decided by Community Assemblies, based on lines, signs and hearts and minds campaigns to change attitudes about driver speeding in residential areas.
- 4.4 In Sheffield 20mph speed limits have previously been introduced as part of a traffic calming scheme for an area, using physical measures such as speed humps. These are '20mph Zones' and are different to '20mph Limits'. They were known as Child Safety Zones as the emphasis was on reducing child pedestrian casualties. In Sheffield there are eight such zones. A '20mph zone' means engineering measures such as humps are installed at frequent intervals and there are 20mph signs at each entrance to the area. These schemes are expensive, but are effective in reducing accidents, particularly involving children. They are 'self enforcing' as the measures tend to reduce speeds to around the speed limit, without the need for enforcement by the Police.
- 4.5 A typical 20 mph speed limit initiative would consist of 20mph signs at all entrances, coupled with 20mph repeater signs throughout the area. These schemes are relatively cheap in comparison to traditional traffic calming schemes, and are considered less intrusive.
- 4.6 Community engagement techniques can also be carried out to involve the local communities. These 'hearts and minds' campaigns empower local residents to feel part of a 20mph speed limit initiative. Without full engagement of the public and relevant bodies, there could be some difficulty in gaining general acceptance of a 20mph speed limit scheme, which could also lead to problems in the longer term.
- 4.7 The '20's plenty' campaign states that *'It is important that a community recognises that lower speeds on residential roads have the potential to make a difference in safety, noise, emissions, child independence and the ability of people to enjoy our streets as pedestrians or cyclists.'* Another initiative is Community Speed watch. This is a scheme to help people reduce speeding traffic through their community which is used in other areas of the Country. The scheme enables volunteers to work within their community to raise awareness of the dangers of speeding and to help control the problem locally. Community Speed Watch incorporates poster campaigns and a pledge system linked to direct action using radar speed guns. The use of the radar devices does not lead to prosecution; drivers get a letter from the police instead. But it helps to underline a community's commitment to reducing speed.
- 4.8 In December 2009 the Department for Transport (DfT) revised its guidance in respect of the use of 20mph zones and limits, encouraging local authorities over time to *"introduce 20 mph zones or limits into streets which are primarily residential in nature; and into town or city streets where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high, such as around schools, shops, markets, playgrounds and other areas; where these are not part of any major through route"*.

- 4.9 The DfT also advise that successful 20 mph zones and 20 mph speed limits should be generally self-enforcing. The existing conditions of the road, together with any measures such as traffic calming or signing, should lead to average speeds compliant with the speed limit.
- 4.10 South Yorkshire Police have a policy about 20mph speed limits which states that 20mph speed limits or zones will not be enforced as a matter of routine and that they should be self enforcing. They fully support any measure directed towards improving safety on Sheffield's roads but cannot support speed limits which are set inappropriately or where subsequent abuse may place additional demands on their resources. The DfT guidance on 20mph zones and limits also states that "*To achieve compliance there should be no expectation on the police to provide additional enforcement beyond their routine activity, unless this has been explicitly agreed*".
- 4.11 Research into signed-only 20mph speed limits shows that they generally lead to small reductions in driver speeds. Signed-only 20mph speed limits are therefore most appropriate for areas where vehicle speeds are already low, 24mph or less. Engineering measures on roads where average speeds are above 24mph may be necessary.
- 4.12 Sheffield City Council officers visited Portsmouth City Council on the 19th May 2010, to learn from their experience of 20 mph speed limit implementation. Numerous other Local Highway Authorities in England such as Warrington, Oxford and Newcastle have either introduced or are planning to introduce 20 mph speed limits to their highway network to reduce casualties. Sheffield Council Officers have contacted several of these authorities in order to gather information on best practice.

Consultations with the Community Assemblies

- 4.13 In September 2010, a letter was delivered to all seven Community Assemblies requesting feedback on whether they were interested in pursuing 20 mph speed limits on roads within their area. This letter was accompanied with the 8th July 2010 Cabinet Highways Committee Report and the Cabinet Highways Committee Briefing minutes for background information.
- 4.14 The aim of the 20mph speed limit initiative is to create a safer environment for all residents by working in partnership with interested Community Assemblies, who wish to progress and implement 20 mph speed limit schemes within their area. Community Assemblies put forward potential locations for this initiative, with advice from the Road Safety Team, who can provide technical guidance to jointly develop these area-wide schemes.
- 4.15 The East Community Assembly was the first to commit to the design and implementation of a 20 mph speed limit within their area, and subsequently already had an area proposed for the lower speed limit in Stradbroke.
- 4.16 The Stradbroke area was chosen to be the first sign-only 20 mph area in the City because it is a self-contained area consisting of a network of residential roads, many of which have existing traffic speeds appropriate for a 20 mph speed limit. There were 24 injury accidents within the Stradbroke area over a five year period, and the objective of this scheme is to reduce the numbers

and severity of casualties in the future. There is also strong support from local people and Councillors.

