

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Dine Romero, Council Leader, Cllr Richard Samuel, Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr Neil Butters and Cllr Joanna Wright, Cabinet Members for Transport	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	On 5th June 2020	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3209
TITLE:	RULE 16 - Social Distancing and Active Travel Proposals	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 – List of developed schemes to be implemented to date Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 To support the need, in light of the continued Covid 19 pandemic, to social distance and to increase the space allocated to cycling and walking to allow active travel it is recognised that there is a need to reconsider urgently how the available road space is used. This may include using a number of different methods and processes, from temporary use of cones, barriers and signage to the implementation of experimental traffic schemes, all using the existing powers held by the Highway Authority.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet members are asked to:

- 2.1 agree to the principle of the reallocation of road space and access restrictions, both to encourage active travel and to enable social distancing in a form that is appropriate for the location in areas across Bath and North East Somerset;
- 2.2 recognise and agree to the principle of, where strictly necessary, the removal of parking spaces to deliver the schemes;
- 2.3 approve the incorporation of Social Distancing and Active Travel Measures as a new grant funded scheme into the Councils provisional Capital programme.

- 2.4 delegate authority to the relevant Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Transport, the decisions to agree and to proceed with any relevant legal processes to ensure the delivery of the schemes as developed;
- 2.5 to support the development and adoption of a reviewable plan setting out the consultation and review processes for all temporary and experimental schemes; and
- 2.6 to consider the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) shown in Appendix 2.

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 This report sets out the requirement for agreement to pursue highway interventions and social distancing measures proposed in light of the Covid-19 crisis that has had a significant impact on the lives of many UK citizens.
- 3.2 More widely, the Councils corporate strategy sets out one overriding purpose, to improve people's lives and two core policies of tackling the climate and nature emergency and giving people a bigger say. To translate our purpose into commitments, we have identified within the Corporate Strategy three principles. We want to prepare for the future, deliver for local residents and focus on prevention.
- 3.3 The highway interventions and social distancing measures set out within this report support the priorities as set out within the Corporate Strategy and recognises that during the period of the pandemic these key outcomes have become even more critical as all Council services have worked together to protect residents and visitors.
- 3.4 In March 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency. The Council noted "...the devastating impacts that climate change and global temperature increases will have on the lives of people around the world, including the effects on the wellbeing of B&NES residents. There is urgent need for action to be taken to limit the impact of climate change on the environment and its inhabitants".
- 3.5 A Climate Emergency Progress Report submitted to Full Council in Oct 19 indicates that for transport to achieve the required reduction in emissions, B&NES will need to oversee a major shift from travel private cars to reduce the pollution in the city. For example: a 25% cut in car and van mileage per person per year by 2030, coupled with a 76% switch to electric cars on the road by 2030.
- 3.6 During the lockdown period, the average traffic levels within Bath and North East Somerset were reduced by over 60%. This allowed people to move around the city, when appropriate such as for exercise or for key working, in a different way. Significant increases in cycling and walking were seen, transforming the local environment and using the road space in a new, socially distanced and different way than normal. Increases in these behaviours are required to achieve the reduction in CO2 necessary to deliver on the Council climate declaration to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
- 3.7 Additionally, the Council has received significant correspondence from residents that have seen a benefit in the reduced levels of traffic and do not want to go

back to high levels of congestion and poor air quality as the lockdown period ends.

- 3.8 The Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps MP, further highlighted the need to consider how road space is used when stating “Local authorities in areas with high levels of public transport use should take measures to reallocate road space to people walking and cycling, both to encourage active travel and to enable social distancing during restart (social distancing in this context primarily refers to the need for people to stay 2 metres apart where possible when outdoors). Local authorities where public transport use is low should be considering all possible measures. Traffic signs may be needed to inform pedestrians, cyclists and drivers of changes to road layouts, particularly where temporary widening is in place.”
- 3.9 Furthermore, active travel methods have significant benefits to the health of the general population, reducing obesity levels, improving mental health and wellbeing as well as reducing the impact of Covid 19. Furthermore evidence suggests that areas that are based around active travel have lasting economic benefits.
- 3.10 Interventions, highlighted by the Transport Secretary, that can and will be considered are wide ranging and each location will be considered both in isolation and as part of the longer term wider strategic options to reduce the impact of motor vehicles on residents and visitors. These include:
- a) Installing ‘pop-up’ cycle facilities with a minimum level of physical separation from volume traffic; for example, mandatory cycle lanes, using light segregation features such as flexible plastic wands; or quickly converting traffic lanes into temporary cycle lanes (suspending parking bays where necessary); widening existing cycle lanes to enable cyclists to maintain distancing.
 - b) Using cones and barriers: to widen footways along lengths of road, particularly outside shops and transport hubs; to provide more space at bus stops to allow people to queue and socially distance; to widen pedestrian refuges and crossings (both formal and informal) to enable people to cross roads safely and at a distance.
 - c) Encouraging walking and cycling to school, for example through the introduction of more ‘school streets’.
 - d) Reducing speed limits in association with other measures as reducing the speed limit can provide a more attractive and safer environment for walking and cycling.
 - e) Introducing pedestrian and cycle zones: restricting access for motor vehicles at certain times (or at all times) to specific streets, or networks of streets, particularly town centres and high streets.
 - f) Modal filters; closing roads to motor traffic, for example by using planters or large barriers. Often used in residential areas, this can create neighbourhoods that are low-traffic or traffic free, creating a more pleasant environment that encourages people to walk and cycle, and improving safety.

