

**Active Travel - Police Officer Meeting**

**9 October 2018 at 1 - 2pm**

**Committee Room 1, Civic Centre**

**Present**

Cllr Martin Waite (Chair of Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel)

Martin Stevens (Scrutiny Officer)

Sgt Jonathan Butler (West Midlands Police - Road Harm Reduction Team)

PC Stephen Hudson (West Midlands Team - Road Harm Reduction Team)

**Notes**

Cllr Waite outlined that he had commissioned a report for the Vibrant and Sustainable Scrutiny Panel for the 6 December 2018. The report would be a joint report with Public Health and Transportation. Cllr Waite stated he was a great believer in positive influences to encourage people to use active transport. He asked the two Police Officers what in their experience helped to encourage active transport, being mindful that there was not a huge budget for new infrastructure projects. He added that he wanted to be in a position that when funds did become available, whether it be nationally or regionally, that the Council would know exactly what they would like to bid for in terms of active travel projects. He personally was interested in the 20MPH only speed signs, which were non-enforced (i.e. no traffic calming measures).

Sgt Butler suggested Cycling UK as a useful resource. There were some really simple initiatives, which did not require large amount of resources, which could be easily implemented. He commented that Birmingham were moving away from the 20MPH signs and favouring enforcement zones. Sgt Butler suggested contacting Mel Jones at Birmingham City Council for further information on how successful their 20MPH Zones had been. On the back of the work being completed at Birmingham, Sandwell had introduced 20MPH Zones. They were now heavily involved with Sandwell on the enforcement for these roads. Sometimes they would involve school children as part of the enforcement process. If the driver was willing to talk to the children about road safety, it would prevent them having to pay the speeding fine.

Sgt Butler remarked that his colleague, PC Mark Hodson, had pioneered, an initiative called "*Park Safe*," which encouraged PCSOs and members of the public to third party report dangerous instances of parking. PCSOs could not personally give out a fixed penalty notice, they could however submit evidence to be processed by the enforcement team, who could then issue the notice. A member of the public could submit third party evidence via the Force's Website.

Sgt Butler commented that the Police did carry out targeted enforcement at schools when they had been alerted by the Local Authority to a particular issue, such as speeding, dangerous car parking or seat belt compliance issues. The Police kept a list of the schools which were having issues. They had recently been targeting the high profile cases, where their collision data supported the fact there was a problem. Evidence base was an important part in deciding where the Police team would target their activity. If the Council could provide the evidence of problem areas, at certain thresholds, they would carry out enforcement activity.

Sgt Butler stated that Birmingham City Council had just launched a Speed Reporting Portal on their website. Every month a Birmingham Road Safety Partnership meeting was held, where partners came together to analyse the data which had been obtained from the Portal. He was aware of a Black Country Road Safety Forum, but they were not as pro-active as the Birmingham Road Safety Partnership. He suggested that a Portal could be a model to follow in Wolverhampton and the Black Country. Cllr Waite referred to some schools in Wolverhampton which without car parking near the school, there would be speeding. The parked cars effectively acted as an artificial traffic calming measure.

Sgt Butler suggested the Council should start looking at the routes where they wished to encourage active travel, so the Police could begin to consider enforcement action, such as ensuring cars left a large enough gap when passing cyclists. Enforcement action would give confidence to people wishing to use the network. The main way to change driver behaviour was through fear of prosecution. Top Deck has been launched by the Force's Road Harm Reduction Team and saw plain clothes Police Officers equipped with video cameras on buses looking down at passing motorists observing for distracted drivers, such as non-hands free mobile phone usage. The total Road Harm Reduction Team only consisted of six Officers and so they were naturally limited in the resources they could dedicate to the enforcement projects. The media could be used to the Police's advantage at times, by promoting the enforcement activities, the public became more aware of the potential to be caught committing an offence. PC Hudson commented that the biggest temptation for mobile phone usage in a car was in stationary and slow moving traffic. Catching people during these times would hopefully help deter people from the more serious cases when they were driving more quickly.

