



Road Safety

**A report produced by the
Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport
Committee**

March 2021 Final Report

Overview

Further to a Motion at Council on the 21st October 2020 on 'reducing road casualties' Councillor Allan Brame moved and Councillor Stuart Kelly seconded a Motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Following a debate conducted in accordance with Standing Order 15, and Councillor Brame having replied it was then:

Resolved -

Council notes that:

In the last ten years, there has been no significant decline in the number of people killed and seriously injured on Britain's roads, after decades of reducing casualties.

According to Department of Transport figures, there are still on average five fatalities and 68 serious injuries in England and Wales every day.

In the preamble to the consultation published by the Department of Transport in July this year, the Under Secretary of State for Transport said the review sought to 'build the fairest and most operationally effective enforcement capability in police and other agencies to deliver the best outcome for the safety of all road users'.

In the same month, the HM Inspectorate of Constabulary published a damning report which predicted an increase in road deaths because,

- according to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, there has been a 34% cut in funding in real terms for road policing between 2012/3 and 2019/20, leading to a reduction of police officers available for these duties.*
- these officers receive insufficient training and operational support.*
- road policing is 'seen as less of a priority than it should be' in most local plans and there is an 'unclear national strategy.'*

The HM Inspectorate called for urgent action as 'roads policing is not optional.'

In September, Merseyside Police and the Merseyside Road Safety Partnership participated for five days in 'Project EDWARD' (Every Day Without a Road Death), as part of the welcome initiative to reduce road deaths.

Council resolves to:

(1) Ask Group Leaders to write to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Transport, making clear this Council's position that funding in real terms for road policing should be restored; that the HM Inspectorate's recommendations be implemented in full as

a priority; and that a new national strategy for road policing and safety should be developed.

(2) Ask the Chief Executive to send copies of this letter to the Liverpool City Region Police and Crime Commissioner, the Police and Crime Panel and our local Members of Parliament to seek their support for the Council's position.

(3) Ask the Council's representatives on the Liverpool City Region Police and Crime Panel to request the Panel revisit the local policing plan to ensure that roads policing is sufficiently prioritised.

(4) Ask that this Motion be referred to the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee so that it may review and refresh earlier work that was undertaken on the introduction of 20mph speed limits on all residential roads across the Borough with a view to making progress with their introduction.

Scope

Further to this and subsequent conversations between political groups, it was decided that members of the environment, climate emergency and transport committee should form a working group. A scope was developed by officers and approved by the working group panel and is attached as an appendix to this report.

Members of the working group met over two sessions to discuss the above objectives alongside the current Wirral road safety action plan and a range of charts/graphs and data to show the progress on overall continued improvements in collision reduction in numbers of people killed or seriously injured; the proportions of types of road users injured and an update on engagement and education.

Alongside the Members of the working group, the Highways and Infrastructure team and the Road Safety team, there were also officers in attendance from Merseyside police, Wirral Council's Assistant Director of Highways and Infrastructure and members of road safety groups were also in attendance to feed into the discussion.

Session 1

Members received an update via a presentation which is included as an appendix to this report. The presentation included the following key points:

- An update and data on; total Injury Collision and casualties, including children, pedal and motor cyclists, and elderly drivers.
- An overview of ongoing and new priorities as well as an update on emerging issues.

The presentation informed the panel of a few key consideration, namely most collisions being on major routes, not minor. Officers also informed Members that a deregulation of additional powers for streets around schools is due this year. Points were also raised around current strategies which aim to make every road user aware of their vulnerability and how primary care services need make everyone aware on how to guide older road users around safety.

The presentation was followed up by a question-and-answer session. Members queried the improvement in road safety and asked where we were heading in the tables. Officers advised that even during a period of rising traffic volumes on our roads Wirral's collision numbers have in fact declined year on year and improved in relative terms to other local authorities. This however should not distract from the continued improvements Wirral wishes to make or reduce aspirations towards zero harm.

General discussion

A question was raised over delivery drivers and officers confirmed that they provided the 'mind your business programme' to businesses to discuss road safety, the best way to load vehicles and motor/pedal cyclist awareness. This has been provided to assist people who earn their living on the road, drive for work purposes or commute. This led to a query about elderly people with one member of the panel mentioned that elderly people often comment that they are less able to judge speed now they are older. Officers from the road safety team commented that this can also be the case with younger people and that whilst older people often still want to use their vehicles to get out into the community, they will often self-limit and stop driving at night or during the rush hour which can help road safety.

