

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

TYNEDALE LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Tynedale Local Area Council** held at the Fuse Media Centre, Moor Road, Prudhoe, Northumberland, NE42 5LJ on Tuesday, 21 November 2023 at 4.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor T Cessford
(Chair), in the Chair)

MEMBERS

A Dale
I Hutchinson
N Morphet
A Scott

A Sharp
G Stewart
H Waddell

OFFICERS

N Snowdon

N Turnbull
K Westerby

Principal Programme Officer
(Highways Improvement)
Democratic Services Officer
Highways Delivery Manager

ALSO PRESENT

1 member of the press.

27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fairless-Aitken, Kennedy, Horncastle, Oliver and Riddle.

28. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meeting of the Tynedale Local Area Council, held on 12 September 2023, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

29. PETITIONS

This item was to:

a) Receive any new petitions:

Ch.'s Initials.....

It was reported that a new e-petition 'A68 Safety Improvements' had been opened on the Council's website.

b) Consider reports on petitions previously received:

i) Request for Additional Traffic Calming Measures at Woodlands, Hexham

The Local Area Committee received an update on the above petition which was originally considered at the meeting on 11 July 2023. Due to concerns raised regarding the speed data within the report and the incorrect location of the original survey at the boundary of the 30mph and 20mph speed limit, two new speed surveys had been undertaken between 28 July and 9 August 2023. (A copy of the report enclosed with the signed minutes).

The lead petitioner was unable to attend the meeting.

Neil Snowdon, Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement) outlined the results of the surveys for eastbound and westbound traffic which included the averages for:

- Numbers of vehicles per day.
- Average speed.
- Speed at 85th percentile (the speed or less at which 85% of vehicles were travelling).

In order for enforcement of the speed limit to be carried out, the 85th percentile needed to be 24mph in a 20mph speed limit and 35mph within a 30mph speed limit.

He concluded that based on the surveys, the data obtained in the 30mph section did not meet the limit for the necessary criteria for enforcement but the data in the 20mph did meet the criteria.

The Principal Programme Officer (Highways Improvement) reported that additional 20mph repeater signs and gateway improvements were being considered as part of the Hexham to Corbridge Active Travel Scheme.

He referred to the request within the original petition for consideration of different methods to encourage motorists to slow down but the Council did not generally install physical measures on A-class roads.

In answer to questions, the following information was provided:

- The data for the 20mph section had been passed to the Northumbria Police's Road Safety Unit for further investigation. It was likely that this data would be forwarded to the Neighbourhood Policing Team, for further investigation, as 20mph speed limits were rarely enforced with the mobile camera van. Any update regarding any enforcement activity would need to be provided by the Neighbourhood Inspector.

- The maximum recorded speed of 94.6 mph had occurred once on 4 August 2023 but had been mentioned in the summary for all four of the surveys eastbound/westbound, 20 mph and 30 mph locations.
- Physical measures in the form of speed cushions, have previously been installed on the A1147 in Stakeford, and there have been a number of issues with these recently. Some of the cushions have had to be removed as they had become loose and unsafe. Meetings have recently been held with supplier to discuss these issues.
- Use of horizontal deflectors would result in loss of space for on-street parking.
- The average speeds within the 20mph survey (24.6mph and 25.1mph) were only slightly over the enforcement limit of 24mph.
- Installation of physical measures might be considered in a residential housing estate if the average speed exceeded 24 mph but not on an A class road.
- Use of rumble strips had resulted in noise and vibration complaints from residents at other locations where these has been installed.
- Drivers who wished to avoid routes with physical measures found alternative routes which did not require them to slow their vehicles. This put pressure elsewhere on the road network which resulted in problems in those areas and maintenance issues.
- Details of the Community Speedwatch scheme could be provided to the lead petitioner.
- Officers were unable to recall the results of other surveys on 20 mph roads in Hexham.

Members discussed the following:

- Whether some of the instances of speeding were by emergency vehicles. A member had obtained information that ambulance vehicles using blue lights used the A69 and not the Corbridge Road. Another suggested that it was more likely that it would be a police vehicle which could travel faster than fire engines and ambulances.
- 71 vehicles had been recorded driving in excess of 24 mph in a period of less than 2 hours beside the hospital in a Community Speedwatch event in which a member had participated.
- Whether the effectiveness of 20 mph was reduced in Hexham as the 20mph area was too large. Perhaps it should be more focused in the town centre and near schools.
- Introduction of 20 mph speed limits had reduced average speeds by circa 5 mph which would be of benefit to pedestrians if there was an accident.
- The 20 mph speed limits had been of benefit to the success of safe school zones at many locations. It was hoped that safety talks with school children would result in the message being taken home to parents.

RESOLVED that:

1. The update and results of the additional speed surveys be noted.

2. Speeding concerns in the area continue to be monitored by officers in Highways.
3. A response be obtained from the Neighbourhood Inspector / Northumbria Police's Road Safety Unit.
4. An update on the Hexham / Corbridge Active Travel Scheme be reported to the committee.

c) To consider updates on petitions previously considered:

There were none.

