

Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

24 September 2021

Chairperson: Councillor S.M.Penry

Vice Chairperson: Councillor R.W.Wood

Councillors: A.R.Aubrey, C.Galsworthy, D.Keogh,
W.F.Griffiths, R.Davies, J.Hale and S.Jones

Officers In Attendance: D.Griffiths, M.Roberts, N.Headon, C.Plowman,
H.Hasan, P. Jackson and J.Smith

Invitees: Councillors M.Harvey, R.G.Jones and P.A.Rees

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2021 were approved.

2. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

The Committee scrutinised the following Cabinet Board items:

Welsh Government proposed 20mph default speed limit across Wales

Members were advised of the current position regarding the Welsh Government proposed 20mph default speed limit for Wales. A discussion took place regarding the financial impacts of this scheme; it was asked if Officers will be lobbying for increased funding for speed cushions and physical restrictions that will slow motorists down, as it was recognised that there was not enough resources within the Police to enforce this across the whole of the County Borough.

Officers explained that the intention from the blanket order was that hard engineering measures weren't planned as part of the wider default 20mph limit; and to move away from the extensive number of

speed cushions that would be required as part of this scheme, due to the costs that Local Authorities would be facing across the whole of Wales. It was added that there could be money available for entry features into communities, forewarning people that they were entering a built up area from a strategic route.

Members were informed that Welsh Government were undertaking pilots across eight Local Authorities; Neath Port Talbot was included in this pilot, with specific reference to the Cilfrew community.

It was confirmed that Officers had been raising the issue of funding with Welsh Government, and the circulated report set out a number of areas which were in discussion including undertaking a review of their maps.

The Committee noted that there would be significant costs in terms of the quantum of signage that may be required, and any changes to the legislative orders. An example of a change in legislative order would include if the Council decided that some of the main roads or strategic routes, where bus services running, would be best kept at 30mph; the Council would have to advertise to request that the road becomes 30mph, as in the proposals from Welsh Government, all roads will be defaulted to 20mph.

The circulated report stated that the financial impacts were currently unknown, and it was confirmed this was due to this being such an extensive piece of work; Officers were lobbying Welsh Government, and were being assured that funding will be available. It was mentioned that there would be significant work in terms of supporting the roads that were felt should be maintained at 30mph.

Officers explained that there was a meeting scheduled with the Deputy Minister, Leaders of Councils across Wales and relevant Cabinet Members; at this meeting, all concerns will be raised, particularly the financial implications of this scheme.

It was noted that an All Member Seminar had been arranged for Monday 27 September 2021 to brief Members on the Welsh Government proposed 20mph default speed limit across Wales. Officers were also going to be providing Members with a draft to the Welsh Government consultation that had been prepared from an Authority perspective; Members were asked to review this document before the Seminar. It was added that a lot of the questions contained within the consultation, were unable to be answered as an Authority

as they were directed to individuals; Officers would be asking Members to respond to these particular questions based on the streets within their Wards.

Following the All Member Seminar, it was stated that Officers would take on board all of the feedback and incorporate it into the consultation; it would then be proposed that the Cabinet Member for Streetscene, the Director of Environment and Regeneration and the Head of Engineering and Transport be granted authority to submit the consultation to Welsh Government.

Following scrutiny, the Committee noted the report.

Footway/cycleway link to Eglwys Nunnydd and St Davids Park, Margam

Officers provided a report on the proposal for capital investment in the provision of a footway/cycleway on Water Street to link Eglwys Nunnydd and St Davids Park to the A48 Margam.

Members queried how many times had there been a bid made for this scheme, and why the Council was still bidding on it despite being unsuccessful to secure Welsh Government external grant funding.

The report highlighted that a number of bids for Safe Routes in Communities had been made for this project; in the past, grants had been approved for works on the highways in the area, however these works weren't specific to the footpath. It was determined that this area required a Safe Route in Communities for the residents for a number of reasons.

It was explained that the Council had a long history of progressing Safe Routes in Communities across the County Borough, and after trying on several occasions to secure the funding from Welsh Government, the Council was not able to on this occasion; therefore, the Council were being asked to contribute to the funding of the scheme due to the elements of concerns with road safety in the areas.

The concerns with the safety of this particular site were explained to Members. It was noted that the Local Development Plan (LDP) included dormitory settlements across the County Borough, some of which weren't served by footpaths; the link to Eglwys Nunnydd and St Davids Park, Margam was one of those areas. Officers highlighted

that the estates in discussion did not have any safe access way out on foot.

Furthermore, Members were informed that there had been some changes in terms of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) traffic movements, which was detailed within the circulated report. It was stated that several years ago, the Leadership in Bridgend County Borough Council, approached Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC), following issues with HGVs driving through the small villages in Pyle. It was noted that a major project was undertaken to alter the highway to allow HGV access to the industrial estate which was accessed via Water Street in Margam; this resulted in a higher volume of HGV traffic utilising this route to access the industrial estate.

Following a query regarding the lack of school children that would use the proposed footpath, it was explained that at the time of the first bid to Welsh Government, the Safe Route to School Programme was a factor contributing to the succession of funding for these types of projects; due to the low number of children that would have used this route to walk to school, Welsh Government did not approve the funding. However, since then the Safer Routes in Communities Programme had been established which considers all users and residents within various areas. It was mentioned that although the children in the area had transport to school, there was no route out of this area for residents on foot and that was a concern.

