

Cheshire East Council

Cabinet Briefing Note

Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 14 th March 2017
Briefing Note of:	Frank Jordan, Executive Director – Place Kath O’Dwyer, Executive Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive
Subject/Title:	Briefing note - Available Walking Routes to Schools, Progress Update
Portfolio Holders:	Cllr David Brown, Highways & infrastructure Portfolio Holder Cllr Liz Durham, Children & Families People Portfolio Holder

1. Summary

- 1.1. This briefing provides Cabinet with an update on the actions taken to date to implement local infrastructure measures that are necessary to enable the Council to designate additional Available Walking Routes (AWR) to Schools. Specifically, the paper addresses the following motions as discussed at Council on 23 February 2017.
 - 1.1.1. *Council approved the amendment to Motion 1, “The Council requests that Cabinet defers implementation of its decision made on 18th October 2016 to withdraw free school transport from Bollington to Tytherington High School via the Middlewood Way, until a toucan crossing for pedestrians and cyclists has been installed and is operational, and its operational safety has been assessed and evaluated, adjacent to the roundabout on the A523 Silk Road, at the junction with the B5090”.*
 - 1.1.2. *Council approved the amendment to Motion 2, “The Council requests that Cabinet defers implementation of its decision made on 18th October 2016 to withdraw free school transport from Willaston to Malbank School and Brine Leas School until such time as Network Rail have provided an assessment as to whether they consider the London Road level crossing to be safe for pedestrians to use, and this Council has accepted the assessment, in the light of the fact that there is potential for an additional 64 pupils to walk that route.*

This note summarises how these have been addressed within the implementation programme.

- 1.2. On 18 October 2016, Cabinet agreed to progress works to re-classify five Available Walking Routes to Schools, following review and where necessary improvement of infrastructure. The approach is consistent with the Council's Home to School Travel policies and the subsequent removal of free transport, for non-eligible students, will contribute to the Council's revenue savings plan.
- 1.3. In line with the commitment from Cabinet to monitor implementation of Available Walking Routes, this update provides details on further matters raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. Update on Actions Taken to Date

- 2.1. The following table summarises progress on measures agreed by Cabinet, on 18 October 2016, as part of the implementation programme for AWRs.

Agreed Action	Update	RAG
1. Highway improvements approved for implementation by September 2017.		
Repair potholes on the Middlewood Way	Potholes have now been repaired. Maintenance of the Middlewood Way is on-going.	
Install signage to improve visibility of Toucan crossing on A500, Nantwich.	A review of the visibility of the Toucan has been undertaken and the following works have been completed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut back vegetation on junction of A500 and B5074 to improve visibility. • Erect warning signs on all approaches to roundabout • Alterations to the tactile paving 	
Switch lighting back on Newcastle Road	Lighting is now switched on	
Review speed limit on Newcastle Road	The speed limit along Newcastle Road has been reviewed and no objections to the recent consultation were received. The speed limit will be reduced to 40 mph by mid-April subject to Legal check.	
2. The provision of a subsidy towards the cost of transport for those children currently in receipt of free transport until they either conclude their education at their current school or move to another		

Agreed Action	Update	RAG
school		
Discussions to take place with regard to innovative solutions using the subsidy as a grant	Meetings have taken place with all five schools to discuss alternative innovative solutions. The only school that was interested in exploring innovative solutions was Malbank High School. However, as a financial subsidy will be provided on the other four routes, it is felt likely that parents at Malbank High School will may prefer a financial subsidy. Further discussions will take place with Malbank High School but the agreement of all parents will be needed to take any ideas forward.	
Subsidy to be made available towards the cost of transport for those children currently in receipt of free transport until they either conclude their education at their current school or move to another school	<p>It is proposed to make the subsidy available to for those Children receiving Free Transport as at 31 December 2016 and still in receipt of free transport as at 31 May 2017.</p> <p>The subsidy will be paid at a rate of £192 per child per full year remaining at the school for secondary aged children and £128 per child per full year remaining at the school for primary aged children. This reflects the different distance criteria of 2 miles for primary and 3 miles for secondary.</p> <p>This will be a single payment to cover the child's remaining school career.</p> <p>Letters will be sent to parents in March outlining the implication of the changes following the decision on 23 February 2017 and outlining the arrangements for claiming the subsidy.</p> <p>It is proposed that for parents of children attending Wheelock Primary School and Poynton High School the Subsidy will be paid in June /July 2017.</p> <p>For the remaining three routes it is proposed that 12 weeks' notice is provided at the point in time the route is reconsidered as per the revised Council Motions. The subsidy will only be made available at this point in time. For transport to be removed by the beginning of September a decision will need to be made by 9 June 2017.</p> <p>In the case that transport continues in September the transport will be available for new year 7 pupils but they will be informed as part of the admissions process that this is an interim arrangement and they will not be eligible for a subsidy.</p>	
3. Develop a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy		
Develop a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy	<p>This strategy is required by legislation to ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory obligations regarding travel to school.</p> <p>Ringway Jacobs have been commissioned to develop a Sustainable Modes of Travel to Schools strategy. The</p>	