One Member queried what sort of guidance the elderly were given in regards to driving or surrendering licenses. Officers advised that over 2500 driving assessments of drivers over 60 had been completed and out of that only 6 were found who should not be driving. There are often difficult conversations with families about surrendering licenses as this can often lead to social isolation issues. In addition to this, the over 60's are a protected age bracket, and like all age groups there are variables in health, confidence and medical issues all of which can lead to problems around road safety. The programme the council offers concentrates on increasing confidence driving.

Members raised a point around the increased use of electric cars and queried if there were any issues caused by the lack of sound. This was noted a possible issue and that education would be needed to inform both drivers of electric vehicles and the public.

Cyclists

Further conversation focussed on pedal bikes and intimidation (both perceived and actual) from car users and queried if the Council and Police should be more tolerant of pavement cyclists. Officers commented to say this was illegal unless defined cycle lanes were provided and the only thing that would alter this would be a change in legislation. Members also asked how this worked in places such as Cambridge where cyclists use pavements. It was acknowledged that there this was accepted in places such as Cambridge but it is illegal and some of the pavements in Wirral are not suitable for cyclists. The increase in pedal bike use during lockdown in 2020 has increased cycling on pavements.

Members of the panel understood this but also commented on the Government's environmental strategy and the move away from car use. Officers commented to say they would have to work with the police and if there is not a change to government policy then they could have issues with other road users. It was suggested that a presentation on Gear Change could go to committee and that the authority needs to be supportive.

Road safety around schools

The discussion then focused on road safety around schools and why the authority didn't have more power to stop people parking illegally and queried the use of the camera car. Officers updated Members of a change in regulation which meant they could no longer enforce yellow line parking around schools without using the camera van. It can also be problematic to find suitable parking for the camera car. There are mobile cameras officers could look at and could be moved around sites, but it would be costly. Officers also highlighted the safer schools programme to help educate on the subject of road safety around schools.

Members requested figures on tickets issued. This was followed up by officers and circulated outside of committee.

	CCTV Camera Car Enforcement		
Year	Code 47 PCN's	Code 48 PCN's	TOTAL PCN's
2016	868	347	1215
2017	809	347	1156
2018	678	269	947
2019	1155	343	1498
2020	782	331	1113

Regarding cars idling, Members queried what stops the council putting double yellow lines outside schools. Officers responded to say that there are regulations for extra speed bumps but that is not possible in every location. There are 6 pilot schemes looking at where students live and how far they travel and officers commented that parking control methods needs to be proved as they do get objections from residents and blue badge holders. Officers also referred to the latest gear change policy noted that regulation change is a positive thing but noted that the technology required is also expensive.

Electric Scooters

Members queried in increase in the use of electric scooters and officers agreed that this was an emerging issue. It was noted that you can buy them, but they can't be used on public land unless they are let out by a public scheme. Users are required to have a driving licence and insurance.

Imbalance

A query was raised as to whether there is an imbalance in Collision rates in less affluent areas. Officers confirmed that this is something they consider and target road safety schemes to the location and prioritise funds. It was agreed that the working group needed to consider where they want to be and whether the priority should also be looking at perceptions of road safety as well as casualties and accident data. Members also asked for more information on Merseyside Safer Roads Watch (including Speed Watch) which can be found on an appendix to this report

Session 2

Members of the working group were shown several slides presenting data and officers confirmed we have moved up the table, which was a positive move. It was noted that there had been a small rise in pedal cycle casualties in older road users and a smaller rise in total road casualties, but officers also pointed out there can often be a slight fluctuation in year-on-year reporting, but that the curve was getting better.

Community safety strategy

Members received an update on the Community Safety Strategy from the Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Safety and Transport. They were presented with several slides around the new 5-year plan for community safety. This was being consulted on and officers aim to have it presented to the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure. Members were advised that the plan focused on working with partner agencies to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour such as the use of scrambler bikes in communities. Officers have identified a key theme in vehicle and road safety and want to create a joined-up strategy with partners to tackle this. Out of 8 or 9 thematic schemes within the strategy, officers picked up on key elements and are looking to influence community and individual behaviours by using community groups and high visibility methods to tackle real and perceived concerns around road safety. Members were advised that the aim is to have a robust and interwoven road safety and community safety strategy.

A guest invited by the panel queried whether partners were planning to include local road safety groups and include those who have been bereaved of effected by road casualties. They were reassured by officers that it would be a co-produced strategy and referenced the Domestic Abuse strategy which was informed and curated by victims of domestic abuse. There also needs to be focus on what officers can do or is in their ability to do – culture and behavioural change will take longer to achieve. Officers assured guests that they will circulate dates for wider stakeholders.

