

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ADVISORY PANEL MINUTES - 13 JANUARY 2009

Present: Councillor Page (Chair);
Councillors Ayub, Duveen, Merriott, and Willis.

Apologies: Councillor Townend.

36. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Traffic Management Advisory Panel meeting held on 12 November 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

37. CONSOLIDATION OF TOWN CENTRE TRAFFIC ORDERS

The Director of Environment, Culture and Sport submitted a report informing the Panel of progress towards the introduction of a map-based Traffic Regulation Order system for the Town Centre and seeking approval to advertise the making of a consolidation order of all existing town centre orders to support this process.

The report stated that all restrictions required a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to make them legally enforceable and that currently, all TRO's were maintained in a text-only format, both electronically (in the case of more recent orders) and as paper copies, some of which dated back to the 1960's.

The development of a map-based TRO system would provide a means of presenting current TRO information in an easily understood, map-based format. This had the following benefits for the Council:

- The use of maps would remove any ambiguities and misunderstandings, which could arise from interpretation of text-based TRO's. This information could be used to clarify queries from members of the public as well as internally;
- It would be possible, in the future, to make such information available online, contributing to the Council's commitment to E government and transparency;
- The simplified plan format would mean that the enforcement of restrictions was more efficient and accurate, with a corresponding reduction in appeals and administration costs;
- A map-based system would also allow changes to TRO's to be prepared and made more easily and any subsequent changes to be tracked more accurately.

A map-based system would graphically represent the information contained in the TRO schedules but would not replace it. Text based TRO's would still be necessary and had to be maintained, as they formed the basis for the statutory advertisements, which had to be placed in the press and on-street.

The report stated that the town centre (defined as the area inside the IDR) had been covered by one Consolidation Order (The Borough of Reading (Town Centre Zone G) (Special Parking Area) (Waiting Restrictions and Parking Places) Revision No. 1 Order

2003), but this had been amended since 2003, as new restrictions were introduced. As a result the town centre was now covered by a number of orders.

It was proposed that a map-based TRO system was introduced in the town centre first, before being extended to the rest of the Borough on a phased basis. The newly-consolidated order would not result in any changes to the existing restrictions on street, and under the Traffic Orders procedure there was no provision to invite or accept objections.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

Recommended -

That the Head of Legal Services be authorised to carry out statutory consultation in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 to advertise that the fact that the consolidation order had been made.

38. ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2008/09 - UPDATE

Further to Minute 34 of the Panel's meeting of 25 March 2008, the Director of Environment, Culture and Sport submitted a report updating the Panel on the Road Safety Education Programme 2008/09. A 2008/09 Road Safety Education Calendar was attached at Appendix A.

The report stated that the Road Safety Education Programme for 2008/09 had continued to concentrate on six key areas which met the key groups, identified as the young and disadvantaged communities. It would also continue to help deliver School Travel Plans as part of the Local Transport Plan programme and help oversee the School Crossing Patrols work programme.

Resolved -

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That officers be requested to include accident statistics in future road safety reports.

39. GREEN ROAD - SECTION 278 HIGHWAY WORKS - UPDATE

Further to Minute 20 of the Panel's meeting of 14 November 2007, the Director of Environment, Culture and Sport submitted a report providing an update on the Section 278 Highway Works being undertaken on Green Road associated with the development on the former Thames Valley University site. A plan showing the works was attached at Appendix A.

The report stated that, following the closure of Green Road, some of the traffic that used this road had re-routed to neighbouring roads and that Talfourd Avenue, being

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the next road along from Green Road, had been most affected. The Section 106 agreement with the developer stated that if an increase in traffic was experienced on neighbouring roads, following the closure of Green Road, the developer should pay the Council £50,000 to install traffic management measures to mitigate these increases. Taylor Wimpey had accepted that increases in traffic had occurred and the Council was in the process of securing the monies.

A number of residents of Talfourd Avenue had contacted the Council requesting that traffic management measures be installed as a matter of urgency to mitigate the effects of increased traffic. Measures requested included:

- Making Talfourd Avenue One-Way;
- Making Talfourd Avenue One-Way with traffic calming (speed humps);
- Leaving the road two-way with traffic calming (speed humps);
- Closing the road or making it access only;
- Doing nothing and leaving the road as it is.

It was also reported at the meeting that a petition, containing 47 signatures, had been received from residents of Talfourd Avenue in the following terms: "Since the closure of Green Road, Talfourd Avenue's problems with volume, speed and traffic stand-offs have become intolerable. As residents we believe that new traffic management and calming measures to combat all of these problems need to be introduced. Leaving the road two-way with traffic calming (speed humps) will not suffice." Mr J Hickling attended the meeting and, at the invitation of the Chair, addressed the Panel on behalf of the petitioners.

