

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 JULY 2009

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

SPEED LIMIT & TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER REVIEW 2009-2011

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the methodology proposed to undertake the review of existing speed limits on all A, B and C roads across the Wirral. It also details how existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) relating to waiting restrictions will be assessed and how necessary alterations are to be implemented.
- 1.2 The report recommends an endorsement of key principles to be adopted by Cabinet to enable this project to be delivered.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The study is based upon the Department for Transport (DfT) circular 1/06 and Traffic Advisory leaflet 2/06 which set out guidance on the setting of local speeds limits. A copy of these documents and other reference material will be placed in the Members Room at Wallasey Town Hall and can also be accessed via the internet as detailed in **Appendix A**.
- 2.2 The key objectives of the document are to provide guidance on the review of existing speed limits and their suitability with regard to current accident rates, levels of development, road users and quality of life for local communities.
- 2.3 The DfT has set a deadline of 2011 for Traffic Authorities to implement any proposed changes to speed limits following a review using this guidance.
- 2.4 Members will recall that a report was submitted to this Cabinet on 10 December 2008 (Minute 315 refers) outlining the requirement for the Council to employ Consultants through the Framework Agreement to undertake this work at a cost of £380k over 2 years funded via the Local Transport Plan (LTP). The report and use of LTP Capital funding for this work was subsequently approved. Following a tendering exercise, Faber Maunsell (now AECOM) were successful in being awarded the commission and commenced work on the early stages of the project in March 2009. The main purpose of this report is to therefore advise Members on the proposed methodology and approach to undertake this review.

3.0 OVERVIEW

- 3.1 For this project, existing speed limits are to be assessed through a review of existing mean speeds, traffic flows, accident rates, function of the road and levels of vulnerable road users. A decision on whether speed limits should remain as existing or be lowered or increased will then be made with supporting reasons.
- 3.2 Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) will be assessed and verified on site against current council records. Amendments to TRO's where safety is the chief benefactor will be promoted.
- 3.3 A priority list of schemes covering both speed limit and TRO alterations will be compiled and weighted. Schemes will then be taken forward to detailed design and subject to the formal statutory consultation process including advertising if changes are promoted.
- 3.4 The main driver for this study is to improve road safety and Council officers have worked in partnership with Merseyside Police and AECOM in the development of the review methodology.

3.5 Over 200 km of roads are being assessed in the speed limit review and all areas are receiving a review of the traffic regulation orders along these strategic routes.

4.0 COLLECTING BASE DATA

4.1 Most of the information required for the study has already been provided directly to the consultant by officers. This has included the following:

- Accident data (3 years of data from the most recent available);
- TRO plans and schedules;
- Current asset database (signage);
- List of petitions/public enquiries relevant to the study;
- Existing survey information usable for the study (i.e dated within the past 3 years);

4.2 The consultant has complemented this information by conducting additional surveys across the borough. These surveys are in the form of Automatic Traffic Counters (ATC's). The extents of ATC's used has been dependent upon the amount of existing survey data available. Over 170 sites are subject to an ATC survey.

4.3 Review meetings between the consultant/ Wirral officers/Merseyside Police have been taking place to agree the extents of links and where ATC's should be located. A number of factors such as extents of existing speed limit, whether urban/rural settings and between major junctions on a route have been deciding issues.

4.4 Relevant information relating to known accident, speed and congestion hot spots has also been provided to the consultant to assist in analysis work.

4.5 The consultant will complete a site review of the Wirral in two parts, the first to cover checks of existing TRO records and the second to review accident cluster sites and other route characteristics to aid a review of current speed limits. Roads included in the study are listed in **Appendix B**.

5.0 CONSIDERATIONS IN SETTING SPEED LIMITS

5.1 It is important to have a clear process for the determination of speed limits. This helps remove ambiguity and uncertainty and will produce guidance which will adhere to DfT circular 1/06 and Traffic Advisory leaflet 2/06.

5.2 Officers will adopt key principles to link up the activities throughout the review and importantly for Cabinet the following salient points will be covered.

5.2.1 Classifying the Route: Character and Type

Each road will be classified. These classifications align the road class – (whether A, B or C) with the character of the environment, the character of the road itself and the traffic composition.

