

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 23 March 2023

Present:

Members: Councillor L Bigham (Chair)
Councillor S Agboola
Councillor R Bailey
Councillor J Gardiner
Councillor G Hayre
Councillor M Heaven
Councillor R Lakha (substitute for Councillor A Hopkins)
Councillor R Singh
Councillor R Thay

Other Members: Councillor P Hetherton, Cabinet Member for City Services
Councillor G Lloyd, Deputy Cabinet Member for City Services

Employees (by Service Area):

Law and Governance: S Bennett, G Holmes

Transportation and Highways:- C Archer, J Logue

Apologies: Councillor A Hopkins

Public Business

35. Declarations of Interest

The Scrutiny noted that Councillor L Bigham was a member of West Midlands Transport Delivery Board and that Councillor R Singh was a Scrutiny Member of the WMCA Transport Sub-Committee

It was also noted that Members are School Governors.

36. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February, 2023 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Further to Minute 30/22, relating to “Empty Dwellings”, the Scrutiny Board noted the comprehensive response and assurances that had been received from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities in relation to their comments regarding the wording of the Empty Dwellings Strategy.

37. **School Streets**

The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note of the Director of Transportation and Highways, together with a comprehensive presentation at the meeting, which detailed the introduction of five School Streets, using Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), to create a safer environment outside schools during entry and exit times at the start and end of the school day and encourage a modal shift.

The proposed School Streets programme is a collaborative initiative between Coventry City Council and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and is funded through the Walking and Cycling Programme. School Streets have been implemented across the UK and 23 School Streets have already installed across Birmingham, Walsall, and Solihull. The TfWM collaboration is the first regional cross-border School Streets programme. The existing initiatives have been installed with relatively good outcomes, including increasing walking and cycling. Local Authorities submitted a bid for potential School Streets and these have been prioritised to 16 locations, to be delivered by September 2023, based on a number of criteria including, level of school/local political support, links to cycling and walking infrastructure and existing framework to promote School Streets. Local authorities needed to demonstrate they had a high-level project plan deliverables to demonstrate success, including to measure any benefits. Coventry received funding of £190k from a total allocation of £410k for the region.

The School Streets scheme has numerous road safety benefits and secondary benefits include a reduction in air pollution and an increase in walking and cycling, helping to create a healthier and safer place for children and young people. Residents are still permitted to access/egress their property during the times of the restriction using a permit system. Access is permitted at all times for emergency services.

The proposed School Streets will be introduced using Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs), these differ slightly from traditional TROs as they provide an opportunity to see how the scheme works for a period of up to 18 months, allowing monitoring and assessment to be undertaken before a final decision is made whether they should be made permanent. The first 6 months of operation are also an objection period, allowing parents, residents, drivers etc to see how the scheme works before making comments or objections.

School Streets is being trialled at five locations. The first scheme has recently been installed in the Knights Templar Way Area (Templars Primary School) and became operational on 27 February 2023. This was funded separately and not through the Walking and Cycling Programme and was in response to safety concerns raised by local residents and Councillors

Four further School Street schemes are proposed to be funded through the Walking and Cycling Programme. The schools selected for the trial are Stanton Bridge Primary School, Southfields Primary School, Ravensdale Primary School and Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School and are supported by Ward Councillors and Headteachers.

The Briefing Note detailed the following four key high-level deliverables per school:-

Milestone 1: Official confirmation of school's interest to local authority and TfWM in delivering a school street. Indicative timescale: Early 2023 - January-February 2023

Milestone 2: Informal and formal consultation for each school street is complete as part of any TRO/ETRO. Spring 2023 (March-April 2023).

Milestone 3: Set up of monitoring and evaluation and baseline monitoring and evaluation is completed. Spring 2023 (March-April)

Milestone 4: Delivery of infrastructure, marketing materials and implementation of the TRO/ETRO. Summer 2023 (May-September 2023)

The Scrutiny Board asked questions and made comments on a number of issues including:-

- How the School Streets are signed and operated, particularly in relation to the enforcement of the TRO's by the Police and the penalties that would be applied for non compliance
- The criteria that was used to select the first 5 schemes
- The need for continual engagement with the schools and parents during the trial
- Consultation that has already been undertaken with the schools and consultation with residents that will now take place and which will help to shape the schemes that are introduced
- How the schemes will be monitored and assessed during the trial period
- Other initiatives that have been and which will be undertaken by the schools to encourage the modal shift
- The budget for the schemes. Coventry's success in securing a high proportion of the region's budget was noted and welcomed
- The benefits of the scheme on children's health and wellbeing as well as the scheme creating a safer environment for all
- Assurances were received that any possible displacement of traffic will be carefully monitored and assessed
- Data available from other schemes around the country (It was noted that Sustrans national data on the impact of the introduction of School Streets would be circulated to Members after the meeting)
- Operational issues, such as permits and exemptions for deliveries to residents

The Scrutiny Board expressed their support for the introduction of School Streets and paid tribute to the comprehensive work being carried out in this regard.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board:-

- 1) Note, welcome and support the steps being undertaken to trial the use of School Street and the proposed School Street programme which is being undertaken as an 18 month trail in collaboration with Transport for West Midlands.**

2) Request that a review of the School Street trial be added to the Work Programme for 2023/24.

38. Outstanding Issues and Work Programme for 2022/23

The Scrutiny Board noted their Work Programme for 2022/23.

39. Thanks

The Chair, Councillor L Bigham, thanked the Cabinet Member for City Services, Councillor P Hetherton and the Deputy Cabinet Member for City Services, Councillor G Lloyd, together with officers, for their attendance at the Scrutiny Board during 2022/23, and for the comprehensive information provided at meetings throughout the year.

Councillor Hetherton reciprocated those thanks for the support given by the Scrutiny Board in matters relating to her portfolio.

40. Any Other Items of Urgent Public Business

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.15am)