

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday 9 May 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor Jeff Clarke (Chair)
Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne
Councillor Sarah Feeney
Councillor Jenny Fradgley
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher
Councillor Tim Sinclair
Councillor Richard (Rik) Spencer
Councillor Andrew Wright

Portfolio Holders

Councillor Peter Butlin, Portfolio Holder for Finance & Property
Councillor Andy Crump, Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety
Councillor Wallace Redford, Portfolio Holder for Transport & Planning

Officers

David Ayton-Hill, Assistant Director - Communities
Jo Edwards, Lead Commissioner - Safety Engineering
Caroline Gutteridge, Team Lead Senior Solicitor Planning & Litigation
Isabelle Moorhouse, Democratic Service Officer
Garry Palmer, Lead Commissioner - Strategy and Policy
Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities
Paul Taylor, Delivery Lead - Minorworks & Forestry

Public Speakers

John Dinnie
Councillor Bill Gifford
David Passingham
Michael Ray
Stan Sabin

Others Present

Councillor Tracy Drew

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillor Jackie D'Arcy was substituted by Councillor Sarah Feeney
Councillor Dave Humphreys was substituted by Councillor Rik Spencer
Councillor Kam Kaur

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

2. Public Speaking

Mr John Dinnie read out the following statement:

“Chair, Councillors thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I think I understand the problem. The report of the task and finish group (TFG) has been called back for not considering all the evidence. Not adequately giving the detail of the desk top studies and being inconsistent with the Council Plan. Your officer has responded by drawing attention to the Atkins report, re-publishing some of the desk top data and attempting to identify the real problem by referring to a ‘range of policy approaches’. The Task and Finish brief was too narrow. The problem for you is the Atkins Report is low on statistically significant data to conclusively prove the case either way. However, there is enough evidence to reach a conclusion and they do.

Those graphs of modest improvement are telling you this is the right way to go. Just do it better. Don't accept the Tyranny of the average – emulate the outliers. – Change your recommendation. – Align with Atkins.

In section 12.5:

The DfT Circular 01/2013 is valid. Traffic authorities should implement area-wide 20mph limits on:

- major streets where there are journeys on foot, or cycle and
- residential streets where the streets are being used by people on foot and on bicycles, there is community support, and the characteristics of the street are suitable and there should be no expectation on the police to provide additional enforcement beyond their routine activity. Those are the recommendations you should be going forward with.

For local decision-makers Atkins refers us to section 2.6:

Stressing Integrated Approach – 20mph schemes have the potential to deliver health, environmental and community benefits greater than the road safety benefits. Your officer is pointing you towards the broad integrated policy agenda (involving health, environment, urban planning, emergency services, education, community representatives, complementary transport, and community policy). These reinforce messages about safety, active travel, and associated benefits. Despite the finely balanced data, Atkins is telling you to be bold, like Brighton, to obtain the wider community benefits.

The message is in there – The faster vehicles slow down more. Learn from Portsmouth and Liverpool. Do it but do it better. Thank you very much”

Mr David Passingham read out the following statement:

“I'm representing 20's Plenty Warwickshire but I'm also part of the Shipston campaign. When we started our campaign in Shipston for 20mph a few months ago we were asking for 20mph in the centre of the town only. During research we went to a zoom workshop given by the national 20's Plenty Campaign. We learnt that United Nations endorses 20mph speed limits where people mix with motor vehicles, unless strong evidence exists that higher speeds are safe. We learnt that 20mph is Government policy. The UK recently signed the Stockholm Declaration with 130 other nations, agreeing on a default 20mph limit wherever cyclists and pedestrians mix with motor

vehicles. We learnt that 28 million people live in areas where the Councils have decided to make 20mph default including the whole of Scotland and Wales. We were told about case studies where town wide 20mph schemes had been shown to work.

- like Faversham in Kent where speed reduced by 4 to 5mph on faster roads
- like Calderdale where casualties fell by 30 to 40% when introduced as part of a “love Your Streets” campaign
- Like Bath where it was introduced to help tackle the Climate & Ecological Emergency and to encourage greater walking and cycling, especially for commuters

We were shown that there are other benefits to 20mph limits:

Less crash costs for the NHS, more active travel, 50% noise reduction, 25% CO2 reduction and improved air quality. Originally, I would have been very happy with this Task & Finish Group report. But over the last few months I have seen more evidence of what has worked around the country and heard from national experts. The Task & Finish group should have heard such evidence – but did not. If all these other councils are introducing 20mph cost effectively why does the Task & Finish study show it isn't. Should they have looked at what other places have done? If it is government policy to make 20mph the default speed limit, why isn't Warwickshire trying to implement it?"

