

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for City Services held at 2.00 pm on
Wednesday, 20 October 2021

Present:

Members: Councillor P Hetherton (Cabinet Member)
Councillor G Lloyd (Deputy Cabinet Member)
Councillor M Heaven (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees:

R Goodyer, Transportation and Highways
G Hood, Streetscene and Regulatory Services
P Howarth, Transportation and Highways
L Knight, Law and Governance
J Logue, Transportation and Highways
R Parkes, Law and Governance
J Seddon, Transportation and Highways
A Walster, Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services

Apologies: Councillor L Bigham – Chair of Communities and
Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) - Invited

Public Business

25. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

26. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2021 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

27. Petition - Save the Tree on the Corner of Beanfield Avenue and Medland Avenue

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Streetscene and Regulatory Services concerning a petition, bearing 170 e-signatures, requesting that the tree on the corner of Beanfield Avenue and Medland Avenue be saved from felling. The petition was supported by Councillor Heaven, a Wainbody Ward Councillor, who spoke in support of the petition. The petition organiser was invited but was unable to attend the meeting. A local resident spoke on behalf of the petitioners.

The Cabinet Member had considered the petition prior to the meeting and requested that the petition was dealt with by determination letter. On receipt of the determination letter, the petition organiser had requested that the petition be considered at a Cabinet Member for City Services meeting.

The report indicated that on 28 July 2021, the Urban Forestry Officer was notified by Travel West Midlands, that one of their buses had struck a tree on Beanfield Avenue. The tree was a mature pollarded European Lime tree *Tilia x europaea* situated close to 89 Beanfield Avenue and a bus stop. The tree was pollarded once every 5 years. As the bus was manoeuvring from the stop and around some parked vehicles, it hit the tree. The damage would be dealt with by Travel West Midlands on this occasion, as they determined that the tree was not over the carriageway.

The Urban Forestry Officer had assessed the tree and found that the wound on the upper limb indicating the point of impact was directly over the kerb. The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges required that all highways should have a 'Structure Free Zone' of 450mm behind the kerbline, that allowed for a high sided vehicle to lean with the camber of the road surface. This defined that the tree in question was within the zone and that the Council should take action.

The report highlighted that nearly all trees, particularly those in Beanfield Avenue, were within this zone, but it would be unreasonable for the Council to remove them all, as most would not cause damage and so there was no expectation or duty to remove them all as part of active maintenance. Only those which were foreseen as going to cause damage or injury required action of some sort. The Cabinet Member was informed that when notified of a collision incident, the Council had to take action, to prevent a similar event occurring. A failure to take action would be seen by any court as negligence.

Many residents had commented on the type of bus that was deployed on the number 9 route that takes in Beanfield Avenue and had requested that this be reverted to the older type of single deck buses that were operated a few years ago. This was a matter for Travel West Midlands and had no effect on this tree and how the City Council managed it. The incident had occurred so consequently action was needed to prevent a negligent situation in the future.

The report set out a number of options for dealing with the tree which included remove and replacement the tree with a Norway Maple variety called 'Perfect Upright' which would reduce the need for constant pruning away from highway and property. It would also increase the species diversity of the road which would help to work against the risk of tree loss through pests and diseases. Pruning the tree was another option but this would lead to decay in the main trunk in the coming years and the amenity value of the tree would be reduced significantly.

The preferred option was to narrow the carriageway of the road by placing road markings on the edge of the carriageway. This would provide visual warning to drivers, of the presence of the tree on the edge of the carriageway. This option would not completely cancel out the liability that existed after the first damage event, but it demonstrated that action was being taken to prevent a similar event from occurring again. The Cabinet Member noted that placing reflectors on the tree could also be considered. The cost of undertaking the work could be met from within existing highway revenue resources. This option also provided time for the Council to progress the consultation on how the Urban Forest was managed in Coventry.

The spokesperson for the petitioners detailed the parking issues in the street and highlighted that many buses had made the same manoeuvre over the years and there had never been an issue before. Consequently, the isolated incident was likely to be a result of driver error. Concerns were expressed about the positioning of two bus stops which were directly by street trees. Support was expressed for the option of hatched markings on the carriageway by the tree rather than removal and replacement of the tree or pruning. Reference was made to the physical and mental health value of trees.

Councillor Heaven highlighted the importance of trees, also supporting the preferred option to progress the matter.

