

Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 28 September 2017

Attendance

Members of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Ian Angus (Chair)
Cllr Christopher Haynes (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE
Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal
Cllr Keith Inston
Cllr John Rowley
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz
Cllr Arun Photay
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Mak Singh

Witnesses

- Tracey Packham, Outer Sector Inspector, Wolverhampton NPU
- Karen Till, Senior School Crossing Patrol Officer, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC)
- Sarah Roden, School Crossing Patrol Warden, CWC
- Tom Richards, Project Coordinator West Midlands (Schools), Living Streets
- Julia Crear, Regional Director South, Living Streets
- Jo Phillips, Director of Finance and Services, the Royal School
- Tricia Scott, Headteacher, Loxdale Primary School
- Emma Wright-Jones, Deputy Headteacher, Loxdale Primary School
- Simon Sutton - resident

Employees

- Nick Broomhall, Service Lead - Traffic & Road Safety, City of Wolverhampton Council
- Paul Lever, Professional Lead - Road Safety Training and Promotion, City of Wolverhampton Council
- Donna Cope – Democratic Services Officer
- Earl Piggott-Smith – Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 **Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of interest

Councillor Phil Bateman declared an interest in item 5 as he is Chair of Governors at Ashmore Park School.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting (29 June 2017)

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, has spoken to Ravi Phull to check progress on actions agreed following the panel meeting 29.7.17. A summary of progress is outlined below.

Overall progress made to date:

(A) The rent with confidence scheme provides an enhanced rent guarantee scheme, including covering rent in advance, and/or off-setting rent loss as well as training, support and vetting processes for landlords and tenants, to be drawn up in conjunction with the Private Sector Housing Forum referred to in (B) below;

The Private Sector Housing Forum (detailed below) will be the platform to relaunch the rent deposit scheme with new terms. The terms to be agreed by members of the forum.

(B) engagement with the sector to include the setting up of a Private Sector Housing Forum. The forum will have representatives of councillors, representatives of estate agents, landlords, tenants, client side representatives and community/charity groups such as Citizens Advice. The aim of the forum will be to work together to improve standards in the private rented housing sector.

The first forum meeting is planned to be held in November 2017. At the time of drafting expressions of interest have been received from 40 landlords and managing agents in the City. The plan is to invite everyone to the first event and agree a memorandum of understanding which will set out how the forum will be set up, membership and a code of conduct.

(C) publicity about the rent with confidence scheme to include a communications and marketing process and plan that enhances the scheme in a way that covers all parts of the city. The plan will be drawn up in conjunction with members of the Private Sector Housing Forum referred to in (B) above.

- Rent with Confidence officers are conducting a proactive inspection regime of all managing/letting agents in Wolverhampton with our Trading Standards team to inform agents about:
 - The rent with confidence scheme – including making appointments for officers to go out and inspect their portfolio and register them onto the scheme
 - Any legal updates
 - Trading Standards are taking the opportunity to advise agents on their consumer obligations

- [Rent with Confidence](#) (RwC) now has its own Facebook page, this will be followed up shortly with twitter. These pages will be used as an interactive forum to engage with tenants and landlords and to positively advertise the scheme and our starred landlords/agents.
- City Housing has a new enforcement policy which is going to Cabinet on 18 October. This policy underpins the principles of engagement with the RwC scheme as a preferable alternative to a robust enforcement regime that will be used to tackle unscrupulous landlords.
The policy once agreed at Cabinet will be communicated City wide through as many channels as possible.

5 **Parking near Schools**

The Chair introduced the meeting and welcomed everyone. He discussed the recent public consultation that had taken place and the high number of responses received in response to the press release

Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, introduced the report.

Nick Broomhall, Service Lead, Traffic Safety, discussed the report further and explained how and why the issue of illegal and inconsiderate parking outside and near schools is a national problem and number of different approaches had been used to alleviate the problem, as detailed in the main report.

The Chair referred to the importance of working in partnership with parents and schools to find sustainable solutions to the problem and invited the witnesses to give their evidence in four separate sessions.

Session One: **Living Streets** - Tom Richards and Julia Crear.

