

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF  
THE EXECUTIVE  
HELD ON 26 JULY 2018 FROM 7.30 PM TO 8.40 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Councillors: Charlotte Haitham Taylor (Chairman), Julian McGhee-Sumner, Richard Dolinski, Pauline Helliard-Symons, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, Stuart Munro, Anthony Pollock and Simon Weeks

**Other Councillors Present**

Laura Blumenthal  
Prue Bray  
Rachel Burgess  
Gary Cowan  
Andy Croy  
Lindsay Ferris  
Dianne King  
Helen Power  
Angus Ross  
Imogen Shepherd-DuBey

**23. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited members of the public to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

**23.1 Trevor Sleet asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

I would like to ask a question regarding the loss of the lollipop lady in Murray Road.

Has a published cost benefit analysis been carried out regarding the cost of the lollipop lady v's that of installing a pedestrian crossing at this location?

**Answer**

Broadly speaking yes however this site is subject to a redesign following my intervention in the last few weeks and therefore the cost benefit will be recalculated following the redesign. This information will be made public.

**Supplementary Question**

I have a copy of the road safety audit report that was based on the decision to remove the lollipop lady in Murray Road and in that safety audit report the site visit was done on the 13<sup>th</sup> February when the schools were on half term. So it is no wonder that there was no traffic at that time.

My question will be therefore will Wokingham Borough Council accept the failings of this report and reinstate the lollipop lady?

**Supplementary Answer**

I attended the site on Monday, along with our Road Safety Auditor, and I observed the activity outside the school and he was with me during that time so I think the Council has viewed that site during school times with school pupils going in and out of the school.

**23.3 Sally Cairns asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Can the decision about the school crossing patrollers be considered on a site by site basis? The number of consultation responses from the different sites indicates very different levels of concern, and the full Council meeting debate highlighted that the situation is very different outside the different schools – in terms of how helpful a crossing will be given the road layout, and whether there are likely to be other groups of people wanting to cross the road at different times of the day. Does this have to be an all or nothing decision, or can the best solution be chosen for each location?

**Answer**

I have visited each of the sites concerned along with Officers and the crossings have been designed with specific reference to each site. That is what we have already done. We have taken into account the different characteristics of each site. We have done surveys of numbers of cars and numbers of children accessing school so I think we have done that and certainly I have tried to look for solutions that will work at each site taking into account each sites' characteristics.

**Supplementary Question**

That seems to be a decision about what type of crossing in each location and I suppose my question is it might be that a crossing is the best for some and keeping the school crossing patroller is the best for others and it is whether there can be that flexibility in the decision?

**Supplementary Answer**

As we have decided to withdraw the funding for the crossing patrollers a number of years ago I am looking at what we put in to those sites to make them as safe as we can. So I think the answer to that is probably no.

**23.4 Annette Medhurst had asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question which in her absence was asked by Sally Cairns:**

Councillor Pollock - having observed the situation at the Murray Road crossing on Monday morning – and the constant fluctuation in the numbers of people waiting to cross, the queues of cars needing to get through, and the somewhat random parking behaviour – would you agree that a school crossing patroller – who can constantly adjust to what is happening, is a better solution than any kind of formal crossing – and that although a fixed crossing may seem like a reliable long-term solution, in many ways it is a very risky solution, since you don't know how well it is going to work, particularly when the weather changes, or there are roadworks on surrounding streets – and if additional measures are needed, it could all become much more expensive than the current efficient and adaptable school crossing patroller.

**Answer**

As you say I attended the school on Monday morning along with our Road Safety Auditor. I attended from 8.15am to approximately 9.15am. The first 20 minutes or so was without the school crossing patroller being present and I was particularly impressed by the curtesy of drivers towards the children crossing or seeking to cross the road. I didn't see any driver speed through the crossing when a child was there. I particularly saw one car very

carefully stop and let the child and parent cross so my impression was generally speaking that the motorists were behaving particularly well. I do accept that there was a problem further down the road where a couple of cars met each other as one came down and one went up but I think that is nothing to do with school crossing patrollers and something to do with parking generally and maybe that needs to be addressed or looked at. So that is separate from the school crossing patroller and I don't think the school crossing patroller sited where she was could have intervened with those two cars that were arguing with each other over a piece of road space.