A discussion took place in regards to the cost of the scheme, to which it was predicated that it would cost around £550k. Officers provided information regarding the various products and materials that would be required, and highlighted that certain products were currently very volatile. Members were informed that Officers were hopeful to deliver this project within its budget; the figures had been based on a schedule of rates for the Council's Streetcare Services, which had been reviewed by an external consultant. It was stated that until work is contracted there is always the potential to be variances; however, this was the case for every project that the Council considers.

It was asked if there were plans to put in a footway/cycle way from the estate in discussion, towards the area of Pyle, which was located in Bridgend; this route would be in the opposite direction of the route detailed in the circulated report. It was noted that the Council was currently reviewing the Active Travel Routes, and a consultation was currently being undertaken on this matter; if a footway/cycleway was

to be established towards the area of Pyle, then joint proposals would need to be considered with colleagues in Bridgend Country Borough Council due to the link between communities. Members were informed that there were plans to join up communities across the County in that respect, however this rested with the Active Travel future plans.

Reference was made to paragraph six of the letter that was received from the residents of Eglwys Nunydd and St Davids, which was detailed in the circulated report; Officers were asked to elaborate on this.

The Committee was informed that there was a group of Officers within the Local Authority who were part of the Capital Programme Steering Group; this Group considers issues relating to capital projects and associated funding including unforeseen incidents across the County Borough such as flooding or landslides. It was stated that this Group had been in operation for some time and prior to the recent review which proposed changes to the procedures around how schemes were authorised the scheme in discussion was approved. As a consequence Officers had been asked to present this report to the Streetscene and Engineering Cabinet Board to share the information and to ensure that Members were sighted on the proposal for consideration. It was explained that the residents were informed of the scheme as it had been thought, incorrectly, the project had been incorporated into the works programme via its Capital Programme Steering Group approval.

It had been noted in the meeting that the project had been raised for consideration in the annual Members' Surgery meetings regarding the Highways and Engineering works programme. Given the scale of the project Members queried the breakdown of programme spend throughout the Wards. Officers stated that whilst spend was limited there was potential for schemes to start as small feasibility projects under the programme however a project of this scale could not be funded out of the programme; this was the reason why it went to the Capital Programme Steering Group for consideration of investment from the Capital Programme. It was mentioned that this had happened in many areas in the past. Officers could provide information as required and noted spend as discussed in the surgeries formed part of a wider asset management approach under the Highway Asset Management Plan including essential safety work such as surfacing needs, barrier repairs and other safety hazards that may come to light from asset surveys.

It was noted that over the past few years, the Head of Streetcare, had sent all Members a briefing note in advance of the Member Surgeries which set out the available budget and the process. Officers noted that if the available budget was averaged across all wards the amount would only be around £40k, however actual spend varied according to need, for example, there could be bridges that needing repairing or drainage assets that needed addressing in specific wards in a given year. Officers confirmed again that a scheme of this scale and nature would not come under the Highways and Engineering Programme but as noted some feasibility work might be undertaken. Following a study, the outcome would inform future decision taking; over the years, various Members had requested a range of studies into potential schemes in their Wards.

The Local Member for the Margam Ward addressed the Committee, and expressed the need for the footway/cycleway link to Eglwys Nunnydd and St Davids Park.

It was raised that there was an error contained within the circulated report; on pages 211 and 212, it mentioned '*a reduction in the National speed limit along the A48 route from 50mph to 40mph*'. However, it was confirmed that it should state '*a reduction in the National speed limit along the A48 route from 60mph to 40mph*'.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the recommendation to go to Cabinet Board.

Traffic Regulation Order/s: Glais to Pontrdawe

The Committee received a report regarding a 40 mph Speed Limit Traffic Regulation Order at the A4067 Glais to Pontardawe.

Officers explained that the vast majority of this network falls within the adjoining Council, the City and County of Swansea; for some time they had been concerned with the number of road accidents that had taken place on the highway network in the area. It was stated that there was evidence of motorists speeding on the road; colleagues in the City and County of Swansea had expressed that the only way in which the speed of traffic on that part of the network could be controlled, would be to reduce the speed limit. Members were informed that Neath Port Talbot Council had a small section of the network that would need to be changed in order to allow for the whole A4067 to have the average speed cameras; the average speed

cameras seemed to work effectively, as there was evidence of a lot more compliance with cameras of this nature.

The Committee discussed the placement of the average speed cameras. It was confirmed that they will be placed on both sides of the network, in Neath Port Talbot and the City and County of Swansea in order to capture the average speed across the length of the road.

In regards to the advertisement of the order, it was confirmed that it will need to be advertised in the press, such as local newspapers, and on the Neath Port Talbot Council website. Members were also informed that signage will need to be placed in specific areas to inform motorists of the average speed cameras. Members were informed that the grant that was submitted by the City and County of Swansea and the money had to be spent by March 31 2022; therefore, the preparatory work was in hand and the order just needed to go through the legal process. It was mentioned that colleagues in the City and County of Swansea were completing a parallel exercise on their part of the network, and were aligned with the Neath Port Talbot Council's work on the order.

Following scrutiny, the Committee were supportive of the recommendation to go to Cabinet Board.

3. **Forward Work Programme 2021/22**

Members noted the Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Forward Work Programme for 2021/22.

It was stated that the Streetscene and Engineering Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Workshop was scheduled for 14 October 2021.

CHAIRPERSON

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