The officer informed that the City Council certainly recognised the importance of trees. The Council's first tree strategy was nearing completion. It was the intention to plant a tree for every resident in the city, with the programme starting this year.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Having considered the content of the petition, the concerns of the petitioners be noted.**
- 2) The potential options outlined for dealing with the tree be noted.**
- 3) The option of narrowing the carriageway of the road by placing road markings on the edge of the carriageway be endorsed.**

28. Binley Cycleway - Scheme Part Approved, Way Forward and Petition Responses

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways which sought approval to proceed with 75% of the Binley Cycleway scheme, which was a 6km long segregated cycleway connecting the City Centre with University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire. This was a regional priority cycle route forming part of the Starley Network. The report also responded to two petitions, one in favour of the proposals asking for more cycle lanes to be built. The second petition, which was supported by Councillor R Singh, a Lower Stoke Ward Councillor, opposed an element of the proposals around the Biggin Hall Crescent junction with Binley Road. A representative of the petition organiser attended the meeting and spoke in support of the petition.

The report detailed that cycling had an important role to play in addressing the challenges the city and region faced, which included reducing congestion, carbon and pollution, supporting economic growth and employment, tackling obesity and creating places where people want to live, work, learn, shop and do business. Cycling offered an affordable, convenient and low-cost travel option to access jobs, education and leisure opportunities, particularly for people without access to cars. One in three households in Coventry did not have access to a car. Investment in high quality cycle routes was a priority set out in the draft Coventry Transport Strategy which was considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 12th October 2021.

During the West Midlands wide Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) development process, potential strategic core routes were evaluated and prioritised. A route connecting Coventry University and the city centre with University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) scored amongst the highest within the West Midlands metropolitan area. Now referred to as Binley Cycleway, this route was developed throughout 2019 and early 2020, with an allocation of funding being made available from the Transforming Cities Fund in December 2019.

The scheme details were set out in Appendix A to the report. A second appendix highlighted the minor alterations and improvements that had been made following feedback from residents and stakeholders.

Public consultation was held in two phases due to the length of the scheme. Phase 1 covered Gulson Road up to Brinklow Road and took place between 28th September and 31st October 2020. Phase 2 covered Brinklow Road to UHCW and took place between 1st March and 18th April. Both phases were online with a questionnaire accompanied by downloadable plans. The Cabinet Member noted that Phase 1 included delivery of 6,000 'street news' leaflets showing the route plan, artists impressions, some of the key aspects and web addresses to locate the online plans and survey. 76% of respondents stated that they supported the idea of segregated cycleways like this. The most common response was that people would like to see this go further and reach more destinations. The biggest concerns were how this might affect traffic congestion, parking concerns and the local economy.

Phase 2 included delivery of 4,500 'street news' leaflets and some socially distanced on-street engagement on Clifford Bridge Road, once restrictions allowed. There was a very good turnout allowing valuable and detailed feedback to be received. 62% of respondents in phase 2 supported the idea of segregated cycleways. The main concerns were around the reduction in on-street parking on Clifford Bridge Road, narrowing of Clifford Bridge Road and that safety of the road in general. The Cabinet Member noted that there were lots of detailed comments that could in many cases be addressed. It was recommended that, for this section of the route, those amendments that were possible were drawn up and a further consultation undertaken. Appendix B to the report detailed further information on the public consultation and the responses received.

The report referred to two petitions that had been received. The first, bearing 398 e-signatures was submitted in March 2021 and supported the new Binley Cycleway, requesting more safe cycle lanes across the city. The petition had been responded to by determination letter earlier in the year.

The second petition, bearing 162 signatures, requested that Biggin Hall Crescent was not made exit only. A representative of the petition organiser informed of the negative impact that this proposal would have on the petition organiser's business due to a likely loss of customers and requested reconsideration of this element of the scheme. The report detailed the reasons for the decision to ban traffic movements into Biggin Hall Crescent and the implications for drivers.

The development stage and delivery of the Binley Cycleway scheme was estimated to cost in the region of £8.6m. The scheme was expected to be fully funded from the West Midlands Combined Authority and government grants, a Full Business Case for which was currently going through the relevant assurance framework process.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The first petitioners support and the second petitioners concerns be noted.**
- 2) The high quantity and value of feedback received during both phases of public consultation and the amendments to the scheme that have been made as a result be noted.**
- 3) The scheme design and the construction of the Cycletrack for the sections of the route between Gulson Road and Brookvale Avenue, and between UHCW and Tesco Clifford Bridge access roundabout be approved.**
- 4) The review of scheme design for the section of the route between Brookvale Avenue and Tesco Clifford Bridge Access roundabout, and the holding of a further public consultation on the revised scheme design be approved.**
- 5) The advertising of Traffic Regulation Orders to enhance the safety of users of the highway and particularly the Cycletrack be noted.**

29. Objections to Proposed Local Safety Scheme - Old Church Road, Gayer Street, Proffitt Avenue and Dudley Street

The Cabinet Member considered a report and received a presentation of the Director of Transportation and Highways concerning eight objections and one letter of support that had been received to a Traffic Regulation Order advertised on 9th September, 2021 for a Local Safety Scheme on Old Church Road, Gayer Street, Proffitt Avenue and Dudley Street. A location plan and a summary of the objections and the responses to the issued raised were set out in appendices to the report. All the objectors were invited to attend the meeting and a number attended and outlined their concerns to the measures proposed.