So as far as the crossings themselves we have replaced school crossing patrollers with crossings throughout the Borough over the last 10 years or so and I don't think any of them are more dangerous now than they were before and in some instances where the traffic was of a higher speed than they are here it was actually beneficial.

As I have said I am going to look at this site particularly. Since I visited it when I was Chair of the Education Committee there are more children going to the site so there may be some issues on that front but the principal is that I don't see that the crossing itself is inherently less safe than a school crossing patroller.

**23.6 Diane Burch asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Tony Johnson reported in the local Wokingham Paper (dated July 19th), that the Council Leader said; "The residents sent us a clear message on 3rd May - If our residents feel that they are not being listened to, then we need to redouble our efforts to show that we have taken on board what they have to say".

Bearing this in mind; why does it appear that they not listening to the parents and children at least at the Keephatch and Murray Road crossings – who realise not only how dangerous these alternative crossings will be at their particular locations but, according to the survey undertaken by the independent Road Safety Experts in April of last year, the conclusion was (on the Murray Road crossing) that: "Under the justification criteria outlined in Section 6, this location does not require a pedestrian facility."

Might I also point out that according to these figures, between the hour of 5pm and 6pm only 10 pedestrians crossed the road at the crossing. Announcing that "other road users can safely cross the road using the automated crossings" doesn't apply to this site so to the untrained eye – it does look like needless and unwanted expense.

Bearing all this in mind, would the Council please consider delaying the installation of automated crossings (at least at these two sites) until a further (and perhaps more detailed) survey can be completed, instead of (what appears to be) trying to rush through these unwanted and expensive alternatives?

**Answer**

Formal crossings such as zebra and puffin controls are safe forms of crossing facilities and the designs for the proposed crossings have been through an independent road safety audit to confirm this.

The assessment process you refer to uses the Department for Transport's guidance to establish if a pedestrian crossing is required. This guidance assumes no existing crossing is provided and considers pedestrian demand and traffic over the entire day. As you have

highlighted because the maximum demand is during two relatively short periods of the day and the assessment considers the demand throughout the day, the survey results when analysed showed that no crossing was necessary.

However recognising that the demand is focused over two short periods of the day, we used the Road Safety GB guidance for establishing if a crossing patroller would be justified. This assessment would also identify whether a formal crossing could be considered rather than providing a patroller.

The assessment for both Murray Road and Keephatch identified a patroller would be justified. Where the assessment identified one would be justified we have proposed to install a formal crossing as an alternative.

Delaying the delivery of the crossings and undertaking further surveys is not considered necessary as it will not change the outcome of the assessment.

However, as a result of the concerns you and the public have raised the designs of both crossings are being reconsidered with a view to providing traffic signal controlled crossings instead.

### **Supplementary Question**

We heard of the death a few years ago of a school crossing patroller up north. The details were discussed at one of our meetings and we learnt that the accident was probably caused by the driver being unable to see the school crossing patroller in the road due to low sun and probably the glare of a wet road. Are there any additional safety measures that they would be willing to take at the Murray Road crossing because during the winter months the low winter sun and glare off wet roads are a real hazard in the months of December and January?

I have had a few drivers confess that they genuinely cannot see me on the crossing and, of course, I am always in high-viz clothing. There is a real concern on my part that if they cannot see me in high-viz wear what chance does any pedestrian, child or adult, have in normal clothing?

