



WIRRAL'S ROAD SAFETY PLAN

Scrutiny Report of the Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee

December 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

At the meeting of the Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 19th September 2017, the Committee agreed to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of the Council's Road Safety Plan. As a result, a scrutiny workshop was held on 13th December 2017 for Members of the Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the draft Road Safety Plan.

The session commenced with a presentation delivered by senior officers before the session was opened up for Member questions. The outcomes from the workshop are detailed in this report.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Statutory Responsibilities

Under section 39 of the 1988 Road Traffic Act, local authorities have a statutory duty to “take steps both to reduce and prevent accidents”. As a result Local Authority Partners must:-

- Prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety;
- Carry out studies into accidents arising out of the use of vehicles on roads within their area, and take appropriate measures to prevent such accidents; and
- Take measures to reduce the possibilities of road accidents when building new roads.

Liverpool City Region Context

The Transport Act 2000 (amended by the Transport Act 2008) sets out the requirement for Transport Authorities to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP). The creation of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) resulted in the amalgamation of the strategic Merseyside & Halton Local Transport Plans to form the Liverpool City Region Transport Plan for Growth (TPfG). In July 2017, and as a supporting document to the TPfG, the LCRCA published its Road Safety Strategy which recognises that partnership working is a key element of delivering casualty reduction and identifies the three E's of casualty reduction – Education Enforcement and Engineering. The LCRCA Road Safety Strategy uses casualty & collision data to identify key priority road user (casualty) groups. These include cyclists, motorcyclists, senior road users and adult pedestrians.

Wirral's Road Safety Plan

The key features of Wirral's Road Safety Plan are summarised below:

- It complements the “Connecting Wirral” Transport Strategy
- It supports the delivery of the overarching Liverpool City Region Road Safety Strategy & Transport Plan for Growth, whilst reflecting on priorities from the Wirral perspective
- It acknowledges that Wirral Council is not solely responsible for casualty reduction and that in order to improve road safety residents, employers and numerous partners must play a role

- It seeks to promote a partnership approach for all road users to using the roads safety slogan “Shared roads, shared responsibility”
- Initiatives and schemes are based on the “3 E’s” of Education, Enforcement & Engineering
- Priorities are based on current casualty data but will be reviewed on an ongoing basis

3. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The LCR Road Safety Plan was approved by the Combined Authority on 14th July 2017. Given that the Wirral Road Safety Plan needed to take direction from the City Region strategy the Council was unable to produce a strategy until after this approval had taken place. The key feature is around partnership working which should be recognised by all Liverpool City Region Partners as a driver for moving forward. These partnerships include the Police and Highways England.

The Liverpool City Region Road Safety Strategy is informed by the statistics from all the local authorities in the City Region, produced by Merseyside Police. It is recognised by partners nationally that there are limitations in relation to the Police statistics, however it is the best dataset that is available to use for this purpose. Based on casualty and collision data, four key priority road group users were identified. These are:

- Cyclists
- Motorcyclists
- Senior Road Users
- Adult Pedestrians

The Government set a ten year target for Wirral to reduce the number of killed or seriously injured people in road collisions by 40% (This was set in 2010 based on 1994 to 1998 average number of casualties). Members acknowledged that Wirral has met the target set by Government. Members agreed that despite the increase in traffic volume over recent years, there have also been improvements in car safety as well as potentially fewer people walking. It is also accepted that the reduction in both casualty and collision numbers can in part be attributed to enforcement action as well as engineering schemes and education initiatives.

Despite the ongoing reduction in the number of collisions and injuries (all severities), Wirral ranked 104 out of 152 authorities on Killed & Seriously Injured people based on 3 year average from 2014 to 2016 (Department for Transport statistics). It was also noted that in 2016, Wirral ranked 83 out of 152 on Killed & Seriously Injured (KSI).

Members identified that the LCRCA Road Safety Strategy has a specific target to reduce the KSI number from 599 in 2016 to fewer than 400 in 2020. From this target, Wirral is required to reduce its KSI to fewer than 96 but this is not detailed in Wirral’s Road Safety Strategy. It was argued that if the Combined Authority believes Liverpool City Region can do better, as one of the worst performing areas, and then Wirral needs to be judged on this. However, there was acceptance that incorporating Wirral’s target within its Road Safety Plan may be perceived as the Council being satisfied with having no more than 96 KSI when the goal is to have zero KSI instances reported in Wirral. Members noted that Wirral is not currently meeting its target.

There was concern that a key partner in delivering Wirral's Road Safety Plan is Merseyside Police and the need for more enforcement of not just speeding but of other priority issues. However, it was noted by Members that Merseyside has the 7th greatest overall reduction in police staff since 2007 and these have an effect on casualty numbers. This reduction includes:

- 20.4% in police officers; and
- 26% in specialist roads policing officers

Members acknowledged that Wirral's Road Safety Plan has been designed to help deliver a number of the Wirral Plan pledges for 2020, including vulnerable people. It is also accepted that an improved road safety picture is good for business to ensure there is investment in Wirral. The Road Safety Plan also supports the delivery of Wirral's Connecting Wirral Transport Strategy as well as the City Region Transport Plan for Growth. Officers re-emphasised the strong partnership approach across all sectors that is required for casualty reduction which is based on the three 'E's' – Education, Enforcement and Engineering.