Mr Stan Sabin read out the following statement:

“Good morning Chairman and councillors I'm Stan Sabin, Chairman of Radford Semele Parish Council. I'm actually going to focus on a scheme that we tried to introduce in Radford more than two to three years ago, before the 20's Plenty campaign actually came to Warwickshire. I am proud to represent one of the 17 town and parish councils that have had the foresight to pass motions in support of the 20's Plenty for Us campaign. My Council endeavours to be proactive rather than reactive which is why pre-pandemic we started to look at ways of improving the road safety of vulnerable groups within our village. We propose to purchase a number of advisory 20's plenty signs which was unanimously carried. In February-March 2021 we contacted Highways to obtain permission to fix these signs to street furniture, luckily, we had not purchased the signs as the reply from Highways was a resounding 'no you can't do it, the manual and the computer says no'. Our initiative received support from our County Councillor, Councillor Redford, the now Portfolio Holder for Transport & Planning; he challenged the then Portfolio Holder Jeff Clark with the words, 'Are we serious here? We have a local parish council endeavouring to create a safer environment for its residents at no cost to WCC (Warwickshire County Council) and our response is no more than to discourage a local initiative? Is this how WCC encourages local councils to take responsibility for their community?' It's unfortunate that Councillor Redford actually didn't say those words in the Cabinet meeting which actually accepted the task and finish group (TFG) report, it might have had a different outcome. The task and finish group report is actually flawed, poor representation of the facts, or not representing the correct facts at all. Publicising that a blanket limit for the county was being pursued is not the case, and the trouble is that has led to misrepresentation within the press; no one would think of putting in a 20mph limit on the M40. This is to protect vulnerable persons, children in areas where they mix with cars. And also the other resulting aspect of this is when we haven't got an authority to use 20mph it then means excessive costs because every case there must be looked at as an individual application, whereas if it was in force then it be a lot easier to change traffic regulation orders (TROs). Thank you.”

Mr Michael Ray read out the following statement:

“Good morning and thank you for letting me talk. I'm presenting 20mph limits just for Southam, a focused approach. As most of you know, Southam is located in a hub of roads; it's southwest of the Leamington, southwest of Rugby, west of Daventry, south of Coventry and north of Banbury.

Consequently, it is a hub of five A roads and two B roads which converge on the town. The A423 bypass on the east side of the town has three roundabouts and pedestrian lights, and the A425 to the south of the town has one roundabout and two sets of traffic lights. The centre of the town to the west of the bypass has several schools, shops, a pharmacy, bank, post office, a number of churches, plus an array of food outlets and other retailers and services. In the same area are a number of residential properties including a Thithe Lodge, a significant number of which have insufficient access to available off-street parking. The 20's Plenty initiative was put before the Southam Town Council to consider and the members were invited to suggest roads which would benefit from a 20mph limits. It was resolved that all local roads leading in and out of the town, roughly in alignment with the conservation area, are proposed. The rationale for the decision was commuter traffic ahead of the bypass as tail backs at times at peak time and the distance travelled can be shorter than taking the by-pass e.g., Leamington Road – Coventry Road. This is compounded by sat-nav directing the shortest route. In addition, the town centre has a high density of both young and old persons at busy times of the day. Reducing the speed and of traffic through the centre of the town (plus identified short cuts) would dis-incentivise through traffic whilst having no significant material impact on local residents. A number of roads had been identified of which I provided a list but the benefits for the community would be to reduce through commuter traffic flow, improve free flow of residents traffic, reduced traffic pollution, reduce traffic noise, provide a safer pedestrian access to the town, and safer traffic flow on road parking pinch points. Thank you.”