PC Hudson remarked that their team did not currently do any targeted enforcement on cyclists without lights on public roads and illegal use of cycling on pavements. They would however deal with offences committed appropriately if they were observed in action. There had only been three fixed penalty notices issued in the last five years to cyclists in the West Midlands Police Force Area. The greatest threat of harm was clearly with cars. Sgt Butler commented that there had just been a consultation about changing the law for cyclists hitting pedestrians and causing serious injury or death in public places. The law change would bring in specific offences for these cases. PC Hudson remarked that three quarters of cycling fatalities took place at junctions. On analysing the data, 85-90% of the fatalities showed the driver of the vehicle was at fault.

Sgt Butler stated if a cycling lane was implemented on Stafford Road, people would be more likely to cycle from Low Hill into the City. Deprived areas tended to have higher levels of obesity and so cycle lanes could have a positive impact on public health and there were the obvious benefits to air quality.

Cllr Waite asked about theft of bikes. Sgt Butler responded that the Safer Travel Team who were funded by Transport for West Midlands had a bike marking system, which promoted the system at train stations and other areas.

Cllr Waite asked the Police Officers about "Play Streets," in residential neighbourhoods, where streets were closed down for a few hours. Sgt Butler commented that he had heard mixed reviews at the Safer Road Partnership meetings. There was a discussion about different economic areas and whether playing on the streets amounted to anti-social behaviour or harmless social activity.

The Scrutiny Officer asked about safety campaign for cyclists. PC Hudson responded that working with partners in Birmingham to obtain funding, they issued bike lights and ruck sack covers. They tended to target the universities. They had also done some work whilst out on patrol in the evenings, where they had issued lights and florescent covers to cyclists who did not have them. There was a discussion about bike racks on trains. There was agreement that these were limited and on occasions the train could be too full to allow cyclists onto the train with their bike. The train transport system was clearly overloaded at certain times of the day. The folded bikes were becoming more popular.

Cllr Waite asked if operations such as "Close Pass" in Birmingham had led to behavioural change in drivers. PC Hudson remarked that the Police worked together with the Fire Service to deliver the education on "Close Pass." Research had shown that education by law enforcement was not as well received by the general public than if it was by other third-party organisations.

There was a discussion about speed cameras. Cllr Waite asked if the re-introduced cameras in Solihull and Birmingham had been successful. PC Hudson responded that he knew the trial on Coventry Road had been a success. There had not been a serious road or fatal traffic accident since the cameras had been introduced. Traffic was also moving better out of Birmingham City since the change.

Sgt Butler commented that the technology which the Police now had for speed enforcement was excellent and had led to more prosecutions. One mobile device which they used did not require the Police to stop the individual and had led to more prosecutions. He remarked that there was an intelligent analyst at the Police Force who analysed the last three years of KSI (Killed or Seriously Injured) data. Seriously injured was anyone who required an overnight stay in hospital. In 2017 for the West Midlands Region, which included Staffordshire, West Mercia and Warwickshire, the KSI's were up 23% on the year before. The analyst produced a document showing the roads with the most problems in the

individual areas. Stafford Road was one of the roads in Wolverhampton that had been identified. The Police data on this road had led them to the conclusion that it was not speed which was the problem on the Stafford Road. Their observations had showed that people were running the red lights on the traffic light junction coming out of Oxley Moor Road. They had consequently led a targeted plain clothes operation at the lights, with tickets being issued when the lights had been contravened.

Sgt Butler stated that the Traffic Department across the whole Force area was now approximately 95 Traffic Officers, but they were not all on Duty at the same time. As an example, he cited that on the present day there was only 16 Traffic Officers covering the roads in the whole of the West Midlands Police Force area. The minimum staffing number for anyone day was 10 Traffic Officers. They had been conducting eye check tests when they had stopped drivers, which had led to some alarming failures.

Sgt Butler commented that, The Road Safety Team worked with the Wolves Academy Team to improve Road Safety. It was also being introduced at other Football Clubs across the West Midlands. The Team were also working with the Rugby and Cricket Clubs.

The meeting ended at 2:20pm.