30. FIX MY STREET UPDATE

Kris Westerby, Highways Delivery Manager, gave a presentation on the new web based reporting system, Fix My Street (FMS), which had been launched in May 2023. (A copy of the presentation is enclosed with the signed minutes.)

The presentation outlined:

- The limits of previous systems used by Local Services and other departments with minimal integration of back-office systems and lack of feedback to customers.
- The benefits of FMS which included asset based reporting, use of photographic evidence, accuracy of locations, integration with other systems, ability to produce reports for users and respond to FOI / EIR information.
- The implementation timetable.
- The benefits for users and staff with slides which demonstrated views of the web and mobile apps and ability to monitor reports made.
- Data on reports logged using FMS from May to September 2023 and comparison with issues logged for the same period in 2022 (there had been an increase of 143%).
- The ability to monitor trends by ward or postcode and obtain a detailed breakdown by category.
- The top 5 reporting categories were:
 - i) Roads – potholes
 - ii) Flytipping
 - iii) Hedges / Overgrown vegetation
 - iv) Blocked gullies
 - v) Grass cutting
- Next steps including ongoing enhancements such as inclusion of grit heaps and bins, developments to aid defense of insurance claims, improvements to consistency and feedback to users, increased front end automation of responses with reference to policies, use by more departments such as housing etc.
- The demonstration included a brief overview of the system as viewed by officers, how the system interacted with Alloy (the system used by Highways Maintenance) and how reports could be reassigned between users and departments.

- Users were able see whether the same issue had already been reported.
- Residents could continue to report issues by telephoning the Contact Centre who would enter the details on Fix My Street.
- Anything deemed as an emergency should still be reported by telephone to the 0345 number which had out of hours cover.

The following information was provided in response to questions from members:

- Videos could be embedded within the system and work was in progress to include demonstration on how the system be used.
- A winter services video was to be filmed in the near future and if helpful, a link be shared with members.
- Vexatious reports could be marked private and hidden. Access to the system could also be blocked by those individuals.
- Some categories required individuals to provide their names and contact details e.g. Public Protection, but the information could not be viewed by members of the public.
- Response to highways matters were risk assessed and work undertaken in accordance with the Highways manual.
- The demand for road marking was significant. There were 2 teams working across the county with the work being dependent on weather conditions.
- The gully tankers worked on cyclical routes in order to maximise their use, ad hoc problems would only be prioritised if it caused traffic to go into a different lane or pedestrians onto the road network.
- Terminology could be tweaked to aid understanding by members of the public with links to policies, such as reference to 'reactive maintenance'.
- Problems arising from works undertaken by utility companies on the highways road network were referred to the Street Works team.
- Town and Parish Councils were recommended to use Fix My Street which would aid monitoring of reports within wards, parishes or post codes. They could add an RSS link to FMS on their own websites.

The Chair thanked the Highways Development Manager for the presentation on Fix My Street, which was a positive addition for the Council.

RESOLVED that the presentation be received.

31. WINTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE

The report provided an overall update of the pre-season preparations ahead of the forthcoming winter services season to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable that the highways was maintained in a safe condition in accordance with legal obligations under the Highways Act 1980. (A copy of the briefing note was enclosed with the signed minutes.)

Kris Westerby, Highways Delivery Manager, reported that the fleet of vehicles, salt supplies and drivers and other staff were in place to respond to winter weather.

In response to questions, the following information was provided:-

- Councillors and members of the public were reminded to ring the Contact Centre via the 0345 telephone number or report all non-emergency issues via Fix My Street. Out of hours calls were taken by Fire Control and referred to the on-duty supervisor to manage.
- Due to shift patterns, it was important that Winter Services Supervisors and Winter Service Delivery Managers were not contacted out of hours to ensure their rest periods were not disturbed. Officers should only be contacted directly in an emergency situation.
- Whether the winter service rota could be shared with members would be checked.
- A link to the map on the council's website which showed the primary and secondary gritting routes would be shared with members.
- The Highways Delivery Manager would check what information could be obtained regarding recent clear water flooding in Newton which was the responsibility of Northumbria Water.
- Queries regarding untreated roads could be reported via Fix My Street and would be checked by the supervisor.
- The Council worked closely with neighbouring authorities, including Durham County Council.
- Clarification was provided regarding the council responsible for gritting a section of the A68.
- Unusual weather activity on Friday 17 November 2023 had resulted in the weather being colder than predicted and unfortunately officers had not had sufficient time to respond resulting in black ice in some areas on untreated roads.
- Any emergencies should be reported by calling the Contact Centre on the 0345 number.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

32. LOCAL AREA COUNCIL WORK PROGRAMME

A list of agreed items for future Local Area Council meetings was circulated. (A copy is enclosed with the minutes.)

Members were invited to email any requests to the Chair and / or Democratic Services Officer between meetings.

The Democratic Services Officer reported that the Interim Senior Regeneration Manager had suggested that it would be more appropriate to consider an update on the Borderlands programme in May 2024 when there would be more progress on the place plan element. The work programme would be updated.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

33. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 16 January 2024.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____