- 4.17 A consultation leaflet describing this initiative was delivered to approximately 1,700 properties in January 2011. Out of the 290 residents who replied to the questionnaire, over 70% of residents supported this initiative. 15% of residents who responded to the questionnaire didn't think the initiative would work, and a further 15% were unsure if the scheme would be successful.
- 4.18 The 20mph speed limit in Stradbroke was introduced in March 2011. The scheme is currently being monitored to assess whether it is working effectively. The process involves:
- 'Before' and 'after' speed data
 - 'Before' and 'after' accident and casualty analysis; and
 - 'Before' and 'after' public perception surveys.
- 4.19 Evaluation of the Stradbroke scheme so far is currently being carried out and will be reported in full to the East Community Assembly at the end of September. Speed surveys, carried out three months after the 20mph speed limit was introduced, have shown that there have been reductions in average speeds in the area ranging from – 1mph to - 4mph. However, there was an increase in speed of 1mph on two roads. Further analysis of the results is currently being carried out. We are unable to draw any conclusions on accident numbers yet, as the scheme needs to have been in place at least 2 years in order for there to be statistically significant data to study the accident trends.
- 4.20 Public perception surveys were sent out before the scheme was implemented and 3 months after the 20mph limit was introduced. The results are currently being collated. The survey asks the same questions each time and is designed to find out the following:
1. How people feel about 20mph speed limits?
 2. What people understand about 20mph speed limits?
 3. If there is a perception of compliance?
 4. Whether 20mph speed limits encourage people to walk or cycle more.

A survey will also be sent out 18 months after the scheme inception and an accident analysis will be carried out at this time.

- 4.21 A second 20mph speed limit was introduced in the Shiregreen area of the City in May 2011. In 2006, Council properties in the Shiregreen area were transferred into the ownership of Sanctuary Housing Association (SHA). Within the Shiregreen stock transfer agreement, the City Council and SHA agreed to a scheme of highway improvement works. These works included a reduction of the speed limit in Shiregreen to 20mph. There were a total of 70 road accidents resulting in injuries over a five year period in the area, and 9 of these collisions were classified as serious. The scheme is to be monitored in the same way as the Stradbroke 20mph speed limit in order to evaluate its success.
- 4.22 All the Community Assemblies were asked to discuss their views on 20mph limits. The Northern Assembly has agreed that, subject to the Local Transport Plan (LTP) budget being confirmed, they will explore the option of funding 20mph schemes but would like to see more information and

evidence of their effectiveness. The North East Assembly have stated that they are very open minded about 20mph speed limits at present, but would like to see further evidence of their impact. They would be agreeable to implementing 20mph limits where appropriate, but this only after consultation and clear evidence showing that this would be an effective way forward. Further 20mph limits in the East Assembly are being investigated for the Stafford Road area and the Woodthorpe area. Following the 17th March 2011 Assembly meeting, Darnall was also put forward to be looked at.

- 4.23 The Central Assembly have committed to delivering a 20mph speed limit in the Wisewood area in the 11/12 financial year. They have also commissioned feasibility studies into 20mph limits in Broomhill, Hanover Estate and Winn Gardens. The Assembly is not in a position to fund any of these schemes this year from their highways allocation, other than the Wisewood Estate scheme. The South Assembly has expressed interest in exploring the idea but have not agreed to allocate any of its LTP budget to 20mph speed limits. Given the reduced budget the Assembly will be receiving it is unlikely that anything will be allocated to 20 mph limits this financial year. However, if funds are available they may consider assessing and developing a selected 20 mph speed limit scheme. The South East Assembly have commissioned a feasibility study into a 20mph limit in the Hackenthorpe area. However, they have concerns about being unable to enforce the 20mph limit. Due the reduced allocation to the Assemblies in the 11/12 financial year, 20mph speed limit areas are not a high priority at this current time. The South West Assembly have had positive feedback on the concept of 20mph speed limit areas but there is also some concern if a 20mph speed limit will be complied with. A feasibility study is proposed for an area within the South West Community Assembly boundary.

