

Questions, Answers and Actions – Chichester County Local Forum 1 March 2022

In Attendance:

County Councillors

Simon Oakley (Chairman), Janet Duncton, Jeremy Hunt, Donna Johnson, Julian Joy, Kate O'Kelly, Tom Richardson and Sarah Sharp.

Apologies

Andrew Kerry-Bedell and Pieter Montyn.

Residents

17 members of the public.

Question 1 from Mrs M. Devitt:

What plans are there to repave the four pedestrianised streets off of Chichester Cross - north, east, south and west streets?

I have tripped twice on the appallingly mislaid pavings and am becoming nervous of shopping in Chichester. I do not want to break a hip. I remember my father writing to the then Council when they were first laid to complain about their poor quality and warning they would quickly deteriorate which they did, but the Council had obviously made no contingency arrangement requiring the company concerned to replace defective pavings. I have friends who have fallen too and two who have been hit by cyclists who should not have been there. These are always men for I have seen others and have been verbally abused when I tried to remonstrate with one.

Officer Response to Question 1, in consultation with the local members - Cllrs Hunt, Joy, Oakley and Sharp:

Firstly, I am sorry to read of this resident's fall and I hope they make a full recovery. We do inspect these locations on a monthly basis, however due to the nature of the historic materials used and the heavy vehicles that can access this road, issues can appear very quickly and I hope residents understand that it is not always possible for us to be aware of every issues as it occurs. We are aware of the challenges with the footway in this location and, the County Council, Chichester District Council and Chichester City Council jointly funded a highway consultant's report, which presented a number of options for Chichester city centre precinct improvements, ranging from low to high-cost solutions.

The options will be included for discussion in the Chichester Growth Deal review, with key stakeholders consulted to establish where a potential project should be positioned against other priorities in the city, and if any of the options should be taken forward.

Highway officers will continue monthly walked inspections to highlight any safety issues and arrange repairs with our contractor. Residents can find information on [how to report concerns about pavements](#) on our website.

WSCC is investigating costs to replace the red pavers in the city centre. Following this, we will work with partners on an agreed solution.

Supplementary:

Mrs Devitt claimed that she does not want the pedestrianised pavings to become a heritage surface. She voiced concerns over reported drainage issues outside of shop fronts and the passages receiving a high footfall. She also recalled a recent incident with a cyclist cycling through the precinct despite being prohibited.

Local members' response:

Cllr Hunt acknowledged awareness of the matter and recognised the resident's frustration. He confirmed that talks are progressing between Chichester City Council and Chichester District Council, but re-iterated the likely high-cost implications of the scheme. Cllr Hunt spoke in support of the District Council's community wardens who patrol the shopping precinct and encouraged residents to report sightings of prohibited cycling to them directly. Cllr Joy added that there may be some confusion over the cycling time zone restrictions in place. He also commented that Heavy Goods Vehicles are known not to always use designated loading bays. Cllrs Joy and Oakley suggested that a potential Traffic Regulation Order imposing a vehicle weight limit could be submitted in line with the re-paving scheme. Cllr Oakley also highlighted the risk of standing surface water should permeable surfacing be removed.

Question 2 from Mr T. Morris:

I am concerned that the Highway Code changes will create an increased risk of collisions at Northgate, Chichester.

The one-way system is currently signed so that cyclists must give way to vehicles turning into the roads leading off the one-way system. Unfortunately, the Highway Code now gives priority to cyclists and pedestrians, instead of vehicles turning into those roads.

I fear that cyclists may now believe that they are no longer obliged to give way at those junctions. Pedestrians may also expect that vehicles will give way to them at those junctions. In addition, there is the added risk of motorists on the one-way system colliding with vehicles that do suddenly stop on the one-way system to give way to cyclists or pedestrians crossing at the junctions.

There will inevitably be confusion over the rules and signage at Northgate, which will increase the risk of collisions. I appreciate that WSCC is not responsible for the Department for Transport's (DfT) ill-considered changes, but WSCC will have to deal with the consequences.

I would be grateful if you could review the position to see if anything can be done to reduce confusion regarding the rule changes at this location, and to see if any measures can be taken to reduce the risk of collisions.

Officer Response to Question 2, in consultation with the local member Cllr Hunt:

The Highway Code is issued by the [Department for Transport](#) and we recommend residents contact them directly if they have an issue.