The report indicated that a Local Safety Scheme was proposed on Old Church Road, Gayer Street, Proffitt Avenue and Dudley Street to reduce vehicular speed and prevent personal injury collisions and make the areas safer for all road users. An examination of the personal injury collision rate in this area revealed a total of 11 collisions, and this included two serious injury collisions. The majority of causation factors were attributed to speeding vehicles. In addition, the 85th percentile speeds had been recorded at 43mph, and the speed limit was 30mph. Speeding vehicles on residential roads were dangerous for all road users and increased the likelihood of more serious injuries if collisions occurred.

In February 2021, residents were consulted on a possible Local Safety Scheme on the roads highlighted above. The proposed road safety measures included a reduction in the speed limit to 20mph; the installation of speed cushions; and the installation of raised junctions. Although the majority of respondents (65%) supported the proposed Local Safety Scheme, some residents did not support the proposed traffic calming measures and the speed limit reduction.

As part of the statutory procedure, the Traffic Regulation Order for the 20mph speed limit and the Notice of intent to install speed cushions were advertised in the local press and notices were posted on lamp columns in the area, which resulted in the eight objections being received.

The Cabinet Member was informed that it was recommended to install the scheme due to the road characteristics and the recorded vehicular speeds and number of personal injury collisions related to speed. Old Church Road, Gayer Street, Proffitt Avenue and Dudley Street comprised of a series of long straights, and this could increase the likelihood of excessive vehicular speeds, as drivers tended to look at where they were going and not what was immediately in front of them, often referred to as 'tunnel vision'. There was a high number of junctions, Schools, and houses which front the road, and all these factors increased the road safety risk when drivers travelled at inappropriate speeds.

The objectors present raised a number of concerns in response to the proposals including whether the 85th percentile speeds recorded at 43mph were collected before or after the installation of speed cameras; the option of other measures that would be more suitable than speed cushions and raised junctions; and concerns about the potholes in the roads including the problems that this caused for both drivers and their vehicles. Several residents expressed concerns about speed cushions being located outside their properties and highlighted the issues that this would cause. Other issues raised included the problems caused by vehicles parking on the pavements, particularly at junctions; the difficulties caused by traffic at school drop off and pick up times; concerns about the consultation; concerns that the mitigation measures for Gayer Street and Dudley Street were unnecessary; the issue that the location of a speed cushion outside a property could cause a devaluation in its market value and make the property difficult to sell; a perception that vehicle speeds could increase in between the traffic calming features; concerns about the state of the pavements; the option for more speed signs rather than the speed cushions; and that the traffic calming measures would mean a reduction in parking spaces. Support was highlighted for the decision to reduce the traffic speed to 20mph.

Residents were informed that it was possible to make the gradient on speed cushions and raised junctions less severe. However, for a safety scheme to be effective it was necessary to include traffic calming measures. The Cabinet Member informed that she would ask officers to investigate the state of the pavements and consider the introduction of double yellow lines at junctions.

RESOLVED that, having considered the objections to the 20mph speed limit and traffic calming measures:

1) The implementation of the 20mph speed limit and installation of speed cushions and raised junctions (Old Church Road, Gayer Street, Proffitt Avenue and Dudley Street Local Safety Scheme) be approved.

2) Officers be requested to liaise with a resident of Old Church Road regarding the height and gradient of the speed cushion to be installed on the road by her property.

3) Officers be requested to investigate the state of the pavements in the Local Safety Scheme area.

4) Officers be requested to investigate the issue of parking on the pavements at junctions in the Local Safety Scheme area which are creating visibility issues for drivers and consider the introduction of double yellow lines.

30. **Petitions Determined by Letter and Petitions Deferred Pending Further Investigations**

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Director of Transportation and Highways that provided a summary of the recent petitions received that were being responded to by way of determination letter or holding letter. Details of the individual petitions were set out in an appendix attached to the report and included details of the actions being taken in response to the petitions. The report was submitted for monitoring and transparency purposes.

The report indicated that each petition had been dealt with on an individual basis, with the Cabinet Member considering advice from officers on appropriate action to respond to the petitioners' request. When it had been decided to respond to the petition without formal consideration at a Cabinet Member meeting, both the relevant Councillor sponsoring the petition (if any) and/or the petition organiser/spokesperson could still request that their petition be the subject of a Cabinet Member report.

Members noted that where holding letters were being sent, this was because further investigation work was required. Once matters had been investigated either a follow up letter would be sent, or a report submitted to a future Cabinet Member meeting.

RESOLVED that the actions being taken by officers as detailed in the appendix to the report, in response to the petitions received, be endorsed.

31. **Outstanding Issues**

There were no outstanding issues.

32. **Any other items of Public Business**

(Meeting closed at 3.45 pm)