Councillor Bill Gifford made the following statement, “Thank you for allowing me to speak. I was one of those who signed the call-in and one of those who sat on the task and finish group. I have to say having listened to the public speakers, a lot of what I was going to say has already been said but said more eloquently than I would have said it. What I would really suggest is that the County Council be bold and look at the evidence from elsewhere, which we really didn't get an opportunity to do; and indeed, as a task and finish group we didn't have an opportunity to listen to the to the public which I think is unfortunate. We need to be bold because we stated as a council, that we want modal shift, and it's difficult to get that modal shift anyway, but reducing the speed limit in towns and villages would certainly help get that modal shift in a way that if people don't feel safe walking or cycling they are more likely to use their cars and less likely to move to walking or cycling so that in itself is a good reason. I've always been in favour of speed limit change rather than zones, I feel that zones are divisive for communities. Have look at those results in London and a few days ago, to see how divisive they can be the communities. It's also confusing for a driver from elsewhere if they go from 30 to 20 back up to 30 whereas if you're travelling through Radford Semele or Leamington, it's going to be a 20mph limit throughout the village or the town. It's straightforward and you go to 20mph, nice and easy for the police who don't need to do any more than they do which is enforce the speed limit whether it be 20 or 30. I don't see any difference from now if it's easier for them to do. The final thing I would like to say is no member of the public has ever asked me to increase the speed limit and the 30mph speed was set nearly 90 years ago and no real evidence was used at the time, whereas now have plenty of evidence that 20mph is a sensible speed limit in a built-up area.

The Chair thanked the public speakers for attending.

3. 20mph Speed Limits - Task & Finish Group Recommendations

Councillor Jonathan Chilvers informed the committee that the call-in was initiated because of evidence from the 2013 Department for Transport (DfT) guidance and 2018 Atkins Report; and to enable communities who want 20mph limits in their area get them, and give them clarity on the

process and cost with this without any bureaucratic obstruction. The 2013 guidance stated that benefits of 20mph schemes include quality of life, community benefits and encouragement of healthier and more sustainable transport modes e.g. walking and cycling; this was based on research from the previous 10 years. The 2018 report provided evidence and the numbers around this, and it said that within 20mph limits, 5% of people walked more, 2% of people cycled more and around schools, between 6-9% of children cycled to school once a 20mph limit was implemented. Councillor Chilvers stated that this proved 20mph was a modal shift method that worked especially with children. The TFG raised concerns with the speed reduction on 20mph but the Atkins report stated that a 20mph limit would delay journeys by 30 seconds if the journey was one mile and a minute if the journey was five miles. The DfT report said that 20mph had a positive affect on road safety and if residents are in favour then traffic authorities could introduce 20mph speed limits on major streets where there were/could be significant journeys on foot or pedal cycle movements and if this outweighs the disadvantage of longer journey times for motorised traffic. The authority would need to decide whether the disadvantage is outweighed by the benefits. Councillor Chilvers stated the committee should have this discussion. He concluded that the DfT said no additional enforcement should be expected from the police and the local authority would be responsible for reinforcing the speed limit through Speedwatch, flashing signs etc.

Councillor Tim Sinclair clarified that the TFG found out that each 20mph blanket approaches (20mph for a whole village/town) in Warwickshire would cost between £34,000-£141,000. Therefore, if every village and town in Warwickshire had a 20mph limit then it would cost £12.7 million. Evidence presented by the officers that 20mph limits in some areas could lead to speed increasing and more accidents if the speed limit is too low and drivers do not follow it. Certain roads are appropriate for 20mph limits, but a blanket approach was not. The TFG received information from '20's Plenty' and officers and the evidence presented was somewhat partial. The TFG's recommendation was community powered based, all 57 councillors have £35,000 to spend on improving their division including on a 20mph limit, providing it was a sensible proposal. Councillor Sinclair stated that the recommendation's purpose was to get the members behind their communities and any 20mph limit trials should be run within Warwickshire instead of basing them on evidence from London and Portsmouth.

Councillor Jenny Fradgley said that the country was heading towards 20mph limits as this was being set by central government. The new Local Transport Plan focuses on promoting cycling, walking and making spaces in towns more suitable for the new hierarchy of pedestrians/cyclists first and private vehicles last. Stratford town centre was now 20mph permanently following Covid-19 restrictions and this received positive feedback from cyclists and pedestrians but not motorists. She had two active resident groups asking for 20mph on their streets which were used as 'cut throughs' by traffic. 20mph limits could be achieved through better signage and engineering. 20mph zones would be needed around schools to enable children to walk/bike to school instead of by car. She suggested a detailed briefing on how residents can achieve 20mph limits on their streets with the help of their Councillors and what signage and engineering, where appropriate, was possible in the cost.