### **Supplementary Answer**

When I was with you the other day, as I said to a question earlier, I was very impressed with how motorists came up to the crossing and were relatively slow. They were not driving at 60mph or even 30 or 40mph and the parked cars to some extent also do provide for drivers slowing down because of the parked cars beside. However I do think perhaps there needs to be examination of some of the parking aspects. I think you and I saw two cars arguing as to who had the right of way and I noticed that perhaps a couple of the cars in front of that car had been parked there for quite a while so I don't know what the parking restrictions are.

So I will look into things a bit more at that site because I do take your point. I think the issue of low sun perhaps we need to put covers over some of the lights when they are installed so that they can be seen and they are not blinded by the sun. So I take your point and thank you for that and we will take that into account.

## **24. MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members

### **24.3 Lindsay Ferris asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

I have considerable concerns that the financial information presented for the closure of the School Crossing Patrol Service (see pages 21/21 of this Agenda) are inaccurate and omit a number of ongoing Revenue costs associated with the provision and future running of the crossing facilities proposed to be provided.

Why have these ongoing revenue costs been excluded, as it gives a false impression of any supposed savings?

#### **Answer**

I believe the costs you are referring to relate to any interest payments associated with capital borrowing and the ongoing maintenance and operation costs once the sites have been installed.

I can confirm that the majority of the capital funding has been allocated from grants with a very small proportion from developer contributions. Therefore there are no additional costs associated with borrowing in this part.

As for maintenance and operation these costs are relatively small and will be absorbed within the existing maintenance budgets. The new lights will all be LED so power consumption and therefore cost will be very low and in terms of faults the most common fault is bulbs requiring replacement. With LED this is no longer a regular issue. As these installations will be new any maintenance or faults during the first few years will be covered under warranty. For new traffic signal installations the approximate annual cost is less than £600 per site.

#### **Supplementary Question**

I beg on the debate to differ if necessary on the interest payments because not all your money will be coming from that because it is a question of how the money is funded. So I will query that later.

I will also just make a comment before I get to my question. You mentioned that the decision was made a little while ago about this. My understanding is that it was on the first phase that the decision was made and that the paper presented said it would review the second phase so I have an issue with that. Also you were asked about not being able to do something about keeping any school patrollers. You know you can do that via a supplementary estimate so that is not an issue.

The issue I now have is there is an ongoing replacement cost for these control systems. They last somewhere between 10-15 years. So somewhere in the costs will need to be a replacement cost and I also do believe that the maintenance of seven new crossings, which is what you are putting here, would actually be quite a significant increase on the number so I will be asking you to come up with a specific issue regarding how you are going to increase the contract associated with the maintenance of the crossings that we

have in the Borough and how that will come as I think the figures you mentioned of £600 a year is actually low but I would like you to provide that and if you could provide it by a written answer I am happy for you to do that?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I said that the maintenance costs are relatively small and I don't think that is likely to change the number of crossings here and there are other crossings that we have in the Borough. The answer says that it is not going to significantly increase the maintenance budget but I will seek to get the more detailed answer you have asked for but I believe that the answer I have given is accurate.

### **24.5 David Hare had asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. Due to his inability to attend the meeting a written reply was provided:**

The Council designed a zebra crossing for Murray Road which was due to be installed on 25th July – before any decision was finally made about the effectiveness of these controls. It has now been delayed, but would it have been pulled if the anger of local residents had not been expressed at the last Council meeting, with questions about the validity of this idea abounding. An uncontrolled crossing on Murray Road would cause traffic chaos and might well lead to injury of the crossing users.

### **Answer**

Following a site meeting with the local ward Member on the 10 July 2018, Officers have been considering a request to change the original proposed zebra crossing to a Puffin Crossing. The scheme will now be redesigned. I visited the school on 23<sup>rd</sup> July and observed the children arriving at school with their parents, and spoke to parents, a teacher and Mrs Birch which provided additional information on other issues beyond the issue of a school crossing patroller. I will take these into account during the redesign process.

