

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

13 SEPTEMBER 2023

QUESTION NO. 1

Councillor White to ask the Chair:

Improving Road Safety Around Schools

Recently tackling parking problems around schools at the start and the end of the school day came up at the Traffic Management Sub-Committee in the general discussion. Green Party Councillors often have concerns about dangerous, chaotic parking around schools in the town raised with us. What future plans does the Council have to improve road safety around our schools at the start and the end of the school day ?

REPLY by the Chair of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

I invite Councillor Ennis, the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by Councillor Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport:

I thank Councillor White for his question.

Issues of poor driver behaviour around school pupil drop-off and pick-up times have been a regular topic for discussion and these will not be unique issues to Reading. It is important to consider that our schools sit within urban, residential areas, and to be mindful that making changes to address these acute periods of the day could have greater impact to residents and other road users over time.

The majority of the Borough's schools have some key areas covered by parking restrictions, including 'School Keep Clear' markings near to entrances. These are nationally recognised restrictions that the Council can enforce, but it is important to manage expectations. There are parking restrictions across the Borough that are in place to minimise risks on the Highway, the majority of which require attendance by foot patrol, so there will be resourcing limitations to the extent and frequency of visits to any single location.

The majority of the Borough's schools sit within 20mph speed limit restrictions and have either a controlled pedestrian crossing or school crossing patroller nearby. These are further measures that can reduce safety risks on the Highway and encourage travel to school using sustainable modes (i.e. not by vehicle).

Reading Borough Council was an early adopter of School Streets and has worked with a number of schools to make successful trials into permanent restrictions, as reported through this Sub-Committee. These provide a mechanism whereby the road outside a school can potentially be closed to traffic for the school drop-off and pick-up periods, while still enabling legitimate access/egress for residents and businesses within. Schemes have been successfully introduced at Park Lane Primary & Junior School, Wilson Primary School, Thameside Primary School and most recently on Crescent

Road in East Reading. Officer engagement and discussion has been offered to all schools within the Borough and this continues, with good information available on our website.

Of the measures available to the Council, uptake of School Streets is still a strong recommendation where it is appropriate as it should bring the greatest positive impact in terms of risk reduction and encouraging travel mode shift, while having less impact to those living within the immediate area, particularly with the restrictions not applying outside of school term time or at weekends.

Where issues or changing needs are identified, the Council has programmes that can capture these. Requests for parking restriction changes can be included in the twice-annual Waiting Restriction Review programme that is reported to this Sub-Committee. Requests for traffic management measures (for example, speed calming and new controlled pedestrian crossing facilities) can be captured on the 'Requests for Traffic Management Measures' report that is updated at this Sub-Committee twice-annually.

While funding would need to be secured in order to deliver new pedestrian crossings and speed reduction schemes, the Council continues to demonstrate its ability to do this. Recent examples include, but are not limited to:

- Local CIL funding that has delivered new zebra crossings to benefit Moorlands Primary School and The Ridgeway Primary School and an extension of the 20mph zone to cover the frontage of Reading Girls' School
- Developer contribution secured through the planning process for the delivery of a new zebra crossing for The Heights Primary School
- Successful bid for government 'Active Travel' funding to develop and deliver a new zebra crossing near to St Joseph's College (report is later in this meeting agenda).

Ultimately, there are clear limitations to the Council's enforcement powers, enforcement resourcing and to the level of engineering solutions that can be applied to reduce risks on the Highway. It is entirely the responsibility of any driver to behave lawfully and appropriately to the conditions around them, for the safety of themselves, their passengers and those around them.

ENDS