For example a classified single carriageway A or B road would typically have a speed limit of 50 or 60 mph and primarily carry through traffic. It would also be likely to have

- Limited development and frontage access
- Good forward visibility
- Relatively good mean vehicle speeds
- Few vulnerable road users
- Relatively good accident rate

5.2.2 In built up areas or rural villages where the speed limit is 30 or 40 mph it would be expected that

- Frontage development is dominant
- There is a significant number of vulnerable road users

- The accident rate is relatively poor
- The road splits communities
- The road serves as a route to schools, churches, private and commercial premises etc.
- The opinion of the public is that traffic speeds
- Where speed limits change there is potential to introduce 'gateways'

5.2.3 As well as the roads purpose, character and its setting the DfT guidance recommends a calculation of injury accident rates for consideration in influencing a change in speed limit.

5.2.4 Other key evidence which is to be included in the review of speed limits is the data for each link along a route this being

- Length
- Accident Data
- Existing speed limit
- Traffic flow (AADT) (Annual Average Daily Traffic)
- Recorded speed taken from automated counting loops enable a comparison to be made against the set speed limit

5.2.5 There is also a requirement to consider a qualitative assessment taking into account

- Road characteristics (width gradient, no. of side roads, condition etc)
- Vulnerable road user activity (pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians)

- other important supporting evidence being

- Input from Merseyside Police (known accident, congestion, speeding hot spots)
- Existing fixed/mobile camera sites
- Relevant TRO enquiries

5.3 Breaking down each route into manageable lengths which have been determined on road/frontage/speed limit characteristics enables a rigorous approach to take place using all of the above factors. Using all this information will inform us as to whether or not the existing speed limit is suitable or whether or not a change needs to be proposed.

5.4 Where a change in speed limit (higher or lower) is highlighted as a potential measure then the impact of making such a change will be assessed against the 'Speed Assessment Framework' published by DfT under Traffic Advisory Leaflet 2/06. This allows an analysis of the effects of alternative speed limit choices by calculating relative changes in accidents, journey time and fuel consumption with respect to cost.

5.5 **Appendix C** contains examples of the format to be used in the analysis of links with typical recommendations that could be made.

5.6 In some cases, a safety scheme may be the most suitable solution to address say an accident problem at a particular location as opposed to a change in speed limit. A recommendation to this effect will be drawn from the study.

5.7 I am aware that there has been a lot of media attention to the creation of 20mph zones, particularly in urban areas and where vulnerability of road users is a factor. This review as reported upon, however, is embracing the Department for Transport's guidance as currently published for the review of speed limits. I am not envisaging the results of the study promoting widespread introduction of 20mph limits. Should legislation change during the course of this study, I shall obviously update Cabinet as necessary.

5.8 Whilst it has been proven that an overall reduction in vehicle speed can lead to a reduction in the severity of road casualties, local analysis of casualty records has shown that there is no evidence to support a blanket speed limit of 20mph outside all schools on Wirral.

5.9 I have previously reported on the research surrounding 20mph signed areas with no other physical calming measures which shows an average speed reduction of just 1mph. I consider that 20mph zones near schools should continue to be prioritised based on road safety records with the use of physical calming measures to ensure the lowered limit is self enforcing. The criteria used within the Review does take on board factors which could result in specific locations being identified for a 20mph speed limit.

6.0 REVIEW OF EXISTING TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS (TRO's)

6.1 Running alongside the speed limit review is an important complementary review of the existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) which impose waiting restrictions.

6.2 In much the same way as a rigorous approach is being taken in reviewing speed limits, officers and partners are exercising the same level of diligence towards TRO's).

6.3 Interlinking key principles drive the necessary activity and take into account

- Sites where TRO's may be a contributory factor to accident clusters.
- Review list of current enquiries for consideration of TRO's both to implement and remove.
- Review existing TRO information – check that the on the ground situation matches the database.
- Conduct site surveys.

6.4 It is then possible to determine whether or not a positive impact can be achieved by the introduction of a TRO, an amendment or revocation.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The consultant will liaise with Cheshire West & Chester Council and Hyder Consulting Limited over cross boundary routes. Cheshire's speed limit review is currently part way through and consistent measures on shared routes (A41, A540 etc) will be ensured.

7.2 Throughout the assessment process the consultant will also liaise with the emergency services and Wirral Council representatives.