### **24.6 Rachel Burgess asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

The School Crossing Patrol consultation raises a significant number of safety concerns. With regard to the Keephatch Road crossing these concerns are backed up by the independent road safety audit. The audit states that the proposed site of this zebra crossing is not safe for two reasons: poor visibility and, more crucially, proximity to the roundabout. The audit states that “the close proximity of the proposed zebra pedestrian crossing to the...roundabout...could result in an increased risk of...collisions”. Are the findings of the road safety audit going to be ignored at the Keephatch Road site?

### **Answer**

No not all. All findings from a Road Safety Audit are an integral part of the design process and where applicable recommendations that have been identified have been adopted and included in the final scheme design.

The Road Safety Audit did not identify that the design would provide an unsafe crossing facility but highlighted recommendations that if implemented would improve safety further.

With regard to the hedgerow, clearance has started on site. The final design for the crossing has been proposed as far north as possible without taking pedestrians away from the desire line.

### **Supplementary Question**

I would just like to focus on the location of the crossing. I don't believe that the crossing should be placed where it was originally proposed because of what it says in the Road Safety Audit. It cannot be placed much further north, as the Road Safety Audit suggested, because that is not practical and I don't think anyone thinks it would be. It cannot be placed at the south side of the roundabout because of the dropped kerbs and houses there. So do you not agree with me that the only safe solution, in this particular setting, is a school crossing patroller on the south side of the roundabout?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I am advised that it is safe on the north side of the roundabout at a suitable distance from the roundabout to ensure that there is safety.

### **24.7 Andy Croy asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:**

Clearly, the main driver to cut the School Crossing Patrollers (SCPs) is financial – the cut first appears in the 2015 Medium Term Financial Plan and if safety were an issue I am sure the Borough would have replaced these SCPs years ago.

The financial information provided in the report excludes:

- Any attempt to quantify the value of non-core services (e.g. road safety training to children, a pillar of community cohesion, an extra set of official eyes and ears) provided by the SCPs;
- Maintenance costs of the proposed crossing sites, including, for example, maintenance of any high friction road surfaces which will need to be added.

Why are the Executive making a financial decision based on incomplete financial information?

### **Answer**

The decision being made today is not based on financial considerations. That decision was made in 2015 and we are today deciding on whether we continue to implement that decision.

### **Supplementary Question**

The decision was made in 2015 and indeed you said earlier that it was decided to withdraw the funding in 2015 and that is why we are where we are today. So what you are saying is that there are no revenue implications for the maintenance of the high friction road surface and no revenue implications for the continued clearance of the vegetation on, for example, the Keephatch site and there are no revenue implications, for example, in the changes in the parking markings that you have eluded to all over these sites? There are revenue implications that are not included in the financial assessment.

So the question is why are you making a decision based on incorrect financial information?

### **Supplementary Answer**

I do not agree with you that there are missing revenue implications because I think that what we are doing is actually spending capital money to make these places safe.

### **25. SCHOOL CROSSING PATROL SERVICE - CONSULTATION REPORT 2018**

The Executive considered a report setting out the findings from the Safe School Crossing consultation.

The Executive Member for Highways and Transport advised the meeting that following consultation with local Ward Members it was intended to redesign the crossings proposed at four of the sites: Murray Road, Norreys Avenue, Keephatch Road and Hurricane Way. Officers would then come back with redesigns and as the new crossings would take 3-5 weeks to build it would therefore be necessary to reprogramme the delivery of these sites.

Councillor Pauline Jorgensen commented that she had received a lot of positive feedback in relation to the Silverdale Road site as residents were looking forward to the crossing.

### **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) WBC continue with its proposal to provide safe, permanent crossings at the seven locations that currently have a school crossing patroller, and, following their installation, remove the school crossing patrol service once the permanent crossings are complete as set out in Option 2, Appendix 1 of the report;
- 2) all affected schools be reminded that they have access to the Council's road safety and My Journey teams who can facilitate further road safety training for pupils if requested.