

COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 25 NOVEMBER 2021

Question 1

From: Councillor Jeremy Milln, Central Ward

To: Cabinet member, infrastructure and highways

In the 20 months since Council passed Cllr Norman's 20mph Motion (6th March 2020), numerous local authorities – both urban and rural - such as Hampshire, Calderdale, Cheshire West & Chester, Scottish Borders, Lancashire and Merton have moved ahead with area wide adoption, recognising the benefits for public health, active travel, and the reduction of accidents and emissions. Edinburgh's 20mph-based safer streets plan is a prime example of how many are moving forward with this popular and progressive policy <https://www.livingstreetsedinburgh.org.uk/2021/11/17/slower-speeds-safer-streets-for-edinburgh-an-action-plan/>

The Welsh Government's 20mph steering group has invited cross-border collaboration from us and we may slip stream a scheme in Hay extending into neighbouring Cusop. However may I ask what our own future programme is for area-wide 20mph given the results of our 20 month period of investigation?

Response

I support the ideal of aiming for a lower speeds in towns and villages across Herefordshire, although, I have to be realistic in that the level of resources the council has. Regrettably, we do not have the resources to implement fully engineered self-enforcing speed limits across the County.

The introduction of area wide 20mph limits without traffic calming as suggested by the 2020 Council motion is potentially a more affordable option for the Council to implement. Unfortunately, due to current resource constraints officers have not been able to progress an investigation into area wide 20mph limits. However, officers are working with colleagues from Powys on a 20 mph limits at Cusop (Hay on Wye) and Presteigne and we are also implementing a 20mph limit at Pembridge at the end of February 2022.

This will allow us to evaluate the effects at a local level, as the national 20mph Research Study by Atkins, AECOM and Professor Mike Maher (UCL) published by the DfT in November 2018 shows that the outcome of signed limits whilst positive and worthwhile, may not be as significant as communities might expect. The study found:

- Public support for 20mph (signed only) limits but concern about non-compliance
- Minor changes in driven speeds: median speed fell 0.7mph in residential areas and 0.9mph in city centre areas
- Faster drivers reduced speed more: 1.1mph and 1.6mph respectively (85th %ile)
- Road characteristics have a much larger impact on driven speeds than whether the road has a 30mph or 20mph limit
- No significant change in short term in collisions and casualties in the majority of case studies
- The majority of people have not noticed a reduction in the speed of vehicles, and do not perceive there to be fewer vehicles driving at excessive speeds

- Small increase in use of active travel modes; mode shift cannot be determined from data.

Notwithstanding the above, I feel that a rolling programme of area wide 20 mph limits without traffic calming in our towns and major villages could be very beneficial for our communities especially as advances in vehicle technology such as Intelligent Speed Assistance system (ISA) are likely to increase the levels of compliance with speed limits.

Therefore, I have asked officers to prioritise commissioning a study to identify the potential outcomes, practicality, and costs of introducing a rolling programme 20 mph speed limits across the county, as signed only limits, from the 2022 Public Realm Annual Plan so that an informed decision can be made on whether or not it is practical and value for money to take the project forward.

Supplementary question

I thank Councillor Harrington for his reply confirming that he will ask the executive to investigate area wide 20 mph as agreed by Council following Cllr Norman's motion 20 months ago. However many would say we have already enough evidence and experience to proceed as other local authorities are doing. The National 20's Plenty Organisation 20's Plenty for Us (20splenty.org) have, at no cost, kindly offered to run a briefing/training session for officers and members to explain the practicalities and costs. Would Cllr Harrington agree to this?

Response from cabinet member

The cabinet member confirmed that the council was commissioning a piece of work to look at this. He did not agree that there was already enough experience and evidence and stressed that any work done on speed limits needed to be done in an evidential and process-driven way. He agreed that the national 20s plenty organisation was fantastic and would take up their offer to help the council's officers and members explore the practicalities and costs.