Councillor Sarah Feeney queried the engagement with communities and how councillors would be able to afford 20mph limits with their delegated budgets.

Councillor Richard Spencer who also sat on the TFG said that he had implemented a 20mph zone around schools in St John's Kenilworth with his delegated budget as well as the 20mph limit post-Covid. He added that members have access to road speed average data in their areas and

resources for 20mph limits could be sought from town council and parish council CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funds. The difference between speed limits and zones is that zones have engineering works.

Councillor Sinclair confirmed that councillors could put their delegated budgets together to achieve a 20mph across divisions and that drivers would overtake drivers on straight residential roads with 20mph limits. He reiterated that it should be horses for courses.

Councillor Chilvers stated that the data provided was difficult to investigate and queried some of the costs and report contents e.g. that 1000 repeater signs would be needed for a 20mph blanket zone for Kenilworth but the DfT guidance said none would be needed. The 2018 report said that there was no evidence that drivers increase their speed if they feel the speed limit is too slow and people will intrinsically drive slower. He concluded that community groups needed clarity on the process to get 20mph limits.

Paul Taylor (Delivery Lead - Minorworks & Forestry) informed the committee that the 20mph limit costings for Kenilworth were done based on every road having its own bespoke design. A lot of roads in Kenilworth were used as 'through routes' at 30mph. All schemes were designed to have to signs needed to effectively enforce a 20mph zone. He concluded that in his long experience signs and lines had never been enough to enforce a lower speed limit.

Councillor Wallace Redford stated that all the comments made in the meeting were possible to achieve through Cabinet's decision. DfT guidance said that speed limits should be evidence led and not set in isolation but instead as part of a 'package' with other measures to reduce speeds. As well as member delegated budgets, the Community Action Fund could also be used to enforce 20mph speed limits; the Council had around £350,000 as part of the casualty reduction fund. He concluded that an update on the scheme would come back to Communities OSC in February 2023.

Councillor Sinclair clarified that the recommendations to Cabinet were meant to explain to members how they could use their budgets for 20mph limits when appropriate. The members of the TFG proposed that the recommendations be community powered led with local members trialling 20mph limits in their area and this progress being reported on. He concluded that in point 95 of the DfT guidance stated that signs alone would only slightly reduce average speeds and that the call-in was flawed.

Councillor Fradgley reiterated that schools would need 20mph zones around them to protect the children there.

Councillor Peter Butlin said that the TFG's recommendations were 'horses for courses' and that zones would not be needed around all schools because some were in dead end roads while others on open roads. Communities would need to be onside for 20mph limits as he received pushback from villages when he tried to reduce a speed limit from 60mph to 50 when he was the Portfolio Holder for Transport & Planning. Parents and other drivers would need to be educated on speed reduction. He concurred that drivers would speed and dangerously overtake in a 20mph speed limits if they thought it was too slow. Sat Nav data would be used for implementing 20mph limits in Warwickshire and drivers would more likely follow 20mph limits if they felt the were appropriate. He concluded that the expensive part of reducing speeds was the TRO (traffic regulation order) consultation.

Councillor Fradgley stated members of the TFG not getting all the information earlier was the issue. She stated that they had walking zones around her grandchildren's school and the traffic reduction would help nudge more children and parents into walking.

Councillor Andy Crump said that the Road Safety Partnership looked at a lot of traffic data and the main cause of road accidents was careless driving or driving under the influence. 20mph limits and zones should only be implemented in areas where drivers can see why there is one. Clear repeater signs would be needed to ensure a 20mph limit works. Councillor Crump stated that Councillor John Holland informed him that electric cars were heavier than normal ones and when they brake, they release particulate into the environment so fluctuating speed on electric cars damaged the environment. Congestion around schools at peak times meant stop cars from going above 20mph and it was the DfT's responsibility to encourage more people to not use their cars. He concluded that 20mph limits should be evidence based and implemented with the community's consent.

Councillor Sinclair noted that it would be easier and quicker to put 20mph limits on connecting streets with signage alone than with engineering works too. He stated that the TFG received all the information and disagreed with the claim that some members of the group intentionally disregarded the idea of 20mph speed limits. He stated that Councillor Chilvers was the only member of the TFG who did not change their mind after being presented all the information. He also disputed the claim made by the public speaker in the Stratford Herald. Councillor Spencer concurred with these statements.

