

# **Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

## **School Safety Zones and Routes Update and Proposal for Future Task and Finish Work**

**17 June 2020**

### **Recommendations**

That the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Notes the developments carried out by officers as part of the School Safety Zones Task Force since April 2015
- 2) Agrees that a Task and Finish Group be established to explore education-based ways of encouraging more children to walk / scooter / cycle in safety to their schools and report on costed options to inform the refreshed MTFS (Medium Term Finance Strategy).

### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 As part of the Council's budget setting meeting on 5th February 2015, members agreed to establish a cross party member task force to consider safety in the vicinity of schools and to allocate £3m in total spread across the financial years 2015/16 – 2016/17 to support this initiative.
- 1.2 At its subsequent meeting in April 2015, Cabinet gave the Strategic Director for Communities delegated authority to approve schemes using the funding subject to prior consultation with the Chair of the Task Force, the Chair of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Portfolio Holder.
- 1.3 The Task Force was initially due to finish in 2017 but continued when additional money was added to the programme by Council.
- 1.4 Approximately 150 schools in Warwickshire have benefitted from a school safety scheme (a full list can be found in the Appendix). Several schemes are in development and will be delivered shortly. The types of measures which have been provided include signs, road markings, bollards, 20mph speed limits, interactive signs, traffic calming, pedestrian crossings, informal crossings and footpaths.

## **2. Supporting Information**

- 2.1 The previous Task Force (2015-2017) decided to canvass local members to establish what issues and problems there were outside schools, or on the school journey that might be resolved by the introduction of engineering measures. All head teachers at schools in Warwickshire received a letter inviting them to get involved in this programme of works.
- 2.2 A meeting with members was held in the Summer of 2015, to establish the basis of the three-year programme of works. These included measures to address parking around the school gates (except double yellow lines), signing, zigzags, crossings and other engineering works that could assist with the safety of children.
- 2.3 Any crossing requests were evaluated using the standard WCC policy criteria of identifying the PV2 for each location (pedestrians x vehicles x vehicles). Any crossing that did not meet the criteria was not taken forward. Other measures were investigated at these sites to establish other methods of assisting crossing the road, such as refuges or road narrowing's).
- 2.4 At the budget setting meeting in February 2017, additional funding (£0.5m per year) was provided to extend the programme by a further two years.
- 2.5 A new Task Force of members was established to decide how to proceed with allocating the additional money. It was decided to adopt a similar rationale, and meetings were arranged with local members to gather information relating to any school where engineering measures could benefit the safety of children. A new programme of works was established for the two financial years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.
- 2.6 The Road Safety Education Team continue to deliver key road safety messages to schools and have worked effectively with the Engineering Team.
- 2.7 Overall, this project has proven to be successful in terms of improving road safety within close proximity to schools. Several positive comments have been received from school communities, where the benefits of the new measures provided have been realised.
- 2.8 Since the establishment of the School Safety Zones Task Force, many good working relationships have been established between officers and members. Officers have additionally formed good relationships with schools and external bodies. The members of the Task Force would like these good relationships and the experience that has been built up to continue and be used to good effect.

## **3. Proposal**

- 3.1 The proposal is that a new task and finish group be established to explore education-based options for encouraging pupils to travel to school by means

other than private cars (e.g. walking, cycling and scooters). The group will submit a report to Communities OSC which will be submitted to Cabinet on the options, with an investigation of the cost implications, before February 2021 so that its findings can inform the refreshing of the MTFP in 2021/22. The membership of the group will be decided by the OSC but members of the School Safety Zones TFG are prepared to carry on this work.

- 3.2 The 2020/21 capital programme approved by Council in February 2020 includes an allocation of £792,000 for home to school routes and a further £127,000 for school safety zones. These allocations are the remaining amounts of the specific allocations made in previous years which will fund engineering schemes. By virtue of the budget resolutions and the Financial Rules, the Strategic Director for Communities has authority to approve individual schemes with a value up to £250,000. The task and finish group would not have a role in delivering the programme of engineering schemes.
- 3.3 Before the TFG begins its deliberations it will, as is usual practice undertake a scoping exercise to clarify its aims and objectives, set its parameters agree the form of evidence it would wish to draw on and establish its method of reporting.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 If the requested TFG is established, there may be costs involved in preparation of options to inform the refreshed MTFS, the time of any officers involved with the TFG and then the cost of delivering any options approved.
- 4.2 Currently the Council is operating in a period of significant financial uncertainty. Members will be aware the costs of Covid-19 are in excess of the Government funding provided and funding these will need to be a priority for the refreshed MTFS. There are also material financial risks around the strength of the economy in terms of businesses resilience and the pace of housing growth, both of which will impact on our future resource levels, and the activity needed to support local communities and businesses in recovery. Central to the refreshed MTFS and decisions about future investment will be the financial context in which the Authority is now operating

#### **5. Environmental Implications**

- 5.1 If a TFG is established and successful in encouraging more children to walk / scooter / cycle in safety to their schools; then this will benefit the Warwickshire environment.
- 5.2 There would be less pollution generated by cars where the sole journey is to take children to school. Road accidents may also be likely to decrease on Warwickshire roads. This could also have positive impact in road safety.

## 6. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 6.1 Establish the requested TFG following to meet as soon as is practical either virtually or in person.

### Appendices

1. Appendix 1

### Background Papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None

Other members: Councillors Jenny Fradgley, Jonathon Chilvers, Jill Simpson-Vince, Jeff Clarke, Isobel Seccombe, Alan Cockburn, Dave Shilton, John Holland, Keith Kondakor, Jerry Roodhouse, Richard Chattaway