7.3 Any planned amendments to speed limits or waiting restrictions will be subject to the statutory process of advertising and this process allows for persons to formally object if they feel that planned measures are not appropriate.

8.0 PROGRESSING CHANGES

8.1 The consultant will provide a list of schemes for implementation phased over two financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11. Schemes will be weighted against a number of factors such as safety, congestion, environmental benefit, vulnerable road users and cost with safety always being the main driver.

8.2 Subject to the methodology contained within this report being approved, it is proposed to set up a panel comprising officers from Wirral Council (including the project team), the emergency services and AECOM to collectively assess individual schemes put forward. This will ensure a thorough and fair review process is undertaken that maximises the aims of the study and utilises funding set aside in the most efficient manner.

- 8.3 A list of schemes to be taken forward for detailed design and consultation will then be drawn up for implementation over the financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- 8.4 The proposed schemes to be taken through the statutory framework for advertising TROs will be made available to Ward Members and the Chair and Party Spokespersons for the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 8.5 Any unresolved objections received from statutory consultation will be considered by the Highways and Traffic Representations Panel which will then be put to the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee for agreement on an appropriate way forward.
- 8.6 Implementation of the site works will be undertaken by Colas, the recently appointed term contractor for Wirral at the end of the study. TRO records across the Wirral will also be updated with new orders introduced to improve safety at specific locations across the borough. A full speed limit review will have been completed in accordance with DfT circular 01/06 with limits amended to the agreed methodology and set to a limit that meets the requirements of all road users. A total of 210km of roads will have been covered, including 14 'A' roads, 19 B' roads and 31 'C' classified roads. All the resulting information will be retrievable on an electronic database.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As set out in the Cabinet report dated 10th December 2008, the cost of the project will be met from the existing LTP Capital 2008-2011 budget, as follows:

2009/10 - £225k
2010/11 - £155k

- 9.2 There will be ongoing maintenance costs in maintaining the resulting assets to be contained within the Department's existing revenue budgets.

10.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Officers will assist the appointed consultant, when required.

11.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no specific ethnic minority or elderly persons implications, although lower speed limits and attention to waiting restrictions should make the road safer.

12.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Properly configured speed limits and Traffic Regulation Orders for waiting restrictions should have a positive impact on the number of collision occurrences on Wirral's roads.

13.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are no implications under this heading.

14.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no implications under this heading.

15.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no implications under this heading.

16.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1 There are no implications under this heading.

17.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

17.1 This review has implications for all Wards.

18.0 ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

18.1 There are no implications under this heading.

19.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

19.1 That

- (1) Cabinet is requested to note this report and endorse both the methodology to be adopted and in particular the key principles proposed in sections 5 and 6 as the means for reviewing existing speed limits and Traffic Regulation Orders across the borough.

DAVID GREEN, DIRECTOR
TECHNICAL SERVICES

APPENDIX A – REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

1. **DfT Circular 01/2006 – ‘Setting Local Speed Limits’** – Document issued by The Department for Transport which advises Traffic Authorities to review speed limits on all their A and B roads by 2011. The guidance provided in the document should also be used as the basis for future assessments of local speed limits, for developing route management strategies and for developing the speed management strategies required as part of the Local Transport Plan process. This document forms the basis for this project.

For further information visit:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/dftcircular106/dftcircular106.pdf>

2. **Traffic Advisory Leaflet 2/06 – Speed Assessment Framework** – Document issued by The Department for Transport which provides guidance on the review of speed limits on rural single carriageway roads. The SAF utilises a spreadsheet in the calculation of the impact of changing a speed limit.

For further information visit:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/tpm/tal/trafficmanagement/ficadvisoryleaflet206spe1767.pdf>

3. **TRL report – Accident Analysis on Rural Roads – A Technical Guide (Published Project Report PPR026)** – Report by Traffic Research Laboratory which provides threshold levels for different accident types and can be used to determine specific accident issues on links.

For further information visit TRL website, www.TRL.co.uk

4. **Urban Safety Management Guidelines – Road Safety Strategies for Urban Communities** – A report by The Institution of Highways & Transportation in which road hierarchies are adopted that reflect a road’s function and the mix of traffic that it carries. For further information visit Institution of Highways & Transportation website, www.IHT.co.uk