

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee**



**Safer Parking for Communities around Schools**

**Task and Finish Group**

**Final Report**

**November 2016**

## **1.0 Foreword**

- 1.1 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to carry out this review at the request of the former Portfolio Holder for Communities. In Cheshire East around 34% of pupils are driven to school and inconsiderate parking is major issue for children, parents, residents, commuters and emergency services.
- 1.2 Parking outside schools is understandably an emotive issue for all concerned. During the review, it soon became apparent to the Task and Finish Group that one solution would not suit all schools and that for any scheme to be successful, all stakeholders would have to share responsibility and work together. The Task and Finish Group has therefore recommended several different solutions which could be used to help alleviate the problem.
- 1.3 I would like to thank the Task and Finish Group, officers and partner organisations for their valued and hard work during the review.
- 1.4 I commend this report to Cabinet and hope the recommendations can be taken forward.



Chairman – Councillor M Simon

## **2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 The former Portfolio Holder for Communities had requested that Members investigate safer parking for communities around schools as:
- School traffic and parking was a major problem for the whole community
  - Children were at risk
  - There were issues with enforcement
- 2.2 Parking outside schools at dropping off and picking up time is a recognised, long standing and growing national problem. Typical behaviour includes:
- Parking on double yellow lines
  - Parking on 'school keep clear' road markings
  - Parking on the pavements, causing obstructions
  - Parking on zigzag markings and pedestrian crossings; and
  - Parking across the school gates
  - Parking across neighbouring private driveways
- 2.3 This is not just a safety issue but a problem of traffic congestion and nuisance to local residents. The issue is complex and varies by location and type of school. Over many years attempts to tackle the issues have been implemented across the UK, however to date no successful long term resolution has been identified.
- 2.4 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee therefore decided to set up a task and finish group to scrutinise the problem in Cheshire East.

## **3.0 Setting the Scene**

- 3.1 School related traffic congestion and risks of such congestion is a significant problem to the community and is mainly due to parents dropping off and picking up their children from school. In Cheshire East, in 2011, 34% of pupils were driven to school whilst 47% walked.
- 3.2 School traffic is a problem for students, teachers, parents, residents and emergency services. It can cause road traffic accidents and child pedestrian injuries are more likely to occur in settings with high traffic volume and on street parking with children often emerging from behind parked cars.
- The journey to and from school (door to door) accounts for 20% of child casualties.
  - 25% of all car journeys are under 2 miles, that's about a 30 minute walk and 12 minute bike ride (DTLR Transport Statistics).

- Children who walk or cycle to school are less at risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and osteoporosis when they are older but 4 out of 10 boys and 6 out of 10 girls are active for less than one hour per day.
- The decline in walking to school has coincided with a rise in childhood obesity, with the proportion of overweight children increasing by 7%. (travelling to school: DFES and DFT report 2004).
- During the rush hour, 1 in 5 cars are on the school run.
- Parents on average drive 600 miles a year on the school run, costing over £300 a year on fuel and wear and tear on the car.
- In 1971 most 7 year olds made their own way to school unaccompanied and usually on foot.
- Between 1993 and 2004 the proportion of primary school children being driven to school rose from 29% to 41%. In secondary schools over the last 10 years there has been a 60% increase in the number of children being driven to school.
- Each day about 8.3million children are involved in the school run.
- 39% of households own at least one bike yet only 5% of journeys are by bike.
- Research for the national travel survey found that 60% of all journeys by women taking children to school and 57% of those by men returned straight home afterwards.
- Many people believe that their child is safer being driven to school.
- Research suggests that children who walk or cycle to school are more alert and ready to learn, achieving better academic results.
- Walking or cycling to school provides greater independence and freedom
- Walking or cycling to school promotes a healthy lifestyle that will carry through to adulthood.
- Walking or cycling to school is better for the environment.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

- 4.1 That the safer routes to schools scheme be resurrected .
- 4.2 That where possible, when schools are applying for academy status, land be kept back with a view to turning it into a car park.
- 4.3 That negotiations take place with schools to ascertain whether or not it would be possible to provide a car park or drop off zone.
- 4.4 That a Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy be produced by September 2017.\*
- 4.5 That schools be encouraged to produce Travel Plans, and if required, the Council assist with its formation. The plan should include the appropriate initiatives set out in paragraph 16.2 of the report.
- 4.6 That the education programme provided by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service include safer parking and that a joint letter from Cheshire Fire, Police and Cheshire East Council be sent out to all parents highlighting the importance of road safety and safer parking.
- 4.7 The possibility of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service attending schools at school drop off time with a fire engine be explored.
- 4.8 That a walking to schools with hero's campaign be introduced – Police or Fire Officers could be involved in the introduction of walking buses.
- 4.9 That signs be erected outside schools showing pictures of correct and incorrect ways to park.

