

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 8 February 2024

Present:

Members: Councillor M Ali (Chair)
Councillor J Blundell (Substitute for Councillor R Bailey)
Councillor J Gardiner
Councillor M Heaven
Councillor A Hopkins
Councillor L Kelly
Councillor M Mutton (Substitute for Councillor A Kaur)
Councillor R Thay

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

Employees (Service Area):

Highways, Traffic and Road Safety: D Keaney, J Logue

Law and Governance: G Holmes, E Jones, U Patel

Apologies: Councillor R Bailey, G Hayre and A Kaur

Public Business

24. Declarations of Interest

Councillor R Thay declared an 'Other Interest' in the matter the subject of Minute 26 below headed "School Streets Update" in so far as his son attends one of the schools identified in the schools streets programme. He remained in the meeting and took part in the discussions.

25. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023 were agreed and signed as a true record subject to a typo on page 3.

Further to Minute 21 in relation to 'Review of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)', it was noted that the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities supports the recommendations made by the Board.

Further to Minute 22 in relation to 'Work Programme 2023/2024', the Board had received an update on the current work being done to improve water quality and noted that it would be added to the work programme for next year.

26. **School Streets Update**

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note of the Director of Transportation, Highways and Sustainability which provided an update on the use of School Streets programme to create a safer environment outside schools during entry and exit times at the start and end of the school day and encourage modal shift.

Most schools experience significant road traffic problems at school start and finish time, and which resulted in resident frustration, increased vehicle emissions and road safety problems associated with hazardous driving and dangerous vehicular parking. Historically, residents living close to schools had requested solutions to these problems and recently, Local Highway Authorities had been granted legal mechanisms to install measures that prevent non-residents from travelling on problematic streets close to schools at opening and closing times.

The School Streets programme (the programme) used Traffic Regulation Orders to restrict school based traffic from entering roads at the start and end of the school day with the intention of creating an environment with fewer vehicles, which would encourage and enable walking and cycling.

The programme was a collaborative initiative between the Council and Transport for West Midlands and was principally funded through the Walking and Cycling Programme. The programme aimed to minimise the negative effects of motorised traffic at school opening and closing times by reducing the vehicles that would access specific roads at those times. As well as delivering the road safety aspect, the programme had secondary benefits which included 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 would be permitted to access/egress their property during the times of the restriction using a permit system. And access would always be permitted for emergency services at all times.

The proposed Schools Streets would be introduced using Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders. These differed slightly from traditional Traffic Regulation Orders as they provided an opportunity to see how the scheme would work for a period of 18 months, during which time, monitoring and assessment would be undertaken, before a final decision was made on whether it should be made permanent. The first 6 months of operation were also an objection period, which would allow parents, residents, drivers etc to see how the scheme would work before making comments or before a decision was made on whether the scheme should be made permanent after 18 months having considered any objections received.

The Council had identified five schools/locations to trial the School Street scheme. The first School Street scheme was installed and became operational on 27 February 2023 in the Knights Templar Way Area, by Templars Primary School. This was funded separately and not through the walking and Cycling Programme and was introduced in response to safety concerns raised by residents and councillors. An initial 12-month review of the scheme was currently underway and the outcome would be shared when completed.

The four further schools to be trialled and funded through the School Street Scheme are Stanton Bridge Primary School, Southfields Primary School, Ravensdale Primary School and Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School.

The Board noted that initiatives such as School Streets or Low Traffic Neighbourhoods would aim to reduce reliance on motorised vehicles. These are residential areas where a variety of tools could be used to significantly reduce traffic levels to create a more comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists. By reducing reliance on car travel, it was hoped that it would encourage more people to walk and cycle, whilst ensuring that areas were accessible to everyone.

Members asked questions and received response on the following:

- Enforcement of the schemes, police involvement and the use of cameras
- Whether the schemes would be picked up on sat-navs and mapping apps
- How the schools were identified for the project and how the learning from the pilot would be used both in Coventry and other local authority areas
- Issues of displacement parking and how that would be managed.
- The use of fixed penalty notices as opposed to points being added to licenses.
- Engagement with local supermarkets, delivery companies etc, to raise awareness of the school street programme and the aim of the traffic restrictions in place.

The Board considered that other measures should be explored such as traffic management for the schools that had not been included in the current school streets programme and requested that the Cabinet Member for City Services be requested to consider this. Councillor P Hetherington, Cabinet Member for City Services, who was present at the meeting, indicated that she was happy to accept this as a recommendation from the Board.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board:

- 1. Notes the report and the steps being undertaken to trial the use of School Streets and the proposed School Street programme being undertaken as an 18-month trial in collaboration with Transport for West Midlands.**
- 2. Requests the Cabinet Member for City Services to explore other measures such as traffic management for the schools that have not been included in the school streets programme.**

27. Work Programme 2023/2024

The Board considered their Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

The Board noted that:

1. **The item for consideration at the next meeting on Housing on Homelessness would focus on reducing homelessness and prevention.**
2. **An update on work being done to improve water quality would be added to the work programme for next year.**

28. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 11.45 am)