
MEETING	SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS AD HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	13 OCTOBER 2010
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS POTTER (CHAIR), ASPDEN, BROOKS (VICE-CHAIR), D'AGORNE, FIRTH, MERRETT AND POTTER (CHAIR)

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. In addition to the standard declarations for the committee the following interest was declared:

Councillor Brooks declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 (minute 12 refers) as a member of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

10. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 8 September 2010 be approved and signed by the Chair subject to minute 8 being amended to read *“previously a page had been funded by independent schools on CarShareYork”*.

11. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the council's Public Participation Scheme.

12. SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS - FURTHER EVIDENCE GATHERING

Members received a report that detailed information that had been gathered during the School Travel Plans Review and provided a framework for further evidence gathering.

(i) Network Management and Parking Enforcement Around Schools

Members questioned the Head of Environmental Enforcement and Parking Services regarding the arrangements that were in place to enforce parking restrictions around those schools where enforceable parking restrictions had been made. Officers stated that, in addition to scheduled patrols, they operated on a risk

management basis when allocating resources. The hot-line telephone number had been publicised and a rapid response was possible using the motorbike team. Last year 30 Penalty Charge Notices had been issued around schools; this was a higher number than some other authorities. Civil Enforcement Officers were required to wear a uniform and hence their presence also acted as a deterrent.

Officers were asked if they were aware of strategies that had been effective in other parts of the country. They stated that Bournemouth and Medway had invested in vehicles using CCTV recording equipment. The costs of such vehicles and the necessary staffing would be between £50,000 and £100,000. Consideration could be given to finding out whether there were authorities nearer to York that used such vehicles and if there would be the possibility of hiring the vehicles for a period of time.

(ii) Planning

Members sought clarification as to whether there were government standards in respect of school travel plans. They were informed that there were no required standards but that guidance was available. Criteria had been in place in respect of the standards required for schools to receive funding for travel plans. This funding was, however, no longer available. The committee suggested that the criteria that had been previously used by the Government in relation to funding for school travel plans, should be the standard required when school planning applications were considered.

The Head of Development Management gave details of how travel plans were sometimes submitted as part of a school's initial planning application. A member of the Highway Development Team explained the process by which school travel plans were assessed when submitted as part of a planning application.

Alternatively, sometimes the introduction of a travel plan was a condition of planning approval being granted. Members sought information as to how the conditions were enforced. Officers explained that every effort was made to resolve any issues with the schools themselves, as it would not be possible for the council to take planning enforcement action against one of its local authority maintained schools. Whilst conditions had to be imposed because the permission always relates to the land (the ownership or control over which may change), it was explained that there is no basis for the Council to in effect take enforcement action against itself. In other planning cases, breaches of control on Council owned property have been resolved within the Authority through discussion between the relevant Directorates. Members' attention was drawn to two schools that were not currently complying with conditions that had been set in respect of travel plans. Members expressed concern that schools were not subject to the same enforcement procedures as private individuals or businesses.

(iii) School Travel Plans – National Best Practice

A representative from Sustrans gave details of national best practice in respect of school travel plans. Members' attention was drawn to the paper commissioned by the Department for Transport entitled "Making School Travel Plans Work: Effects, Benefits and Success Factors at English Schools". Members were informed that some headteachers were concerned about liabilities that may arise if schools were to promote walking and cycling and hence it was useful for them to have someone available to support them with such initiatives. Linking motivational support with small improvements to the infrastructure could have a significant impact. Other strategies included, raising awareness of the educational benefits of walking or cycling to school, promoting sustainable travel to staff and including information about school travel plans in the school prospectus.

Details were given of initiatives that had proved to be successful in other parts of the country, as detailed in Annex B of the report. Discussion took place as to whether it would be worthwhile to implement a scheme similar to the "Footprints" initiative which had been instigated by Nottingham City Council. Officers gave detail of a similar scheme that had taken place in York whereby the council provided some resources but the intention was that schools would continue with these projects, using their own resources where necessary.

(iv) Best Practice in York

Consideration was given to best practice in York, as detailed in Annex C of the report. It was noted that a common feature of successful travel plans had been the involvement of a senior member of staff and the support of the headteacher.

Members noted that, although some schools had involved Governors in the drawing up and implementation of travel plans this was not the case in the majority of schools. This was an issue that could be given further consideration.

Officers stated that their initial focus had been on ensuring that schools had travel plans in place and that their work was now developing to identify which strategies were working and which were not being as successful.