Agreed Action	Update	RAG
	<p>purpose of this strategy is to identify approaches to provide safe and sustainable travel to school.</p> <p>Four key tasks will be undertaken to inform the strategy, a brief summary of which is set out below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake surveys in collaboration with Cheshire East Research and Intelligence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Travel Plans - Survey to determine how many active school travel plans / initiatives • Further Education travel plans - Survey to find out how many active FE travel plans/initiatives • Mode of Travel Survey - Selection of schools to complete 'usual mode of travel' data (500 – 1000 pupils) • Safer Route to School Survey - on-line safer routes to school survey (1000 parents, 20 schools) 2. Develop the strategy, producing a document that outlines the Council's approach to improving and promoting safe and sustainable travel options to schools. 3. Promote sustainable travel and transport to and from school by updating the Cheshire East Council website to reflect how schools can be involved. 4. Publication of sustainable school travel strategy. <p>In addition, the strategy will reference relevant Cheshire East guidance and strategy documents such as Cycling Strategy, Road Safety Strategy, Air Quality Strategy and the Local Transport Plan.</p> <p>The total commission estimated value is £10,000 (excluding VAT and framework overheads). Expected completion date for the updated strategy is October 2017.</p>	

2.2. Since Cabinet met in October 2016, discussions have taken place regarding additional highways improvements that are worthy of further consideration/investigation. The following table summarises action on these matters.

Agreed Action	Update	RAG
1. Install Crossing on Silk Road.		
Install crossing on Silk Road	<p>In terms of further improving the walking route to school, by providing an alternative route, the feasibility of installing a toucan crossing on the A523 Silk Road at the junction with the B5090 has been examined. A Road Safety Audit (RSA) has been conducted, considering the needs of all road users. A copy of this audit is appended to this briefing note (see appendix 1).</p>	

Agreed Action	Update	RAG														
	<p>The installation of a crossing is estimated to cost in the region of £200k, provision is made in the capital programme to cover these works.</p> <p>The process has now commenced and informal consultation is underway with Local Members and other stakeholders; this will lead up to a decision to proceed from the Executive Director Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.</p>															
2. Install double barriers on level crossing on Nantwich Road.																
<p>Install double barriers on level crossing on Nantwich Road</p>	<p>A meeting was held on 21 December 2016 with Network Rail and Cllr Rachel Bailey, Cllr David Brown, Cllr Glen Williams, Cllr Sarah Pochin and officers to discuss improvements to the automatic half barrier (AHB) on London Road. The following proposals were discussed, for which an update has been provided:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="560 891 1323 1753"> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="560 891 959 1025">Install a full barrier with skirt</td> <td data-bbox="962 891 1323 1025">The crossing is not due to be upgraded until 2029 and cost will be in region of £3.5m</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="560 1030 959 1164">Red lights for pedestrians to improve warning for pedestrians that trains are approaching</td> <td data-bbox="962 1030 1323 1164">Network Rail will look into the feasibility to install Summer 2017</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="560 1169 959 1265">Increase the timing of the lighting sequence</td> <td data-bbox="962 1169 1323 1265">Network Rail will look into the feasibility of increasing the time</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="560 1270 959 1404">Provide guard rails to corral pedestrians to stay on pavements and possible widening of pavement</td> <td data-bbox="962 1270 1323 1404">Highways are currently reviewing the feasibility of installing these</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="560 1408 959 1545">Improve boundary markings</td> <td data-bbox="962 1408 1323 1545">Network Rail to consider feasibility</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="560 1550 959 1684">Leaflets to parents and presentations to Willaston Primary School and Malbank High School.</td> <td data-bbox="962 1550 1323 1684">Network Rail have programmed in talks for schools in July and September.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="560 1688 959 1753">Remove highway/leaf debris on footways</td> <td data-bbox="962 1688 1323 1753">Highways to programme in clearing up of debris</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>In addition, the Council's Executive Director of Place has written to Network Rail, seeking their written confirmation of the scope and timing of actions relating to this crossing. These actions are expected to include:</p> <p>a) Completion of a survey of pedestrian usage of the crossing</p>	Install a full barrier with skirt	The crossing is not due to be upgraded until 2029 and cost will be in region of £3.5m	Red lights for pedestrians to improve warning for pedestrians that trains are approaching	Network Rail will look into the feasibility to install Summer 2017	Increase the timing of the lighting sequence	Network Rail will look into the feasibility of increasing the time	Provide guard rails to corral pedestrians to stay on pavements and possible widening of pavement	Highways are currently reviewing the feasibility of installing these	Improve boundary markings	Network Rail to consider feasibility	Leaflets to parents and presentations to Willaston Primary School and Malbank High School.	Network Rail have programmed in talks for schools in July and September.	Remove highway/leaf debris on footways	Highways to programme in clearing up of debris	
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Agreed Action	Update	RAG
	<p>b) Update of the Network Rail Safety Assessment for the crossing</p> <p>c) Review and update of the mitigation plan, as currently discussed with the Council.</p>	
3. Install lighting on Hindheath Road		
Install lighting on Hindheath Road	Consideration will be given to installing lighting as part of a new housing development. No progress can be made until the housing development progresses.	
4. Install crossing at Peacock Roundabout		
Install crossing at Peacock Roundabout	Consideration will be given to installing a crossing as part of a new housing development. No progress can be made until the housing development progresses.	