Living Streets Walk to School campaign is a UK charity aimed at achieving the goal of getting every child that can to walk to school by working with parents, children and schools to make walking safer, more pleasant and the easiest option for short journeys. The witnesses introduced themselves and summarised the aim of Living Streets scheme - which is to encourage and support everyday walking through a range of national schemes and events including Walk to School Week, and WOW – the year-round walk to school challenge.

Julia Crear outlined the work done with schools in Wolverhampton to promote walking as a safe option for children.

In response to questions from the Panel the witnesses stated the following:

- The initiative involved joint working with schools, local authorities, parents and local businesses.
- Several schools in Birmingham have been taking part in the initiative for the past 5 years.
- A variety of campaigns including radio broadcasts were used to promote the scheme.
- Incentives were given to schools that take part.
- Letters were sent to parents encouraging them to participate.

- Schools must meet certain criteria to join.
- Staff would interact with parents at various stages of the scheme including launch day; parents' evenings; at the school gates and via newsletters.

The Chair asked the witnesses for a recommendation they would like the panel to consider that would help the local authority to alleviate the problem of illegal and inconsiderate parking near schools. The witnesses stated it was crucial that the local authority and partners worked together. They stressed Transport Services, Road Safety, Highways, schools, land owners, law enforcement and parents needed to work together to solve the problem and enforcement should focus on persistent parking offenders.

The witnesses were thanked for attending the meeting and participating in the session.

Session Two: **Schools**

- Jo Phillips, Director of Finance and Services, the Royal School
- Mrs Tricia Scott, Headteacher, Loxdale Primary School
- Emma Wright- Jones, Deputy Headteacher, Loxdale Primary School

The witnesses introduced themselves. They outlined the main parking issues at their schools and the measures they had taken to address them. They believed that educating parents was crucial and enforcement was needed to tackle persistent offenders. A number of different ideas had been introduced to help reduce congestion during the school run periods – for example, staggered start times, with limited success. The issue is complicated by new pupil intake each year where new carers and parents need to be educated about the need to look for alternative ways of getting children to school and awareness of parking restrictions aimed at making it safer and the problems caused by driving to school, in some situations when travelling a very short distance from home.

In response to questions from the Panel the witnesses stated the following:

- Officers with authority to issue fines and move offending vehicles must be present at schools to tackle persistent offenders.
- Although it's early days the Living Streets scheme appears to be helping.
- Members of school staff have had difficult situations with some parents refusing to follow traffic restrictions and parking inappropriately causing problems for neighbours around the school. There was concern about the amount of staff time taken to try and manage traffic congestion during the school run.

During the discussion witnesses admitted they hadn't contacted their local Councillor about the issue and the Panel strongly advised them to do so.

The witnesses felt that schools didn't get enough support from the local authority to alleviate the problem. In response to this Nick Broomhall, Service Lead, Traffic Safety, acknowledged there were issues that needed addressing but explained the restrictions faced by his service due to current level of resources available.

The Panel discussed the idea of introducing 'Drop and Go' schemes but felt that due to space restrictions it wasn't practical solution for schools and there was also concern that introduction of parking restrictions would move the problem elsewhere.

The Chair asked the witnesses how the local authority could help alleviate the problem to which they responded:

- Educate those parents and carers who will listen about the impact of inconsiderate or illegal parking and need to support the school in creating a safer environment
- Use enforcement action against offenders
- Install appropriate measure outside the schools to help reduce parking congestion and create a safer environment for children.

The witnesses were thanked for attending the meeting and participating in the session.

Session Three: **Residents** - Simon Sutton (Oak Meadow Primary School area)

The witness introduced himself and in response to questions from the Panel he stated the following:

- The parking problem was worst during the morning and after school.
- Residents were cautious about approaching offenders due to past altercations
- The school have tried to help with the issue but support from the police has been poor.

The Chair asked the witness how the local authority could help alleviate the problem to which he responded:

- Implement more double yellow lines in problem areas
- Utilise unused garage sites for school parking to reduce congestion around the school
- Organise more enforcement presence outside schools

The Panel supported the idea of the local authority exploring alternative parking sites and the Traffic Safety Service Lead advised this was already in place at nearby sites.

