

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES

15 July 2015

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY

COMMITTEE – PLACES

REVIEW OF 20MPH SPEED LIMITS – PROGRESS REPORT

1. The Purpose of the Report

To inform the Committee of the progress made by the working group conducting the review of 20mph speed limits.

2. Information and Analysis

The Committee, at its meeting on 20 May 2015, agreed to undertake a review of 20mph speed limits and a working group was appointed to conduct the review (Cllrs Gillott, Cox, D. Williams and Spencer).

On 8 June the working group met with Cllr Dean Collins, the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport. Cllr Collins informed the working group that a number of communities in Derbyshire have expressed interest in 20mph speed limits being applied to residential streets in their locality. He acknowledged that the evidence for and against 20mph limits is, at present, inconclusive but went on to say where there was community interest he was supportive of 20mph speed limits and that he was open to running pilots in rural and urban areas. He also acknowledged that casualty reduction is not the sole reason for introducing 20mph limits and said that he would support their introduction to meet wider community benefits such as health and wellbeing gains. He did however, on the grounds of cost, caution against wide scale use of physical measures such as speed humps and build-outs.

On 15 June the working group met two officers from the Environment Transport and Economy (ETE) Department: Simon Tranter (Principal Engineer - Traffic and Safety) and Matt Pickard (Senior Project Officer - Casualty Reduction Strategy). From the outset of the discussion a distinction was made between 20mph zones and 20mph speed limits:

- A 20mph zone refers to an area where the roads are subject to a 20mph speed limit and additional traffic calming measures are in place. The physical measures such as humps, plateaus, and build-outs make the roads effectively self-enforcing, as these features force drivers to slow down.

- A 20mph limit is a road subject to a 20mph speed limit and does not require traffic calming measures.

The working group learnt that a previous review conducted by the ETE Department in 2011 identified twenty five 20mph zones in Derbyshire which had been introduced to address high casualty rates on particular sections of road.

The Councils' current policy on 20mph speed limits and zones is to use them "sparingly" and the primary consideration when determining their suitability has always been the casualty rate of the section of road in question.

In 2013 the Department for Transport (DfT) revised its guidance on setting local speed limits and made it easier for traffic authorities to introduce 20mph speed limits by removing the need for physical features. This is the first review of the Councils approach to 20mph speed limits since the 2013 revision of the DfT guidance.

The officers stated that 20mph zones have been shown to be effective in reducing vehicle speeds, as the physical traffic calming measures force vehicles to slow down. Nationally the evidence is that 20mph zones with traffic calming generally reduce traffic speed by an average of 9mph and reduce casualties by 40%. There is, however, limited evidence about the effectiveness of signed-only 20mph limits in reducing vehicle speed or the wider community benefits that area-wide 20mph speed limits may deliver. For this reason the DfT has commissioned research into the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits but unfortunately the research findings will not be available until 2017.

The officers advised that future pilots of signed-only 20mph speed limits (whether in rural or urban settings) should be monitored for at least two years (ideally longer) so that the benefits can be evaluated. They recommended that the monitoring should include traffic speed, carbon dioxide and noise. They also said they would like the decision making process to be more transparent so that it is clear to the public why a scheme has been introduced. The reasons might be collision reduction, promotion of healthier lifestyles and sustainable modes of transport or other community benefits.

On 29 March the working group met with Rod King, founder of the "20's Plenty for Us" campaign group. One of his key messages was that the benefits of area-wide 20mph limits extend far beyond casualty reduction. The benefits include: reduced noise and vehicle emissions, modal shift from cars to more sustainable and active methods of travel, independent mobility for children and older people, social equality and community cohesion. In short they make an area a better place to live.

Traditionally decisions about local speed limits have focused on casualty reduction. “20 is Plenty for Us” believe there needs to be a cultural change in the way local authorities make decisions about speed limits in residential areas and that greater consideration should be given to the wider community benefits. Now that the Public Health function has been transferred to local authorities there is an opportunity for a wider range of opinions to enter the debate about local speed limits. This is pertinent because it has been shown that more active lifestyles deliver considerable long term benefits for communities.

During a discussion about the DfT’s guidance on setting local speed limits the working group were advised that:

- The guidance contains a requirement for the local authority to set the correct local speed limit based on a number of criteria. Completely separately in the guidance there is a discussion about whether to use limits or zones.
- There is now a lot of flexibility regarding the implementation of 20mph zones. It used to be the case that a 20mph zone had to have a physical traffic calming measure (such as a hump or build-out) every 100m. In 2013 the guidance changed so that a zone must have a minimum of one physical measure. What this means is that rather than having a zone made up of lots of physical calming measures or a limit with no physical calming, local authorities can implement a hybrid of the two. It’s possible to have a zone with maybe one physical traffic calming measure and then rely on other measures such as repeater signs and roundels.
- The guidance defines a village as 20 properties. It does not define a residential road or specify what the speed limit should be in a village.
- There is nothing in the guidance about compliance when setting the speed limit. Whilst it is good practice to consult with the Police when setting the speed limit, the guidance does not say that their endorsement is a prerequisite. The local elected representatives set the speed limits and the Police enforce them.

Mr King went on to say that local authorities need to be creative about 20mph limits in terms of how they fund, implement and promote them. The key to the success of area-wide 20mph speed limits is to engage the community. It is not about putting up 20mph signs and expecting drivers to slow down. It’s about promoting their benefits and encouraging people to change the way they use and share the roads to the benefit of everyone in the community. He said it was as much about “reinforcement as enforcement”.

Next Steps

During the course of the review Derbyshire residents will be consulted via an online questionnaire, the review working group will meet with Members whose

communities have expressed an interest in 20mph limits and will speak to a representative from Public Health and a local authority that has introduced an area-wide 20mph speed limit.

Considerations

The relevance of the following factors has been considered in preparing this report; Finance, Human Relations, Legal and Human Rights, Prevention of Crime and Disorder, Equality and Diversity, Environmental, Health, Property and Transport

3. Recommendations

The Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – Places is asked to note;

- (1) the investigations already undertaken by the 20mph speed limit review working group,
- (2) the further investigations which the working group proposes to undertake.

Councillor Cllr Kevin Gillott

CHAIR, IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES