

Community Safety, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Board

23 March, 2016

Summary of Matters Considered

Report of the Vice-Chair, Councillor Ashman

The Scrutiny Board met on 23 March, 2016 and the following items were considered. I have selected the main points of the discussion which I feel members of the Council will be particularly interested to know more about. For more detail, a copy of the minutes is available on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) via the Council's website at <http://cmis.sandwell.gov.uk/cmis5/>

1. Prioritisation of Road Safety Highway Interventions

The Board noted a report which detailed the Council's responsibilities with regards to managing road safety and how it determines where highway intervention measures are required.

The Board was informed that, under Section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, the Council has a duty to investigate road collisions where an injury occurs and prepare a programme of interventions to reduce casualties.

There are three types of interventions that are available to the Council and partner agencies to manage road safety:-

- Engineering interventions to the highway – Due to limited resources these interventions must be targeted at the areas with the highest number of accident clusters to maximise the impact of the intervention and the resources required. The Council uses data from West Midlands Police to identify these priority areas.
- Education and Campaigns – Previously these were done on a regional basis but due to reduced resources this approach has changed. The Council works with the police and fire service to support these activities.

- Enforcement – Police enforcement activities, parking enforcement and traffic regulation orders all have a significant impact on increasing road safety.

Using data from West Midlands Police, the Council undertakes an annual analysis of road casualties to prioritise road safety schemes for the following financial year. The Board noted that due to the variance within the statistics, three to five years' worth are required to draw reliable conclusions and ensure that resources are targeted at where they will have the best impact.

The Board heard that capital funding is available via the West Midlands Local Transport Plan for engineering based road safety schemes and the Council also negotiates developer led improvements in relation to major planning applications where they will have an impact on the road network. The Board noted the 2015/2016 capital programme.

Sandwell's current Road Safety Plan 2013-2015 was presented to the Board for information. The Plan publishes the findings of the detailed road traffic casualty analysis, sets out Sandwell's road safety priorities and the proposed interventions for the three year period. In the current plan, child casualties, pedestrian casualties, killed and seriously injured casualties, powered two wheeler casualties and junction related casualties are identified as groups for prioritisation. The 2016-2018 Sandwell Road Safety Plan is currently being drafted and it is anticipated that it will be implemented by September 2016.

The Board notes that detail is still awaited on what role the Combined Authority might take in managing accident interventions.

The Board recommends that the draft Sandwell Road Safety plan 2016/2018 is submitted to the appropriate scrutiny board early in 2016/2017 municipal year for consultation and analysis prior to it being approved by the Cabinet.

2. **Consultation on the Draft Black Country Air Quality Supplementary Planning Document**

The Board was informed that a consultation process is underway, until 11 April, 2016, in relation to the draft Black Country Air Quality Supplementary Planning Document. The document sets out simplified guidance for dealing with air quality and is aimed at all those involved in the submission and determination of planning applications where air quality needs to be addressed.

The document supplements Policy ENV8 (Air Quality) of the adopted Black Country Core Strategy (2011) and reflects the West Midlands Good Practice Air Quality Planning Guidance (2014), produced as part of the West Midlands Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme.

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The document:-

- Explains why air quality is important in the Black Country and sets out the existing policy framework.
- Presents the methodology for identifying development proposals where an air quality assessment will be required, and the processes involved.
- Identifies the types of development where appropriate air quality mitigation measures will be required to be incorporated, in order to offset the incremental creep in pollutant emissions.
- Proposes various options for site specific mitigation to protect future occupiers from poor air and how such measures will be secured and delivered.
- Sets out instances where on site mitigation is not appropriate and payment is required to the Local Authority.

The Board noted that levels of nitrogen dioxide in Sandwell regularly exceed European limit values and this is largely due to our heavily used road network. The Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme was set up in 2011 and is a partnership comprising the seven West Midlands local authorities, (Birmingham City Council, Coventry City Council, Dudley MBC, Sandwell MBC, Solihull MBC, Walsall Council and Wolverhampton City Council) working together to improve air quality and reduce emissions from road transport.

The Board welcomes the document but recognises the limitations in effectively managing air quality in Sandwell due to its proximity to the busy M5 and M6 motorways.

The Board discussed the benefits of electric cars on the environment but noted that there is only a small number of charging points currently available in Sandwell. It was noted that developers are encouraged to include charging points in their developments and most respond very positively to this as the costs of infrastructure are usually minimal at the development stage. **The Board recommends** that consideration be given to providing charging points on Sandwell car parks to encourage more use of electric cars in the borough. The Board does acknowledge that this could be a costly exercise but requests that the Cabinet gives it some consideration. **The Board also recommends** that the use of electric vehicles should be considered when replacing fleet vehicles.

Councillor Ashman
Vice-Chair of the Community Safety, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Board

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