3. Chronology

3.1. At Council, on 23rd February 2017, the Council considered the following motions;

3.1.1. *Council approved the amendment to Motion 1, "The Council requests that Cabinet defers implementation of its decision made on 18th October*

2016 to withdraw free school transport from Bollington to Tytherington High School via the Middlewood Way, until a toucan crossing for pedestrians and cyclists has been installed and is operational, and its operational safety has been assessed and evaluated, adjacent to the roundabout on the A523 Silk Road, at the junction with the B5090”.

- 3.1.2. *Council approved the amendment to Motion 2, “The Council requests that Cabinet defers implementation of its decision made on 18th October 2016 to withdraw free school transport from Willaston to Malbank School and Brine Leas School until such time as Network Rail have provided an assessment as to whether they consider the London Road level crossing to be safe for pedestrians to use, and this Council has accepted the assessment, in the light of the fact that there is potential for an additional 64 pupils to walk that route.*
- 3.2. The delivery programme for AWR has been reviewed in light of these Motions to Council and, as necessary, additional measures have been put in place to ensure there is appropriate assurance on delivery.
- 3.3. A letter was been sent to all parents affected by the decision following Cabinet in October 2017 to inform them that their child’s route to school will no longer qualify for free transport from September 2017. The letter provided information on other criteria for free transport and advised of their right of appeal.
- 3.4. A revised letter will be sent during March 2017 to update parents on the implications of the decision and outline revised implementation arrangements. This information will also be published on the website.
- 3.5. Appeals panels are taking in place in March 2017 to consider any appeals that have been received.

4. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

- 4.1. All Cheshire East Wards.

5. Implications of Actions Taken to Date

5.1. Policy Implications

- 5.1.1. As outlined in the Home to School Travel Policy and the Cabinet Report date 18 October 2016.

5.2. Legal Implications

- 5.2.1. As outlined in the Cabinet Report date 18 October 2016.

5.3. Financial Implications

5.3.1. As outlined in the Cabinet Report date 18 October 2016.

5.4. Equality Implications

5.4.1. As outlined in the Cabinet Report date 18 October 2016.

5.5. Rural Community Implications

7.5.1 As outlined in the Cabinet Report date 18 October 2016.

5.6. Human Resources Implications

5.6.1. As outlined in the Cabinet Report date 18 October 2016.

5.7. Public Health Implications

5.7.1. As outlined in the Cabinet Report date 18 October 2016.

5.8. Implications for Children and Young People

5.8.1. As outlined in the Cabinet Report date 18 October 2016.

6. Risk Management

6.1. As outlined in the Cabinet Report date 18 October 2016.

7. Access to Information/Bibliography

7.1. Further information on this briefing note can be accessed by contacting the writers.

8. Contact Information

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Appendix 1

Road Safety Audit re Silk Road Crossing