The report stated that, while any of the options requested might be possible, it was critical to remember that any change to Talfourd Avenue was likely to increase traffic in neighbouring streets (Melrose Avenue, Belle Avenue, Earley Hill Road and Holmes Road). Furthermore, the Section 106 monies had been secured to consider the effect of the Green Road closure on all neighbouring streets and not just Talfourd Avenue. All streets in the area had been the subject of requests for traffic management measures at some point to deal with 'rat running'.

It was therefore recommended that an initial consultation process was started with the residents of Talfourd Avenue, Melrose Avenue, Belle Avenue, Earley Hill Road and Holmes Road (the roads detailed within the signed Section 106 agreement) to seek their views on what the preferred traffic management option was before a scheme was designed. Any final design would be open to statutory consultation.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

Recommended -

- (1) **That a consultation process be started with the residents of Talfourd Avenue, Melrose Avenue, Belle Avenue, Earley Hill Road and Holmes Road to identify a preferred traffic management method to mitigate**

the effects of the changes in traffic patterns in these roads following the closure of Green Road;

- (2) That the wider issue of "rat running" in the general area also be included in the consultation at (1) above;
- (3) That the results of the consultation be reported back to a future meeting of the Panel and approval to pursue any legal and/or statutory processes be requested as appropriate.

40. SPECIFICATION FOR ESTATE STREETS AND STANDARD HIGHWAY DRAWINGS

The Director of Environment, Culture and Sport submitted a report seeking approval to the adoption of a new Specification for Estate Streets and associated Standard Drawings, detailing the Highway Authority's construction requirements for new estate roads and for repairs to existing estate roads. The documents "Estate Street Specification" and "Standard Drawings for Estate Streets" had been placed on deposit in the Members Room, published on the website and were available on request.

The main classified road network would be outside the scope of the new document, and these roads should be constructed and repaired in accordance with the Department for Transport Document "Specification for Highway Works".

The report stated that the Council's existing "Estate Street Specification" and "Standard Drawings" for residential streets had been published in 1998, and were based on the former Berkshire County Council's specification and standard drawings with minor revisions. However, there had subsequently been major changes to British Standards with respect to material specifications and the majority of the materials detailed were no longer officially available.

It had therefore been necessary to produce an entirely new specification with regards to these major changes, which clearly detailed the requirements that the Council's own contractors and third parties had to adhere to when working on the estate road network. The document covered all areas of estate street construction, including drainage; earthworks; road pavement construction (surfacing and sub-base); block paving; kerbing; footway/cycleway construction; traffic management (road markings, signs and signals); structures and adoption procedures.

The Specification was based on the Department for Transport document "Specification for Highway Works" which focussed on Trunk Road/Motorway construction. The object of the document was to provide specific details for estate street construction, and clearly inform developers at an early stage of the requirements the Council expected them to adhere to.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

Recommended -

That the documents "Estate Street Specification" and "Standard Drawings for Estate Streets" be approved and adopted.

41. DFT CONSULTATION ON ROAD SAFETY COMPLIANCE

The Director of Environment, Culture and Sport submitted a report informing the Panel of a Department for Transport consultation on road safety compliance and a draft response to be submitted by the Council.

The report stated that the consultation sought views on proposals for measures aimed at improving compliance levels with key road safety laws. Transgressions of these laws were the cause of many hundreds of deaths, and many thousands of serious injuries, each year. A total of 2946 road users had been killed in 2007, and nearly 28,000 had been seriously injured. This amounted to 36% fewer serious injuries and 18% fewer deaths than the 1994-98 baseline (Department for Transport (2008) Road Casualties Great Britain: 2007 Annual Report. TSO: London), and the Government's target was to achieve a 40% reduction in the total number of road users killed and seriously injured by 2010.

Compliance with road traffic law was key to achieving further reductions and the consultation set out a package of measures aimed at helping the responsible majority of road users and cracking down on the reckless few. The report contained details of the package, which covered five issues: speeding, drink driving, seat belt wearing, drug driving, and careless driving.

The report contained initial comments by officers on the consultation, which was considered welcome, particularly in the areas of speeding and careless driving, as these were repeated concerns raised by residents. It was felt that more consideration should be given to enforcement and the use of existing resources, with community support officers and local highway authorities being allowed to carry out enforcement activities.

A full response to the consultation was to be submitted to the DfT before the consultation deadline of 27 February 2009, and a draft response to the consultation would be circulated to members of the Panel for their consideration.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

Recommended -

That the Chair of the Panel be authorised to finalise the response to the consultation, following consideration of the draft by members of the Panel.

42. DFT COMPREHENSIVE BLUE BADGE (DISABLED PARKING) REFORM STRATEGY (ENGLAND)

The Director of Environment, Culture and Sport submitted a report informing the Panel of proposed DfT reform on blue badge use.