Councillor Phil Bateman acknowledged that the problem in this area was particularly bad and despite him contacting several partners, nothing had been done to address the issue. He stated that residents in the area try hard to alleviate the problem but enforcement action is needed. He mentioned an incident involving an ice cream van and believed that lack of enforcement action was heightening the problem.

He believed the issue needed addressing from the start when the school is first created. In response to this, the Traffic Safety Service Lead confirmed that when a new school opens within the city a traffic impact assessment is carried out by the local authority to identify potential parking issues.

The Traffic Safety Service Lead assured those present that alternative unused sites were being considered and his Service were currently talking to Education Services about creating parking provisions for new schools.

Councillor Phil Bateman discussed an incident where a road in that area was kept clear due to communications on social media. He stressed that if this was achieved for one day, it can be achieved every day.

The witness was thanked for attending the meeting and participating in the session.

Session Four - **Police and School Crossing Patrol**

- Tracey Packham, Outer Sector Inspector, Wolverhampton NPU
- Karen Till, Senior School Crossing Patrol Officer
- Sarah Roden, School Crossing Patrol Warden

The witnesses introduced themselves and explained their respective responsibilities for parking enforcement and control around schools. Chief Inspector Packham explained that police resources are limited and the use must be prioritised and balanced against demand for resources needed elsewhere. Chief Inspector Packham explained that the local authority had assumed control of parking enforcement from the police in the area, following a change in legislation. Parking offences on the public highway are treated as civil matter and not a criminal matter.

The local authority can issue fixed penalty notices in specific circumstances. Chief Inspector Packham explained that the police can deal with issues of obstruction on highway but would require a witness who is willing to testify in court to prosecute an offender – the police could not rely on photo as evidence alone.

Following questions from the Panel the Traffic Safety Service Lead discussed the limited powers held by local authorities to control parking.

These included:

- Civil enforcement powers
- Double, single yellow lines and zig zags
- CCTV vehicles

He stressed however, that resources were very limited and city centre and main arterial routes were priority.

The Panel acknowledged that Police and Local Authority resources were stretched but asked whether more could be done to tackle the problem if more resources were in place. Both Police and Traffic Safety believed that more resources would help but stated when these resources were removed the problem would start again.

The School Crossing Patrol Officers added that parents would also 'text' other parents to warn them of enforcement presence.

The Traffic Safety Service Lead stated that despite having the biggest traffic order in place at Upper Villiers, people still offended.

The Panel discussed the CCTV vehicle and monies generated from fixed penalties. The Traffic Safety Service Lead stated that expanding this scheme would not be

easy and he would find out where the money from fixed penalties went to in the authority.

The Panel also discussed installing CCTV cameras outside schools but agreed that it would not be cost effective.

The Police explained that to act against repeat offenders there must be sufficient evidence and it was agreed that incidents should be reported to the Council.

The Chair asked the witnesses how the local authority could help alleviate the problem to which they responded more enforcement presence outside schools on various days.

The witnesses were thanked for attending the meeting and participating in the session.

Panel Recommendations

Members of the Panel considered the evidence heard and discussed how it may wish to answer the question what can the Council do to alleviate car parking near schools?

The following suggestions were noted:

- Newsletters to motorists and pedestrians to explain restrictions on parking
- Physical amendments to the roads
- Enforcement action for repeat offenders
- Cabinet to contact the government requesting more LA powers to deal with the issue illegal or inconsiderate parking outside schools
- Take papers from this group to Planning and Education regarding parking provisions at new schools.
- Promote the work of 'Living Streets' in more Wolverhampton schools and encourage them to participate.
- Stronger enforcement and ringfenced money from fixed penalties to be used make it safer for children to walk to school.
- More support from Licensing enforcement
- Better communication to the public
- Briefing note for Councillors explaining powers and responsibilities of the local authority and police for dealing with parking enforcement issues outside schools.
- Promote Beat the Streets and similar schemes aimed at making it safer for children to walk to school
- Provide more car parks near schools to help reduce congestion
- Install CCTV outside schools.

Chair suggested a sub group from the Panel meet again to discuss these suggestions to agree final recommendations based on the all the evidence presented.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and their contributions.