

Highways and Transport Committee

Date of Meeting:	22 nd September 2022
Report Title:	Notice of Motion: 'Safer School Streets'
Report of:	Tom Moody, Director of Highways & Infrastructure
Report Reference No:	HT/65/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report responds to the Notice to Motion proposed at Council seeking a process that would allow a Safer School Street to be created for all schools, where supported by those schools, which will provide a safer environment and enable children to walk and cycle to school safely.
- 1.2. This report outlines actions required to address the issues raised by the Notice to Motion to Council in July 2022, where Council resolved that the matter be referred to the Highways and Transport Committee.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This paper proposes the preparation of a short report that outlines the process for identifying suitable School Street locations, the required legal process for the implementation of School Streets including consultation, enforcement requirements and commitments required from the school community to support implementation.
- 2.2. The recommendations in this report align with the Council's Corporate Plan. They support the objective of being an open and transparent council as well as supporting sustainability initiatives within our communities which promote a local response to the climate challenge.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Highways and Transport Committee is recommended to endorse the proposed response to the Notice of Motion, which will be made available on the Council's highways webpage.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. There have been several requests from school communities in the Borough to implement School Street closures. There have also been a small number of unauthorised road closures by schools, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, where local action has been taken to reduce traffic levels and increase space for social-distancing.
- 4.2. Any future implementation of Schools Streets will support delivery of the Council's adopted Sustainable Modes of Travel to Schools (SMOTS) strategy, which is available at;
https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/school_transport/sustainable-modes-of-travel.aspx#:~:text=The%20SMOTS%20Strategy%20is%20one,are%20significant%20links%20between%20them.&text=We%20have%20assessed%20home%20to%20school%20travel%20and%20transport%20needs.
- 4.3. Clearly defining the procedures for developing School Streets will enable schools to identify whether or not the locality is suitable for implementing this type of measure. Clearer guidelines will assist in managing expectations, prevent unauthorised closures and mitigate the potential legal implications of unauthorised measures.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. No other options were considered. In the interests of being open and transparent, the response to this Notice of Motion to Council will be considered by the relevant service Committee in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

6. Background

- 6.1. A School Street is a road outside a school that is subject to a temporary restriction/prohibition of motorised traffic for defined time-limited periods during school drop-off and pick-up times. The restrictions would apply to both school-related and through traffic, during term-time only.
- 6.2. School Street schemes aim to offer a proactive solution for school communities to tackle air pollution, poor health and improve road safety. It can encourage active travel to school, a healthier lifestyle and lead to a better environment for everyone. Further information is available at <http://schoolstreets.org.uk/>

- 6.3.** Local authorities in the UK have powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to regulate traffic and restrict access:
- to avoid danger to persons or other traffic using the road;
 - to facilitate the passage on the road of any class of traffic (including pedestrians);
 - to prevent the use of a road by vehicular traffic where such use is inappropriate given the street context.
- 6.4.** Any School Street scheme would require a Traffic Management Order to be applied to a street around a school, temporarily restricting access to motorised vehicles so that the street will, in effect, become a pedestrian (and cycle) only zone. Access for cycles would not be automatic for all Orders, rather it would be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- 6.5.** A range of measures can be used by local authorities to enforce School Streets, in addition to the essential road signs indicating No Entry to motorised vehicles during stated time periods. The measures can include rising bollards, gates or Automated Number Plate Recognition cameras. Cheshire East Council currently has no defined plans for the installation of ANPR cameras in the borough.
- 6.6.** School Street closures are usually co-ordinated on a day-to-day basis by volunteers from the school community, who supervise the street closure and advise motor vehicles that are required to use alternative routes. The availability and training of sufficient volunteers would be a key consideration during the development of each School Street scheme.
- 6.7.** The Council's SMOTS team has been actively engaged with a small number of schools in the development of school access improvements which have considered School Streets as an option. This experience indicates that the following considerations are important in developing viable schemes, including:
- 6.7.1.** The volume and nature of traffic passing the school
 - 6.7.2.** The quality and consistency of Active Travel – walking and cycling - routes to the school
 - 6.7.3.** The suitability of roads onto which traffic would be displaced due to the road closure
 - 6.7.4.** Analysis of road safety records over the preceding 5-year period to assess any impacts on road accident casualties.
 - 6.7.5.** Consultation responses from statutory consultees and the local community
 - 6.7.6.** The level of support from the school community, including parents, teachers and school governors.