The report stated that the Blue Badge Scheme currently enabled severely disabled people to park without charge or time limit in the on-street parking environment, and for up to three hours on yellow lines, unless a loading ban was in place.

Recognising the significant changes that had taken place since the Scheme was introduced in the early 1970s, the Government had decided in February 2007 to undertake a review of the Scheme. The report contained details of a resulting Strategy including a suite of Government commitments designed to ensure that it stayed fit for purpose in the 21st century, and improved the lives of more disabled people. It also set out a number of actions the Government was planning to take forward over the following five years, through legislative measures where appropriate.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

43. HIGHWAYS ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Director of Environment, Culture and Sport submitted a report seeking approval to progress and implement an integrated Highways Asset Management system.

The report stated that as the Highway Authority, the Council had a duty to maintain the public highway network in a safe condition. To meet this duty, a combination of visual inspections and machine-based surveys were undertaken to record the condition of the public highway, from which defects were identified, priorities were set and orders were raised. With the exception of the machine-based surveys and UKPMS (United Kingdom Pavement Management System) functions which were 'electronic' and managed externally by a Consultant, all the inspections were performed in-house and were managed using paper-based systems.

To date, the paper-based system had enabled the Council to deliver and improve the highway maintenance service and provide quality evidence to repudiate third party claims. However, the Council now faced new challenges in the way in which it delivered the highway maintenance service as the Government and the industry moved towards highway asset management and whole-life costing of projects.

The report summarised the external drivers influencing this change and stated that, to deliver the asset management agenda, it had been recognised that the UKPMS function needed to be performed in-house. This function provided BVPI data for the CPA and Audit Commission and was therefore a mandatory requirement. In recognition of this, officers had been investigating possible asset management systems and were currently looking at partnership working with West Berkshire

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Council, which was successfully using an asset management system that would meet Reading Borough Council's needs.

It was recommended that approval was given to introduce a suitable asset management system at the earliest opportunity, and to purchase and maintain such a system, utilising any DfT funding grants that might be made available.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

Recommended -

- (1) That, subject to (2) below, approval be given in principle to introduce a Highways Asset Management System funded by Government grants;**
- (2) That a further report containing detailed costings for the purchase and maintenance of a system be submitted to the Panel once the position concerning DfT grants had been clarified.**

44. M4 JUNCTION 11 AND MEREOAK UPDATE

The Director of Environment, Culture and Sport submitted a report updating the Panel on the progress of the M4 Junction 11 improvements and reporting the provision of an acceptable Parent Company Guarantee in place of a Performance Bond for the works contract.

The scheme comprised a new gyratory constructed around the outside of the existing junction and included two new four-lane bridges over the M4, upgrades to the four motorway slip-roads, and local road network improvements to the north and south of the junction. The finished scheme would provide an improved junction in terms of safety, management and capacity, whilst providing dedicated public transport, pedestrian and cycle routes throughout.

The report stated that there had been substantial progress over the previous six months and that the contract remained on target to be completed in summer 2010. The main areas of works were detailed as:

- Construction of the site works compound;
- Demolition of the former coach depot and construction of a new depot for the Highways Agency. This work had been completed in December 2008 with the Highways Agency now operating from the new facility. This would allow demolition of the old depot and remaining buildings to commence in January 2009;
- Diversion of underground services including gas mains, electricity cables, telecommunications cables and drainage and sewers. This would continue throughout the works;

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- Import of materials to form embankments around the junction, primarily to the south east of the junction;
- Import of materials to form the widening of the Swallowfield bypass;
- Refurbishment and re-provision of garage buildings for Thames Valley Police;
- Removal of materials to allow road construction in the central area outside the Reading International Business Park.

The import of materials was likely to continue for the next few months in all areas around the junction, and works adjacent to the M4 would start shortly as the bridge construction works commenced. Regular updates on works and progress were provided on the Reading Borough Council website together with information on any temporary closures or restrictions which might affect traffic flow. This would be supplemented by the regular quarterly information sheets and through use of Reading's variable message traffic signs system.

The report also stated that the contractor appointed to construct the works was Laing O'Rourke, and a requirement of the contract was to provide either a Performance Bond or a Parent Company Guarantee. This was to ensure that in the event of the Company ceasing to trade, the Council was able to cover its costs in appointing a new contractor and completing the works. In this instance Laing O'Rourke had opted to provide a Parent Company Guarantee, and it was a requirement of Standing Orders to report where a Performance Bond was not in place. The Parent Company Guarantee was acceptable and formed a part of the contract.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Recommended:

That the provision of an acceptable Parent Company Guarantee in place of a Performance Bond, as detailed within the contract and in accordance with Standing Orders (Contract Procedure Rules 26 (4)), be noted and approved.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and finished at 7.27pm)