It was also noted there is now more focus on collaboration between departments and partners by talking and consulting. There is more scope for doing things differently this time.

Road Peace

Members of the panel were keen to hear from local road safety groups and stakeholders and invited Pauline Fielding from Road Peace to the second session. Pauline became involved with road safety campaigning when her son was killed by a driver and never traced. The area of road was a noted safety concern, although not in Wirral, and subsequently the 60mph speed limit was reduced.

Pauline expressed her opinion that zero road casualties should be the ultimate goal and noted that the number of road casualties was dropping, but not at the same rate as the Netherlands or Scandinavian countries. She also commented that the reduction of speed limits to 20mph in residential areas was a priority as well as education in schools for both children and parents to inform. The Kickstart scheme, as an example, allowed children to play football after they had listened to road peace, Merseyside Police and the Fire Service and did activities related to road safety. There are initiatives and schemes out there and small interventions can make a bit difference.

Merseyside Police

Members had invited a representative from Merseyside police who assured the working group that Wirral have a very pro-active road safety team in Merseyside. They are a demanding team, because of the enthusiasm and initiatives they have and he thought this could also work well along the new community safety strategy. He did note that whilst the police are incredibly active in schemes such as security marking bicycles they don't always take the initiative to discuss road safety. Traffic Police should not be the only police teams proactively working to increase road safety.

Ed Lamb

Ed is a local resident who lives in Bebington and is a father of two. He started cycling again after 10 years of driving and started sharing videos of his journey on social media. He commented that he feels that in the UK the car is king, and this is partly due to a failure of planning and policy. Ed has been working closely with road safety groups and the cycle community to push for safer roads. He highlighted his concerns around the environment and climate emergency but feels this will require a cultural Mindshift away from car centric travel. Ed also felt that road safety can be a lever for change, encouraging people to walk and cycle which can encourage social interaction in lower traffic areas. Members were also reminded that in the 1970s the Netherlands made a choice to promote cycling which has reversed dependency on cars in some towns and cities.

Discussion

Members of the working group appreciated the input of the guests and queried the vision of where Wirral needs to be in terms of road safety and what the authority needs to aim for. They also discussed where the barriers are.

Officers from the Network management team were also in attendance and brought Members up to speed with projects such as the annual transport capital programme, and the School Streets projects. There is also a pilot scheme on behaviours on the Brackenwood Estate. This is being delivered through school streets and is a behaviour change intervention.

It was agreed by those in attendance that there needs to be a change in mindset and culture, not just around road safety but also linked in with health and the environment. It was felt that communications are essential to the success of that and would need putting in place. Resources are limited so they need to be channelled into areas which will be the most beneficial. Less traffic on the roads is the end goal which will benefit both the environment and road safety.

Members mentioned several areas which were of concern such as Glenavon Road in Prenton. They felt that the Schools Streets Scheme was a fairly simple project and asked why it wasn't moving forward. Officers responded to say that there had been some legal implications, but they hoped that in 2021 they would have the mandate to move forward.

Questions were also raised about how 'near misses' were reported and Members were advised that these were often reported anecdotally, so it was difficult to monitor. At Spital Junction, incidents had been reduced but there are concerns that further intervention could lead to increased use of 'rat runs' on other roads and back traffic up to the M53. Officers also commented that they needed to balance resources between high profile areas and other roads with worse accident records. They need to consider what can be done in terms of engineering and potential issues around waiting traffic and red light running – they do not want to push traffic onto other residential streets. They suggested that the 'look left, look right' road markings can often be an easy and effective solution. Anything structural such as footbridges are incredibly expensive and so not always solve the problem.

A further conversation was held with Members of the working group discussing the balance required when discussing road safety and raising concerns in the population which may put them off cycling and active travel. Residents also had raised concerns about road and pavement surfaces which they felt was adding to the apprehension around active travel and road safety.

They agreed that any active travel consultation should tap into the local knowledge and access to the community held by Councillors. Communities speak to councillors who can then feedback to officers.

20 mile an hour zone

The prospect of 20 mile an hour zones in residential areas was also discussed by the working group, with officers noting that this cannot be implemented without adding physical aspects such as signs and road markings and in some cases must be supplemented with physical traffic calming measures.

One Member commented that as well as reducing incidents another argument for imposing 20 Mile an hour zones is simply to create a more pleasant area to live. Road safety is a key priority for the Council, but there also should be a focus on reducing the more aggregating factors such as noise or air pollution.