- g) Providing additional cycle parking facilities at key locations, such as outside stations and in high streets, to accommodate an increase in cycling, for example by repurposing parking bays to accommodate cycle racks.
- h) Changes to junction design to accommodate more cyclists – for example, extending advanced stop lines at traffic lights to the maximum permitted depth of 7.5 metres where possible.
- i) ‘whole-route’ approaches to create corridors for buses, cycles and access only on key routes into town and city centres.
- j) Identifying and bringing forward permanent schemes already planned, for example under local cycling and walking infrastructure plans, and that can be constructed relatively quickly.

3.11 Using the interventions highlighted above, the Council will ensure that the health of residents and visitors is protected, those who are able to continue to move around the city by walking and cycling are enabled to continue and that the impact of motor vehicles is minimised where possible.

3.12 Appendix 1 sets out the schemes developed to date of publication of the report. Further schemes will come forward as the plan is developed and any further funding secured in areas across Bath and North East Somerset. The appendix is not a final list of all work proposed and more schemes will be completed than shown at this time.

3.13 All schemes will be monitored and reviewed to ensure that they are achieving the outcomes necessary to alleviate social distancing issues and/or active travel benefits. Where schemes are not achieving the outcomes necessary or where the community provide feedback to how they can be improved they may be removed or altered accordingly. Therefore, the schemes will not have a formal review date and each scheme will be reviewed independently in line with the mechanism used to implement it.

3.14 Further work will be undertaken using software packages to capture feedback on issues being faced by road users and locations where further interventions may be beneficial, subject to formal processes.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 All Traffic Regulation Orders, Parking suspensions and access restrictions are subject to the requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA 1984) and other subsequent legislation. The Council is required to follow the relevant processes in place for each intervention type to ensure that the changes are imposed legally.

4.2 The Council has a public sector equality duty to have due regard to the need to (in summary) eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) is attached as Appendix 2, and the equalities implications of specific schemes will be considered in line with the Equalities Act 2010.

4.3 This decision is to be made under Part 4B Rule 16 of the Council's Constitution as an urgent decision. This matter is urgent because the Council needs to implement social distancing schemes to protect the health and wellbeing of the residents and visitors to Bath and North East Somerset in light of the Covid19 pandemic.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 Resources implications for each scheme will be considered based on the final proposals agreed by the cabinet members.

5.2 Assessment will consider all revenue and capital costs associated with staffing, signage and all other costs as appropriate.

5.3 The loss of parking spaces may have a financial impact on the Council but this will vary by scheme and location. Therefore each scheme assessment will identify and recognise any potential loss and this will be noted as part of the decision for agreement with the Cabinet Member.

5.4 In the short term, funding for development of schemes has been identified and reallocated from the Transport Improvement Block funding and is therefore already within existing budgets. Schemes included within the Transport Improvement Block funding that will not be completed due to funding being reallocated will be included within the funding in financial year 2021/22.

5.5 Further funding for the development and implementation of active travel schemes is expected to become available as part of the Central Government £250m emergency active travel fund via WECA (subject to confirmation).

5.6 Additional funding streams may also become available through other central Government grants and if allocated will be used to develop further schemes.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance and relevant highway standards.

7 CLIMATE CHANGE

7.1 During the Covid 19 lockdown period, significant reductions of road traffic were witnessed nationally, with the associated reductions of Nitrogen Oxide (NOx). The reduction within Bath, according to the monitoring stations, was recorded to be at least 20% of the normal levels.

7.2 The Council declared a Climate Emergency in March 2019, committing it to providing the leadership necessary to enable Bath and North East Somerset to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

7.3 All interventions as listed in 3.6 will be considered with the understanding that each location will be need to be assessed both in isolation and as part of the longer term wider strategic options to reduce the impact of motor vehicles and the clean air strategy.

8 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.1 For no action to be taken – this was rejected as Central Government and the public recognise that there is a requirement for social distance measures to be implemented and active travel to be supported.

9 CONSULTATION

9.1 All proposals outlined in this report are subject to statutory powers and processes.

9.2 Footway widening and access restriction required for social distancing will be delivered to support the easing of the lockdown when a greater number of shops will open, resulting in greater footfall. Appropriate consultation will be undertaken and Emergency Traffic Regulation orders will be used to ensure the measures are in place to assist with social distancing.

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Background papers	<i>List here any background papers not included with this report, and where/how they are available for inspection.</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	