The Road Safety Plan reports that adult car users represent the highest proportion in relation to KSI casualties as well playing a part in injuring other road user groups. Motorcyclists represent 1% of traffic within Wirral but this represents about one quarter of the total KSI. Members noted that this is heavily disproportionate because motorcyclists are less visible to other road users and not that it necessarily means they are speeding or riding antisocially. Against a backdrop of increased cycle usage, pedal cycle casualties have reduced over time but not KSI.

In respect to the Road Safety Plan's priorities, including car drivers, pedestrians, cyclists etc., Members were assured that there is strong approach to education. Children remain easier to target for education than others as initiatives and campaigns can be delivered in the school setting. Members welcomed the initiative taken by a team of Road Safety officers to speak with approximately 6600 children in 2016 at various year groups. Officers targeted the latter years of primary school and the early years of secondary school as these are the years when children become more independent from their parents so there was a focus on the risks of the road network.

Members were concerned that it would be harder to educate adults as they are harder to reach and would be harder to promote a behavioural change. Members emphasised that mechanisms to do this exist to a certain extent but accepted that further investment for PR and marketing to get the message out would be required as it would have revenue funding implications. However, Members were encouraged that Wirral has received a ring-fenced budget of £50K from the Road Safety Trust to further develop work engaging with taxi and 'white van' drivers. Members also welcomed the national award which the Council had recently received for its innovative 'Mind Your Business' Project which targets employers and employees to support them to travel safely.

Members welcomed Wirral's commitment to engage drivers at an early age through developing a program called 'Engage' which targets driving instructors. Engage emphasises the need to educate instructors to focus on getting students to drive safely as opposed to focussing on getting results through passing the driving test to improve their business.

Members highlighted that consideration should be given to adopting a more 'Safe System Approach' to road safety, as with the aviation and rail transport sectors. This approach ensures roads should be safe for all users and accepts that lapses of concentration and errors of judgement are normal human behaviour. Road design must allow for this to minimise death or serious injury. It is also recommended by the World Health Organisation and the Department for Transport. The more traditional approach focuses on road users being responsible to learn rules and keep to them. Officers are planning to speak to Bristol Council and other local authorities who have taken this approach to see if any aspects of it can be adopted by Wirral.

There is a general concern over funding to deliver road safety but Members are aware that some funding is available through the previous Integrated Transport Block funding arrangements as part of devolved funding from the Combined Authority. This funding is based on population size and requires sign-off from the Combined Authority in February 2018. It is understood that £1.15 million will be made available to support priorities around Growth, Low Carbon and Access to Opportunity. This programme will be reported to Cabinet in February and an element of that programme will support the delivery specifically of schemes designed to improve safety, and other schemes indirectly will improve safety through improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Funding is sought wherever possible and examples of recent investment via the Sustainable Transport Enhancements Programme were discussed.

Members highlighted the investment being put into cycle infrastructure schemes with Wirral Waters and the first phase on Northbank East has been agreed. Members were keen that best practice is considered for all scheme designs to ensure that users benefit from the investment. It was acknowledged that in terms of cycling provision it is very challenging to design a "one size fits all" scheme as cyclists can be children or inexperienced adults or prefer segregated provision, or be competent regular cyclists confident to use the main carriageway. Funding is generally provided to encourage new or inexperienced cyclists and therefore design principles use this as a starting point. It was noted that consultation processes exist and that feedback, subject to Department for Transport guidance and available resources, is taken into account where possible.

In response to requiring clarity on sharing intelligence with key partners to deliver the Road Safety Plan, Wirral has a representative on the Road Safety Partnership and across the Liverpool City Region area. Additionally, there is information sharing around trying to help pedal cyclists and how to get more intelligence about what is going on across Merseyside (i.e. understand the tension between cyclists and other road users).

Members highlighted that the removal of funding from Constituency Committees for road safety improvements was disappointing as they considered that there was clear evidence of good work being carried out.

To support the delivery of Wirral's Road Safety Plan, there is an operational plan which requires partners to help deliver. Progress is monitored by the Council's Transport Steering Group chaired by the Cabinet Member. It was noted that this group then reports to Overview and Scrutiny through the annual performance reporting as part of the delivery of the Wirral Plan 2020 pledges, however, this was not detailed in Wirral's Road Safety plan. As the KSI target is seen as challenging, there is the need for Members to be updated on the ongoing performance of this target and by inclusion within Wirral's Road Safety Plan, there will be a clear linkage in respect to monitoring.

Recommendation 1

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to consider all issues identified in this report before approving Wirral's Road Safety Plan.

Recommendation 2

i) As part of the performance reporting of the Wirral Plan, an annual update should be provided to the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure Members have the opportunity to scrutinise the performance of the Council and its partners in relation to the delivery of the Road Safety Plan.

ii) Wirral's Road Safety Plan should be updated to reflect the ongoing monitoring and updating of the Road Safety Action Plan, performance reporting to the Transport Strategy Steering Group and the annual performance update to Members of the Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Appendix 1 – Workshop Attendance

Councillors

Cllr. Mike Sullivan (Chair)

Cllr. Steve Williams

Cllr. Pat Hackett

Cllr. Pat Cleary

Officers

David Ball - Assistant Director - Environmental Services

David Rees – Road Safety Manager

Julie Barnes - Lead Commissioner – Transport and Technology

Richard Call – Senior Engineer

Michael Lester – Scrutiny Officer