4.10 That the Council take a zero tolerance approach to enforcement and that enforcement patrols be increased.

\* This recommendation has already been approved.

## **5.0 Background and Membership**

5.1 At the request of the former Portfolio Holder for Communities, on 15 November 2015 the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to look at safer parking for communities around schools. It was agreed that the following councillors would sit on that group:



Margaret Simon



Michael Beanland



Mo Grant



Sarah Pochin



Bernice Walmsley

## **6.0 Terms of Reference (as agreed with the former Portfolio Holder)**

- To determine whether or not there is a problem with parking around schools.
- To identify what measures and schemes are currently in place and investigate best practice.
- Identify measures to ensure safer parking.
- To investigate the enforcement and education options.
- To understand the role of partner organisations.
- To alleviate the parking problems around schools.

## **7.0 Methodology**

### **7.1 Witnesses**

- Councillor P Bates – Communities and Health Portfolio Holder
- S Cordon – Head of Communities
- P Traynor – Strategic Commissioning Manager - Highways (Cheshire East Council)
- A Grey – Cheshire Fire and Rescue
- C Heyes – Cheshire Fire and Rescue
- S Barker – Senior Road Safety Engineer (Cheshire East Highways)
- D Malcolm – Head of Planning (Regulation) (Cheshire East Council)
- S Hodgkiss – Land and Sites Coordinator (Cheshire East Council)
- F Jones - Parent and Parish Councillor
- R Johnson – Traffic Management Officer, Cheshire Constabulary
- L Mitchell – Parking Services Officer (Cheshire East council)

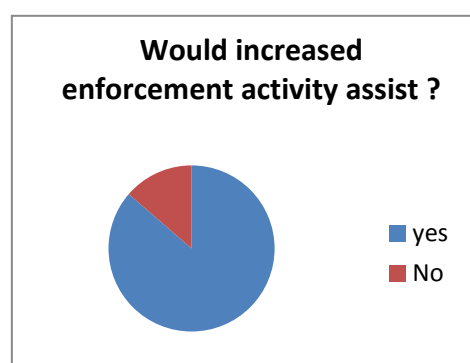
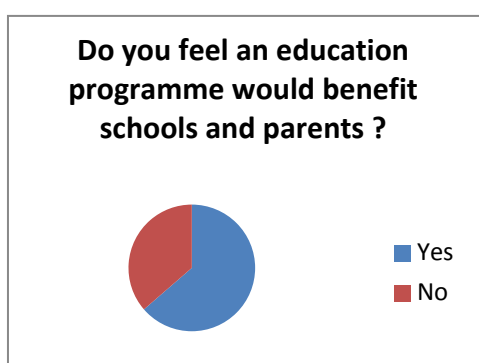
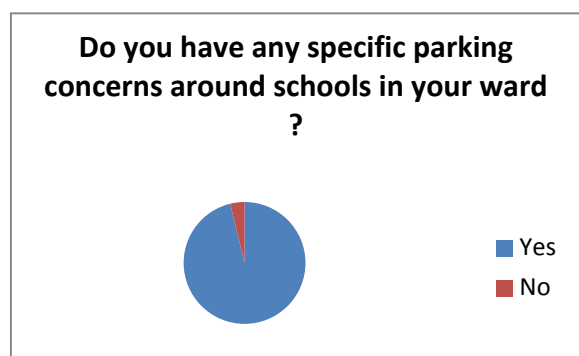
### **7.2 Timeline**

- 15 November 2015 - Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to set up a task and finish group.
- 23 November 2015 – The Task and Finish Group met with the Portfolio Holder for Communities and scoped the review.
- 20 January 2016 – The Task and Finish Group met with P Traynor to discuss the programme of works and enforcement.
- 5 February 2016 – The Task and Finish Group met to agree the questions to ask Planning and Education.
- 4 March 2016 – The Task and Finish Group met with the Land and Sites Coordinator
- 8 March 2016 – The Task and Finish group met with D Malcolm, Head of Planning (Regulation).
- 5 April 2016 – The Task and Finish Group met with C Heyes, Cheshire Fire and Rescue.
- 19 April 2016 - The Task and Finish Group met with R Johnson, Traffic Management Officer.
- 12 May 2016 - The Task and Finish Group met with L Mitchell, Parking Services Officer.
- 15 June 2016 - Members attended a site visit at Dane Bank Avenue to witness the problems.
- 20 July 2016 – Members met with P Traynor to discuss the success of two pilot schemes.
- 8 September 2016 – Members met with F Jones, Parent and Parish Councillor.