- 6.8.** The procedures for creating a School Street are equivalent to those for making any other Traffic Management Order. This is expected to include a period of informal consultation with stakeholders, include ward councillors, during the feasibility stages. Once a firm design proposal has been developed, this would then be subject to a period of Statutory Consultation before a decision is made on the making of the Order.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** It is essential that School Streets schemes actively engage with the local school community and residents that will be directly affected by any School Streets closures. This will ensure that practical considerations such as access to properties, deliveries and access for vulnerable or disabled persons can be fully considered during development of the scheme. Cheshire East Council would expect there to be general support for the School Streets closure.
- 7.2.** Consultation will be carried out as part of the legal process in making the appropriate Traffic Regulation Order. Statutory consultees including Police, Fire, Ambulance services and public transport operators need to be supportive of a School Street proposal.
- 7.3.** Cheshire East Council routinely engages communities in 2 phases of consultation as traffic schemes develop. Initially a period of informal consultation would inform the design process, followed by a period of Statutory Consultation.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1.** There are no direct legal consequences of this report.
- 8.1.2.** Each School Street scheme will need to be compliant with the closure processes, identified under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1.** A modest amount of staff time is required to prepare the School Streets procedure and update the Council's webpages, as a guide to school communities on this theme. This will be covered through existing highway revenue budgets.
- 8.2.2.** The budget for specific School Street schemes will be considered, on a case-by-case basis, with budget allocations determined as part of the annual LTP capital programme which is reported to Committee at the start of each programme year. Depending on the level of interest arising from schools, there is likely to be a need to prepare a prioritised programme of schemes which would be reported to Committee as part of the annual capital programme.

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1. There are no policy implications as a result of this response to the Notice of Motion, as School Streets may be implemented under existing policies and programmes adopted by the Council.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1. There are no equality implications as a result of this response to the Notice of Motion.
- 8.4.2. Equality impact assessments will be prepared for any proposed School Streets scheme, on a case-by-case basis, as part of the scheme development process.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1. There are no Human resource implications arising as a result of this Notice of Motion.

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1. There are no risk management implications arising as a result of this Notice of Motion.
- 8.6.2. Risks arising from any proposed School Streets scheme will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

8.7. Rural Communities

- 8.7.1. There are no specific rural communities' implications as a result of this Notice of Motion. The proposed approach would apply equally to all schools within the borough.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 8.8.1. The introduction of School Streets can have positive impacts for Children and Young People/Cared for Children within the borough. Well-designed School Street schemes in appropriate locations can have positive impacts on children's health and well-being by encouraging greater levels of active travel. There is evidence that increasing active travel can have positive impacts on students participation with learning and readiness-to-learn.

8.9. Public Health

- 8.9.1. The introduction of School Streets can have positive impacts on public health within the borough. Well-designed School Street schemes in appropriate locations can have positive impacts on levels of air quality, noise, road accident casualties and health/wellbeing.
- 8.9.2. The design process will need to ensure that the negative outcomes of poorly specified schemes are avoided, such as displacement of problems to neighbouring areas.

8.10. Climate Change

- 8.10.1. Committee will note that the implementation of well-designed School Street schemes within Cheshire East can make a positive contribution to more active and sustainable journeys to school, reducing congestion, improving road safety, improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions from motorised vehicles.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Richard Hibbert, Head of Strategic Transport and Parking Richard.hibbert@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	A) Notice of Motion to Council B) Process Flow Chart
Background Papers:	Notice of Motion to Council 21 st July 2022, "Safer School Streets" – Proposed by Cllr Suzie Akers-Smith, Seconded by Cllr Lata Anderson