

ITEM 10: MAIDENHEAD CYCLISTS ACTION GROUP'S PROPOSALS

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1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report considers the suggestions from the Maidenhead Cyclists Action Group for making cycling safer in the Royal Borough.

2. Supporting Information**Background**

2.1 Maidenhead Cyclists Action Group (MCAG) wrote to the Council in November, stating that they considered not enough was being done to make cycling safer in the Royal Borough. They made a number of suggestions for measures that the Council could implement:

1. A default speed limit of 20mph in residential roads.
2. Enforcing existing speed limits.
3. More cycle paths separate from vehicular traffic.
4. Better education for motorists to avoid killing and injuring cyclists.
5. Better driver training and safety equipment on lorries and buses.

2.2 **20 mph** - According to '20's Plenty' 33 local authorities in the UK have introduced or are in the process of implementing 20 mph as the default speed limit for residential streets. A further 12 have made political commitment for 20 mph limits in principle.

2.3 Portsmouth City Council was one of the first local authorities to implement a 20 mph speed limit across all of its residential roads at a total cost of £475,000. A Department for Transport review of the scheme after 2 years found that there had been a 22% drop in the number of collisions compared to the average of the previous 3 years. They also found a significant reduction in vehicle speeds on uncongested roads.

2.4 The Royal Borough has a number of 20 mph speed limits in place. However, these are mostly short stretches around schools. The Police have traditionally been reluctant to enforce these due to technical legal difficulties associated with the short length of the road over which the speed limits apply and the fact that speed guns used to be radar based and therefore not approved for use below 30mph. Introducing lower speed limits over a longer area and use of laser speed cameras would resolve both objections.

2.5 It should be noted that there is some local opposition to the introduction of 20 mph speed limits. David Layzell, Chairman of MCAG, was recently featured in a local newspaper article highlighting the group's desire for more 20 mph speed limits. This prompted a significant number of negative comments from residents on the paper's

website. This suggests that if such a measure were to be introduced, then it would need to be accompanied by a strong public and community engagement programme.

- 2.6 **Speed Limit Enforcement** – Thames Valley Police carry out enforcement of speed limits. This is done through fixed speed camera sites and through the use of mobile units. There are no plans at the moment to increase the number of speed cameras, but the Police are committed to undertaking ongoing enforcement action. They also run driver speed awareness courses, which seek to highlight the dangers of speeding to motorists who have been caught speeding.
- 2.7 If there are locations where speeding is considered a particular problem, these should be reported to Thames Valley Police using the 101 non-emergency telephone number. They will then investigate the matter and take enforcement action where appropriate. In some cases, it may be that physical changes need to be made to the highway layout to reduce traffic speeds, in which case the Police will liaise with the Council.
- 2.8 **Cycle Paths** – It is important that cyclists are safe and feel safe whilst travelling. The best way of achieving these aims is by creating segregated cycling facilities on roads where there is likely to be conflict with other road users. Shared paths may be appropriate in areas with low pedestrian flows, but this type of facility generates conflict where pedestrian flows are higher.
- 2.9 The main difficulty associated with implementing segregated facilities is a lack of available width within the constraints of the highway boundary, particularly in areas with historic road layouts. Also, when consultation is carried out on proposed schemes, there are often objections that cannot be resolved and so schemes are not progressed. Notwithstanding these constraints, the Council is committed to providing segregated facilities where appropriate and achievable.
- 2.10 **Education for Motorists** – The Government is running a campaign as part of its ‘Think!’ road safety programme that encourages motorists and cyclists to look out for each other. The campaign is also trying to break down the barriers between motorists and cyclists by stressing that many people cycle and drive a car at different times.
- 2.11 Although the campaign has been broadly welcomed by motoring organisations, it has failed to win the backing of cycling groups, because the safety advice given on the Think! website is inconsistent with that of the Highway Code. For example, the campaign encourages drivers to give cyclists “at least half a car’s width” of space – half the distance set out in the Highway Code, Rule 163, which tells motorists to “give cyclists at least as much room as you would when overtaking a car”. Also, the campaign has only been allocated a budget of £80,000, which is far less than the equivalent campaign for motorcycles.
- 2.12 The Royal Borough does not have the resources to be able to develop its own campaign and it is felt that the DfT should be encouraged to address the shortcomings in its existing campaign, whilst allocating additional funding to ensure that the message

is targeted more widely. The Department could also do more to strengthen messages to drivers through other mechanisms, such as making cycling a bigger part of the driving test.

- 2.13 **Lorries and Buses** – Conflict between cyclists and large vehicles such as lorries and buses is a disproportionate problem in some cities. For example, lorries are involved in half of all cyclist fatalities in Greater London, even though they make up only a small fraction of motor traffic.
- 2.14 Transport for London (TfL) and the Greater London Authority have committed to only buying transport services from the best freight operators who have undergone 'approved driver training'. The approved training should deliver the syllabus of TfL's 'Safe Urban Driving', which includes drivers riding a bike on London's streets.
- 2.15 The new TfL contract conditions go quite a bit further than just training:
- stipulating what checks must be made on a driver's record.
 - listing the safety features that all lorries must have, ranging from a full set of six safety mirrors to side-guards and close proximity cameras or sensors.
 - specifying that all operators have to join the Fleet Operators Recognition Scheme (FORS), a quality standards programme, and attain a Bronze standard level.
- 2.16 There are no recorded instances of cycling casualties in the Royal Borough as a result of a crash with an HGV in the last 3 years, which suggests that it is not a significant issue.
- 2.17 The Council does not currently insist on any cycle awareness training for its own staff or contractors (e.g. waste collection providers or bus operators). Similarly, it does not insist on blind spot mirrors or other safety equipment.
- 2.18 Although the Council can instruct contractors on major development sites to use particular vehicles and associated equipment, no requirement has been made for cyclist safety features on lorries to date.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that members of the Cycle Forum:

- a. Note the contents of the report.**
- b. Consider developing a formal stance on 20 mph speed limits in urban areas**
- c. Identify locations where segregated cycle routes are required.**
- d. Consider ways to promote safe driver behaviour at a local level**
- e. Consider what safety measures should be introduced locally (if any) to reduce conflict between cyclists and HGVs / buses.**