## **8.0 Findings**

### **8.1 Members Questionnaires**

- 8.2 All Members of the Council were sent a questionnaire to ascertain their views on the problems of parking around schools in their wards. An analysis of the 27 responses is set out below:



## 9.0 Possible Reasons for Driving to School

- 9.1 Members considered that the decrease in walking to school could be due to the following factors:

- Increased car availability
- Parental choice of school
- Increasing time pressures
- Reduced levels of bus services
- Increase in traffic making walking or cycling more dangerous
- Perception of safety
- Cost and lack of awareness of public transport
- Bad weather
- Parental choice due to being part of an onward journey to work

## **10.0 20 MPH Zones**

- 10.1 The Council has carried out a local community road safety consultation between February and March 2015 with a view to using the feedback to develop an initial local community road safety programme and help formulate a forward plan for road safety. A significant number of responses related to speeding outside schools. Cabinet therefore agreed that advisory 20mph zones would be progressed for all 160 schools within Cheshire East over a three year period. Flashing signs are activated during drop off and pick up times indicating a 20mph speed limit. This programme is currently being delivered in partnership with Schools, Police, Cheshire Fire and Rescue and Local Community. In the first year the scheme has been successful and well received. This had already been done in certain areas where individual councillors had pushed for it.

## **11.0 School Pick Up/Drop off Trials**

- 11.1 Cheshire East is progressing two trials at schools to try and resolve parking issues. The Head Teachers at both schools are focussed on improving their pick up/drop off arrangements although there are differing views on the most appropriate solutions to achieve the best outcome. Specific options related to education and enforcement and the provision of a car park at one school.

## **12.0 Safer Routes to Schools**

- 12.1 Safer routes to schools enable more children to walk or cycle to school. They usually involve a series of highways measures to make roads safer, such measures can include:
- Traffic calming, lower speed limits, speed cameras.
  - Zebra/pelican crossings.
  - Central refuges.
  - Cycle/pedestrian paths.



- Re-routing street networks, forcing drivers to seek alternative routes, including the possibility of one way streets and no entry signs.

12.2 However for the scheme to be successful, schools need to be involved by providing:

- A travel plan
- Cycle storage
- Pedestrian/cycle training
- Walking buses/cycle trains
- Mapping out safer routes to schools

### **13.0 Sustainable School Travel**

13.1 Local authorities have a duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport. The duty applies to children and young people of compulsory school age who travel to receive education or training in a local authority's area. The duty relates to journeys to and from institutions where education or training is delivered.

13.2 There are five main elements to the duty which local authorities must undertake:

- an assessment of the travel and transport needs of children, and young people within the authority's area;
- an audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority's area that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions;
- a strategy to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are best catered for;
- The promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions; and
- The publication of a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy.

13.3 The group agreed that a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy should be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

### **14.0 School Expansions**

14.1 There are a number of school expansions due to take place by September 2017. The group agreed that Ward Members should be consulted on any proposals as they have valuable local knowledge and would be able to assist with public relations and communication.

14.2 The group also felt that those schools where congestion is already severe should not be considered for expansion unless there was clear commitment to a school travel plan which seeks to minimise both the existing and future traffic/parking/congestion issues. The use of playgrounds as a car park could also be considered during drops off and pick up times.

- 14.3 When new planning applications are submitted for school expansions or additional housing, Members, Planning Officers, Education Officers and police should work together to ensure that there is a joined up approach to providing walking routes to schools and that Section 106 monies are secured to provide any highway safety measures required.

