

Safe Travel to School Consultation Comments

Councillor Stephen Galloway – Executive Member for City Strategy

This proposal seems a little ill-judged. It confuses the powers available to the Council with those that can be exercised by school governing bodies.

It muddles issues like the footpath and carriageway resurfacing programme prioritisation with parking enforcement.

It fails to include a key issue - the "safe routes to school" programme (and the commitment of some members of the SMC to it!).

Arising out of the "safe routes to school" programme there might usefully be a requirement to assess the powers that might be used to enforce non-car access to schools and the implications of such for future central government legislation.

Councillor Carol Runciman – Executive Member for Children's Services

I think the focus of the topic needs to be more clearly defined - a review of the work on Safe Routes to School and/or School Travel Plans could be useful but giving a very wide scope could present problems. Although the use of school staff outside or near school entrances might be considered, it is not possible to direct schools to use their staff in this way – it is for them to deploy staff in the ways they consider the most useful.

Parking enforcement is a different topic and could involve another wide ranging set of issues, mainly affecting parents of children attending the school in question, as well as the use of council staff, PCSOs etc. This would need careful consideration and may be outside the scope of this topic.

Damon Copperthwaite – Assistant Director – Development & Transport – City of York Council

The scope and extent of the scrutiny needs to be very carefully developed. On the basis of the registration form the scope is far reaching and would consume significant staff resources in City Strategy and Neighbourhood Services. We would resource it by reprioritising our workload to drop other work and then drawing staff from other areas. I think the timescale quoted of 1-3 months is ambitious.

The topic picks up on an issue that the Council is well aware of and has over a number of years attempted to address through its Safe Routes to School programme and through its Green Travel Plan initiatives. I see no reason why those two initiatives should not be scrutinised. With regard to new initiatives then no doubt the committee could assess what they may be. Whilst I may recognise the issues being raised by the topic I am not convinced that there are new solutions other than those already in place and so am sceptical about the value of the scrutiny.

Christine Packer - School Travel Plan Co-ordinator – City of York Council

PARKING AND SIGNAGE

Illegal parking and inconsiderate parking is a problem outside many of our schools. Many schools have parking restrictions, some do not. Parking Services do visit schools to enforce parking restrictions; when they visit, or if PCSOs are about parking improves and then returns to 'normal' once the officers have gone. Quality of signage does not seem to have a huge influence on how parents park around schools. In some schools, road markings are observed, in others they are totally ignored. Whilst it is clear an official presence makes a difference on the day, in the long term a different solution needs to be reached and this must actively involve the school themselves. Schools need to work with the parents, explaining the safety issues and that their (the parents) inconsiderate parking can cause a hazard to the children themselves, and to encourage more sustainable travel so that the number of cars outside schools are reduced. This work could be coordinated by a School Travel Plan Advisor in conjunction with the school themselves.

If more road markings are introduced, say double yellow lines, this will only push the problem out sideways rather than solve it. In a number of cases, parents block drives and cause obstructions so larger vehicles find it difficult to get through.

Schools are generally reluctant to supervise children outside school on arrival due to staffing issues - teachers are often in the classroom in the morning getting ready for the day and greeting children as they arrive into the classroom. One or two schools may be happy to consider this option, but my impression is that outside school the child is the parent's responsibility.

TRAVEL PLANS AND SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL (SRTS)

Most schools that have travel plans wrote them prior to 2007, the quality of which is variable and mostly not to the standard that is expected currently. With recent travel plans, the SRTS issues have been addressed as part of the travel plan. Evidence suggests that this has been the case in many cases in the past. Engineering (Ben Potter, Louise Robinson) will have records of where SRTS work has been completed and what that constitutes. To review each school's travel plans and recommend changes would probably create more work than there is staffing to do. In practice, the reality is that schools are not always willing to work with us as they have many other priorities.

Travel plans tend to get reviewed due to planning applications or the school, wishes to update them anyway (parking issues is sometimes a driver there). What might be appropriate is to use the schools census information to identify schools with high car use, combined with some local knowledge to identify those schools that could be approached with a view to cutting car use and improving parking. I strongly feel that we should not approach schools simply to target parking - there has to be a holistic approach. The current target, set

by the Department for Transport, is that we are to work with schools to deliver travel plans in 100% of schools by the end of March. For this reason, whilst it may be difficult to incorporate into workloads for this year, it is an obvious line of enquiry come April when all schools should have travel plans and we are looking at how we can maintain modeshift etc.

Speed limits - it is worth noting that unless a school is on a major route or one, which needs to be accessed by emergency vehicles, schools have a 20mph speed limit by them and in most cases, traffic calming as well.

Road and Footpath resurfacing - There may be some benefit in looking at this - Engineering would be the obvious contacts - particularly for footpaths. However, consideration may need to be given to the political impact of potentially improving paths outside schools when other paths around the City may be in greater need of attention.

In summary, parking is an issue. Whilst the Council can improve signage and road markings the real answer is to work with schools to get them to work with their parents to address the issues.

Comments from School Crossing Patrol Team – City of York Council

School Crossing Patrols

Recruitment

There are a number of issues that School Crossing Patrols (SCP) and the Road Safety Team generally would like to raise in relation to the Scrutiny report. Currently SCPs have limited resources in terms of both the provision and supervision of school crossing patrols. Recruiting for school crossing patrol posts continues to be a challenge and, whilst we have a large number of applications, a vast majority drop out of the process along the way. Recruitment forms a disproportionately large part of the supervisor's time and can be immensely frustrating when interviews and training are arranged and carried out, only for the candidate to pull out at the last minute.

In addition to the difficulty of filling the vacant sites we do have, we also face a number of requests for new sites. These sites are reviewed to establish suitability for a school crossing patrol but inevitably are lower down the list than existing posts, which have been left empty through retirement or ill health and where the crossing patrol has become the norm. The supervisor is expected to make at least one visit to every site per term and this simply hasn't happened due to the volume of workload. The Supervisor role is currently part time. With the number of hours spent in recruitment and training, there is certainly a case (and the work) for this post to be made full time.

There are currently 8 vacant SCP posts. The supervisor's post is also vacant and is being covered by a temporary member of staff. It is hoped that this post will be filled in the next couple of months.

Locating SCPs

It should be highlighted that under the School Crossing Patrol Service Guidelines set out by Road Safety GB, few schools in the York area qualify for a school crossing patrol, as they have facilities such as Pelican/ Puffin crossings already at the site, and/or the number of children vs. the volume of traffic is low. We would suggest that a view of the existing sites be carried out to establish whether, in safety (rather than political) terms, an SCP is really required at all sites?

Road Safety

With regard to the speed limits outside and in proximity to schools, DFT guidelines (circular 01/2006) state that engineering on the road would have to be carried out in order to ensure compliance with a 20mph limit. In addition, police need to be in agreement that the correct speed limit has been set for the road so as to ensure that enforcement of the speed limit takes place.