The representative from Sustrans informed Members that data arising from the Bike It initiative would soon be available and could be provided for the Committee. The analysis demonstrated an increase in families cycling and evidence of improvements in health and fitness as well as in children's learning.

(v) Successful Travel Initiatives in York

Consideration was given to Annex D of the report which gave details of successful travel initiatives in York. Additional information was tabled, which included an interim report on the Jack Archer Award - Roaming Romans Competition 2010.

Members were updated on the Car Free Day that had taken place on 13 October 2010. Unfortunately it had rained heavily on the day but the take-up of free bus tickets had been encouraging. Details were given of the work that had taken place with schools, particularly Fishergate Primary School and St George's Primary School. Cycle try out sessions had taken place and had proved to be very successful. A play entitled "What Happens when it Rains?" had also been arranged. Pledge cards had been issued and figures on take-up would be provided to the committee in due course.

(vi) Transition from Primary to Secondary School

It was noted that many of the initiatives were targeted at primary schools and that different strategies were needed at secondary age level. Discussion took place as to whether more could be done in respect of the transition from primary to secondary school for example by instigating tutor-led cycling routes or encouraging pupils to cycle or walk on the induction days that were held. It was noted that the distances from home to secondary school were often further than to primary school and that journeys were likely to be disparate. The introduction of diplomas would result in some pupils attending a different school for some subjects and hence consideration would need to be given to the travel arrangements.

(vii) Cycle Ownership

Members suggested that bike ownership may be an important factor and that when some children outgrew the cycle that they used at primary school they may not have access to an adult size cycle. It was suggested that consideration could be given to offering a cycling allowance to pupils who were eligible for free transport to schools.

Details were given of a ward-funded project that enabled young people to construct their own cycles and be taught about cycle maintenance and road safety awareness. The project was supported by the Police and it was hoped that it would also have benefits in terms of reducing anti-social behaviour.

(viii) Tackling Traffic Congestion in York – Further Analysis of School Journeys

Consideration was given to the further analysis that had been carried out on school journeys, as detailed in Annex E to the report. Members noted that 48% of those that travelled by car for school/nursery had a journey of less than two miles and that only

15% lived more than five miles away. It was noted that pressures on time may be a key factor for parents in deciding whether to take their child to school by car as part of their journey to work.

(ix) Obesity Levels

Consideration was given to the data on obesity levels in York for children in Reception and Year 6, as detailed in Annex F of the report. Members agreed that, from the data provided, it was difficult to identify a direct link between obesity and possible links to modes of transport to school. It was, however, suggested that more could be done to raise parents'/carers' awareness of the health, fitness and learning benefits if their child walked or cycled to school.

(x) Information Available on Council Website

Members noted the information that was available on the council's website, as detailed in Annex G of the report. Members suggested that it would be useful for information to be made available to parents on issues such as safe routes to school but noted that this would have resource implications.

(xi) Visits to School

Members finalised the arrangements for their visits to school, as detailed in Annex H of the report. It was noted that Manor CE School had requested that the date of their visit be rescheduled and the date had provisionally been rearranged for Thursday 4 November 2010 at 2.30 pm. Councillor Brooks agreed to visit the St Wilfrid's School on Tuesday 19 October with Councillor Potter.

Consideration was given to the questions that Members would ask to staff and pupils. Questions were agreed, based on some of the examples detailed in paragraph 22 of the report. It was agreed that the responses would be made anonymous.

(xii) Draft Recommendations

Members were asked to consider draft recommendations that they would wish to see included in the final report. It was agreed that the draft recommendations should include the following:

- The council should adopt the government standards previously used for determining whether schools received travel plan funding as the required standards for development control purposes.
- Whilst it was appropriate for the council to seek to resolve travel plan issues directly with schools it was also important that enforcement measures were implemented if necessary.
- Raising awareness of school travel plans, including incentivisation and the promoting of best practice.

It was agreed that further suggested draft recommendations from individual Members should be sent to the Scrutiny Officer to enable them to be amalgamated and circulated via email to the whole committee.

- RESOLVED: (i) That the arrangements for the school visits be as detailed in Annex H subject to the amendments agreed in paragraph (xi).
- (ii) That the questions to be asked on the school visits be as agreed and circulated via email to Members and to the schools prior to the visits taking place.
- (iii) That suggested draft recommendations arising from the review be circulated to Members for consideration.

REASON: To progress this review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols.

Councillor R Potter, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 8.10 pm].