## **15.0 Provision of Car Parks**

- 15.1 The group agreed that there was a window of opportunity to hold back a piece of land to provide a car park when schools were applying for academy status. However consideration would need to be given as to how this would be financed and only be implemented with a full and effective travel plan. Playing fields and playgrounds are protected and could not be turned into a car park unless they had not been used for 10 years or more. However there is provision under a S77 agreement to change the use of a playing field provided there is enough playing area left to meet the statutory requirement for 'space per head' . Also where a car park is installed the S77 is eased if the car park is multi use. Consideration should be given as to whether or not it would be possible to use play grounds as a car park during drop off and pick up times only.

## **16.0 Working with Schools**

- 16.1 The group acknowledged the importance of working with schools and having them on board as the problem could not be tackled by the Council alone. Some schools had previously shown resistance to take part ownership of the issue which would hinder any improvements that could be made. All schools should have a travel plan and the Council should, if required, assist the schools with its formation. A School Travel Plan is a document which sets out the measures and initiatives an individual school will use to reduce car journeys and promote other ways of getting to school safely. Successful school travel plans will be supported by the whole school community (pupils, teachers, parents, governors and support staff), the local community and the local authority.
- 16.2 Schools should also be encouraged to consider implementing initiatives such as:
- Green cone zones - special Green Cones placed in the carriageway to prevent motorists from parking on the yellow zig zag lines near the entrance to schools. Cheshire Fire and Rescue indicated that it may be able to source some green parking cones for schools at a cheaper price with bulk purchase.
  - Staggering drop off and pick up times.
  - Reward scheme for walking/cycling.
  - Drop off and pick up zones.
  - Encouraging car sharing.
  - Walking buses/cycle trains.
  - Ensuring that children are on board as they will influence parents.

- Recruiting staff and parent volunteers to educate and advise parents on safer parking at school drop off and pick up times.
- Park and stride.
- Publicity campaigns including leaflets, posters and competitions.
- Cycling proficiency training (bikeability).
- Travel to school agreements.

## **17.0 Education**

17.1 For a number of years Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has been commissioned by Cheshire East Council to deliver road safety education in schools to key stage 2 and 4 children, which consisted of 180 visits to schools per year. The group met with representatives of the fire service to understand its role and education programme it delivers. It was agreed that:

- The education programme should include safer parking and that a joint letter from Cheshire Fire, Police and Cheshire East Council should be sent out to all parents highlighting the importance of road safety and safer parking.
- The possibility of attending schools at school drop off time with a fire engine is investigated, as this would highlight the difficulties caused by irresponsible parking. This could also be used as an opportunity to educate parents and pupils.
- That a walking to schools with hero's campaign be introduced – Police or fire officers could be involved in the introduction of walking buses.
- That signs be erected outside schools showing pictures of correct and incorrect ways to park.

## **18.0 Meeting with Traffic Management Officer**

18.1 The group met with R Johnson, Traffic Management Officer for Cheshire Constabulary. He reported that there were 70 Road Traffic Officers (including motorways) for Cheshire and 1000 PCSO's. However, only Cheshire East Council's Civil Enforcement Officers had the power to issue penalty charge notices for parking on double or single yellow lines. While the Police have the powers to ticket for the offence of obstruction this is can and is done within the officers normal duties. He highlighted that the Police and PCSO's would try to educate rather than issue fines in the first place.

## **19.0 Civil Enforcement**

19.1 The Councils Civil Enforcement Team actively pursue the issue of safer parking around schools. Morning and afternoon visits take place to coincide with the pick up and drop off times and target those schools where safety of the children, pedestrians and road users is of particular concern.

- 19.2 There are currently 11 Enforcement Officers to patrol all schools in the Borough, the Officers would prefer to educate advise and move on irresponsible and inconsiderate parkers rather than issue penalty charge notices. The group felt that enforcement was required to set an example to parents and that mobile CCTV cameras should also be considered.
- 19.3 Members attended a site visit in the location highlighted by several Councillors in the questionnaire, with the Officers during pick up times to witness a typical day on the school run. During that time, one parent was issued with a Penalty Charge Notice for parking on the keep clear markings and others were made aware of their inconsiderate parking.
- 19.4 Members noted that the Parking Service is currently recruiting a further 4 Civil Enforcement Officers which will provide some additional resource to their small team so as to further address the demand for enforcement around schools.
- 19.5 All signage and linage, particularly double yellow lines and no stopping zones should be checked to ensure that they are up to date, clear and adequate.

### **Background Documents**

National Travel Survey 2013

Travelling to School: DFES and DFT report

An Evaluations of the Travelling to School programme

Travelling to School: An Action Plan : DFT