Way Forward

- 4.24 Driver speeds in residential areas are a concern for many members of the public. This is shown in the large volumes of individual requests and petitions received by the Council for road safety engineering schemes aimed at reducing driver speeds across the City.
- 4.25 After considering the experiences of other Local Highway Authorities, particularly the encouraging results from Portsmouth, coupled with published research literature on the effectiveness of 20 mph speed limits, the City Council is keen to deliver innovative 20 mph speed limits which are not over engineered with vertical traffic calming measures.
- 4.26 Sheffield City Council's current overall Road Safety Policy is to prioritise the introduction of speed management measures to locations where there is a high casualty record. However, speed management measures are also considered at locations where there is a perceived road safety problem, such as Danger Reduction Schemes and School related schemes.
- 4.27 Research has shown that for every 1mph average speed reduction in an urban area a 6% reduction in collision frequency can be expected. Therefore a programme of 20mph speed limits has the potential to reduce the number road accident casualties in residential areas across the City.
- 4.28 Further potential benefits of 20 mph speed limits in residential areas include quality of life and community benefits, and encouragement of healthier and

more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling. There may also be environmental benefits, as generally, driving more slowly at a steady pace may save fuel and carbon dioxide emissions.

- 4.29 20 mph speed limits without self-enforcing features have the attraction of being relatively inexpensive to implement. However, in order for the schemes to be successful, it is important to consider the 'before' speeds, because the higher they are, then the less likely it is that speeds will be reduced to 20 mph in an area.
- 4.30 It is generally recommended that 20 mph speed limits should be introduced over an area consisting of several roads and not just an individual road. A single road 20 mph speed limit is unlikely to have any significant effect on speeds or accidents unless it is at least 500m in length. Road accidents tend to occur throughout residential areas rather than at one particular location. Therefore it follows that 20mph speed limits are more effective on an area-wide basis.
- 4.31 There is a risk that a short length of 20 mph speed limit outside a school may result in drivers speeding up significantly once they have passed it. This will be in an area where many children will be on their routes to and from school. A 20mph speed limit on the roads surrounding a school would be more likely to reduce the frequency of accidents. Therefore an appropriate starting point would be to introduce 20mph speed limits, not only in the immediate vicinity of schools, but also on the residential roads surrounding it.
- 4.32 It is considered that a City-wide 20mph speed limit strategy needs to be developed for Highways Cabinet approval. This will identify where 20mph limits would be most appropriate, starting with areas surrounding schools and following with other suitable residential areas across the City.
- 4.33 The strategy will also look into the most cost effective way to deliver City-wide 20mph limits. This will include investigating whether they can be coordinated and delivered alongside the 'Streets Ahead' Highways Maintenance Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract, as it rolls out across the City. It is now understood that these works to improve the highway network will start in April 2012. It is envisaged that the strategy will be completed by March 2012 for Cabinet Highway Committee approval before the start of the PFI contract.

Relevant Implications:

- 4.34 There is an allocation of £40,000 as part of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) budget allocation for 2011/12 for the development of a strategy to deliver a program of 20mph speed limits across the City.
- 4.35 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been conducted and concludes that the proposals are of universal positive benefit to all local people regardless of age, sex, race, faith, disability, sexuality, etc. Because the proposal relates to increased road and pedestrian safety, it should be of particular positive benefit to the more vulnerable members of society, including the young, the elderly and disabled people, plus carers. Also to families with children, particularly in relation to schools. No negative equality impacts have been identified.

5.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 5.1 To continue with the current policy of 20mph speed limits being introduced in partnership with the Community Assemblies funded from their own Highway budgets. However, this funding is limited and there is not a consistent approach across the City. The views of the Community Assemblies will be important in developing the 20mph strategy and ultimately in gaining community support delivering the strategy.
- 5.2 That speed limits across the City remain the same. However, this would lead to the same level of road accidents and vehicle speeds.

6.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Average reductions in driver speeds have the potential for delivering significant benefits across the road safety, transportation, environmental and health agendas.
- 6.2 The potential benefits of 20 mph speed limits in residential areas include a reduction in road traffic collisions and casualties. There are also quality of life and community benefits, and encouragement of healthier and more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling.
- 6.3 The forthcoming 'Streets Ahead' Highways Maintenance Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract may provide an opportunity for 20mph speed limits to be delivered across the City in a cost effective way.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Develop a strategy for City-wide 20mph speed limits, starting with areas surrounding schools and following with other suitable residential areas.
- 7.2 Investigate the feasibility of delivering City-wide 20mph speed limits in coordination with the 'Streets Ahead' Highways Maintenance Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract.

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Executive Director, Place

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