Councillor Chilvers stated that he did change his mind after receiving the evidence presented to the group. He concurred that 20mph limits should be implemented with communities and this should be part of the official process, including what the Council will need from them. The Atkins report stated that support for 20mph increased on average after implementation. TROs were only £3000 on average and covered any amount of land, the expensive things were repeater signs and roundels, but these costings were not clear. The TFGs recommendations stated that things needed to be clarified for members with the 20mph process with budgets, but this needed to be done for communities too with the Highways Action Fund application as this was not clear in some requests.

Councillor Richard Baxter-Payne stated that the debate evidenced why a blanket approach would not work because each division had different characteristics and needs. He concurred with getting residents onboard with 20mph and noted that speed limits were the maximum speed so people could drive 20mph in a 30mph area if they wanted to. He concluded that education of residents would be needed in engineering measures were not implemented.

The Chair noted that he was the previous Portfolio Holder for Transport & Planning and he was keen on 20mph limits being implemented where appropriate and around schools. It was up to members to nominate areas in their division for 20mph limits/zones if their residents want it. Residents responded better to 20mph limits if there was evidence for this and every implementation should be evidence based.

Councillor Chilvers proposed the following recommendations:

This committee comments that:

1. It recognises the benefits that the DfT guidance highlights that: “Important benefits of 20 mph schemes include quality of life and community benefits, and encouragement of healthier and more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling (Kirkby, 2002)” and asks the portfolio holder on behalf of cabinet to publicly affirm their wish to see more 20mph limit schemes in Warwickshire to help fulfil these objectives.
2. The DfT guidance does not require additional police enforcement and recommends other measures such as community speed watch and speed triggered signs to aid speed reduction; the committee wishes to support this approach.
3. It is concerned that the process put in place for 20mph limits should not put up unnecessary bureaucratic barriers, but provide a clear, publicised, enabling process for communities that wish to have 20mph limits in their area.
4. It asks to see a draft version of the process prepared by officers brought to the committee on the 21 September, including clear costs and funding options.

This was seconded by Councillor Fradgley.

Councillor Redford suggested that the committee consider approving a member seminar to explain and clarify the issues with the 20mph limit implementation process raised in the meeting. Councillor Chilvers stated that he was happy to add this to his recommendations.

The meeting was paused to allow members to read the recommendations proposed by Councillor Chilvers

In response to the Chair, Councillor Redford stated that the initial report covered the first recommendation.

Councillor Sinclair stated he was mixed to Councillor Chilvers’ recommendations and stated some parts were contradictory.

Councillor Sinclair proposed that:

The committee take no further action but request that a member seminar be held to clarify and lay out the 20mph limit process for members with delegated budgets and communities for the Highway Action Fund.

This was seconded by Councillor Spencer

Vote

Three members voted for, and **six** members voted against the following recommendations:

This committee comments that:

1. It recognises the benefits that the DfT guidance highlights that: “Important benefits of 20 mph schemes include quality of life and community benefits, and encouragement of healthier and more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling (Kirkby, 2002)” and asks the portfolio holder on behalf of cabinet to publicly affirm their wish to see more 20mph limit schemes in Warwickshire to help fulfil these objectives.
2. The DfT guidance does not require additional police enforcement and recommends other measures such as community speed watch and speed triggered signs to aid speed reduction; the committee wishes to support this approach.
3. It is concerned that the process put in place for 20mph limits should not put up unnecessary bureaucratic barriers, but provide a clear, publicised, enabling process for communities that wish to have 20mph limits in their area.

4. It asks to see a draft version of the process prepared by officers brought to the committee on the 21 September, including clear costs and funding options.

This proposal was lost.

The committee voted **unanimously** for the following recommendation:

That the committee take no further action but request that a member seminar be held to clarify and lay out the 20mph limit process for members with delegated budgets and communities for the Highway Action Fund.

This proposal this passed.

Resolved

That the Communities OSC take no further action but request that a member seminar be held to clarify and lay out the 20mph limit process for members with delegated budgets and communities for the Highway Action Fund.

The meeting rose at 10:42

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Chair

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