After the sessions concluded, a member requested further information on 20 Mile per hour zones which can be found below.

Are we able to supply the date that 20mph Traffic Restriction Orders (TROs) were first used?

Officers do not have access to the records for this; however, they think it would have been a local safety scheme with traffic calming in the mid to late 1990's. In circa 2008 officers implemented TROs as part of the original constituency committees. They do not have the access to the historical costs of this. Each scheme has elements of street design, legal fees and signage which have costs involved. 20mph Zones have fewer signs but have physical measures. Each is dependent on lengths of roads and what is needed to conform to DfT standards. A rough estimate would be that we have probably invested about £2m on all the schemes we have already.

Numbers of 20mph restrictions?

Type	Zones/Areas	Number of Roads covered
20mph speed limits (no TCM)	18	30
20mph Zone with TCM	52	405
30mph areas with TCM	8	142

Enforcement?

Officers asked the police for feedback on enforcement of 20mph speed limits, however this is very difficult for them to get data on as there is no central listing. We are aware that the majority of local officer time (spent on enforcement) is directed to roads with poor casualty records as a priority, not necessarily local 20mph roads where the mean speeds should be at or below 24mph by design.

Recommendations

- Link the road safety strategy into the Community Safety Strategy The oversight and governance for holding partners to account can be delivered via the Community Safety Partnership. This will then allow for progress of the road safety action plan to be monitored via the CSP. Linking 'place based' community safety risks is the key here and road safety is an integral part of this.
- Wirral Council to explicitly adopt a Safe Systems/ Vision Zero approach to Road Safety, with a long term aim of zero KSI.
- Wirral Council to adopt a short term aim of an average reduction in KSI.
- The working group requested that officers look at reducing speed limits on all main roads and ensure consistent speed limits, avoiding small sections with higher limits.
- The working group requests that 20mph zones are introduced in all areas that are predominantly residential, retail, or educational. They note that this may take time to implement due to the resource and cost implications.
- Engage with other authorities that have implemented 20mph zones and link in with organisations such as Sustrans and Living Streets to share best practice.
- Consistent use of speed limit signs and use of existing street furniture columns where available.
- Use physical speed reduction methods such as chicanes where compliance is poor and residents are in support of this.
- Deliver the School Streets programme Wirral Wide.
- Ensure adequate funding for Road Safety Educational type schemes as well as Road Safety Officer training. This includes the continuation of initiatives like community Speedwatch; Mind Your Business, etc.
- The working Groups requests that crash sites involving young people/cyclists and all major junctions to be audited on bike and on foot.
- Ensure all elected members have regular opportunities for road safety training, similar to the carbon literacy opportunities currently available. Campaigners to be part of this.
- Guarantee ongoing interactive consultation/engagement with residents, campaigners and all elected members.
- Agree a percentage reduction in KSIs and /or collisions/all casualties and have regular updates to committee using an agreed dashboard and standard national comparison data.
- Officers to work with schools to add signage to junctions where schoolchildren cross, in order to raise awareness among drivers that children are likely to be crossing. They will need to refer to the relevant legislation.
- Seek all opportunities to secure additional funding and designate officer responsibility.
- Use all available highways and infrastructure spending with a view to improving road safety as an absolute priority.
- Lobby Government for additional funding and any necessary powers needed to improve road safety.
- Develop a pipeline of projects that can be brought forward for implementation when funding opportunities arise.

- Work with partners, including and especially Merseyside Police, on more and better enforcement of road safety eg. speeding and pavement parking.
- Work with PCC on this.
- Lobby for additional support from the Safer Roads Watch scheme.
- Deliver further on active travel networks and LTNs with improved consultation of local communities.
- Adequately fund our outreach and education activities, as a supplement to speed reduction, engineering for safer roads and better enforcement.
- Continue to deliver engagement via our communications team regarding the data showing how walking and cycling benefit local businesses and the local high street.
- Increase road safety information on existing council social media channels which already have engaged and large audiences.
- All road safety comms and documents to avoid the use of “accidents” and use more blame neutral terms such as “crash” or “collision”.
- All council policies and decisions to seek a reduction in car use.
- Promote active travel and awareness of the benefits to health, well-being, air quality, reduced GHG emissions, reduced noise pollution – as well as road safety.
- Align road safety with our Environment and Climate Emergency Action plan and well as the new LCR Road Safety Strategy.
- Work with Public Health and Children’s Services especially schools to achieve road safety targets. Collisions are the main cause of injury and death in many age groups, especially children and young people.
- Fund the additional staff that will likely be required to deliver these actions and save lives.