Although, we are looking into the possibility of some longer-term improvements to the Northgate gyratory system, we are not currently planning to make any immediate amendments due to these changes. However, if residents would like to request a change to the highway through a Communities Highways Scheme, they should [click here for more information](#).

Supplementary:

Mr Morris reiterated that the current signage is misleading for cyclists, putting them at risk of assuming their right of way and called on WSCC to review the position.

Local member response:

Cllr Hunt agreed with the concerns shared and identified a lack of DfT publicity as a contributing factor and claimed that motorists need to be educated on the changes. He agreed to progress the resident's feedback concerning the cycle route signage with the local Highways Area Manager. Members shared sympathy with cyclists and called for action to improve their safety. Cllr Oakley suggested that the Walking and Cycling Task and Finish Group could scrutinise the matter in line with WSCC's Active Travel Strategy. Cllr Joy referred to a recent motion passed by Chichester City Council calling for a 20mph speed limit across the city and added that further traffic calming measures are needed to optimise road user and pedestrian safety.

Question 3 from an Anonymous resident:

On 31st January I reported a large pothole, as a precursor to potentially downloading and using the Love West Sussex App (Enquiry 3056496, Somerstown), I reported it over the phone in WSCC offices, as I hadn't been able to find a no. easily on your website and I was near.

I spent probably 30 minutes plus reporting the pothole and also a dangerous bollard that had caused injury to my wife (photos attached), this was under 3056495. He had reported both incorrectly and fortunately Mark Bishop (Highways Officer) called me and I was able to explain to him over the phone, the location of the dangerous bollard and also the pothole (still no action taken on bollard or pothole).

So, My question(s) to "talk with us" is, how are potholes measured? Because pothole 3056496 is 60mm deep and when speaking with Mark Bishop WSCC he told me this was 40mm. Which it isn't. I was further alarmed that not only do you not check a percentage of contractors work, you don't actually check any of their work? This pothole looks to be due to the previous terrible repair to the road. I realise you can't check every repair, but you should be checking a percentage. If this is due to lack of funds, why not seek volunteers to check some repairs for you?

Officer Response to Question 3, in consultation with the local member Cllr Hunt:

I'm sorry to read of the member of public's injury, and we hope they make a full recovery. Our inspections on potholes are undertaken with a stick that is delineated in 20mm sections. Our investigation levels are set out in our [Highway Inspection Manual](#).

This details a pothole as 'estimated at 40mm deep and a minimum 150mm in diameter. Any breakout where the foundation is unbound.'

The bollard is scheduled to be removed in early March, so it should be happening imminently.

I would like to reassure you that we do audit around 10% of our contractor's works. We will request that a highway steward revisits this location.

Question 4 from A. Henslow of Midhurst Area Cycling:

What circumstances have to exist to get approval of an extension of a 30mph limit into a rural area along an A road, which is currently set as unrestricted?

Officer Response to Question 4, in consultation with the local member Cllr O'Kelly:

For any speed limit Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to be implemented, the following criteria applies:

- A TRO must be supported by the local County Councillor.
- The request must demonstrate reasonable public support and score 10 points or above on.

[Click here to apply for a TRO.](#)

And the request must be within national and local policy and guidance. Our guidance/process has recently been reviewed, following a decision made by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport – [click here for more information.](#)

[Click here to view our current Speed Limit Policy.](#)

The process has been reviewed to ensure it remains up to date with current needs. It should be noted that the new TRO process will be implemented from 1 April.

Supplementary:

- A. Henslow referred to the application stage and questioned how a proposed TRO should be costed, and whether the group are expected to contribute a percentage of the total cost.

Local member response:

Cllr O'Kelly clarified that, at the appropriate stage, the group should contact the local Highways Area Manager to arrange a site visit in order to estimate an

approximate cost. She added that the application process does not indicate that there is expectation of a minimum contribution, however any funds that the group are able to attribute could lead to a higher TRO score. The resident was reminded that the new TRO rolling programme (from 1 April) will improve the frequency of which applications are assessed and schemes implemented. Cllr Oakley recommended that gaining the support of the local Parish Council is also beneficial to an application.

Question 5 from Maria Legge:

What is WSCC intending to do about the ever-increased speed and careless driving that occurs on the beautiful stretch of B2141 through our National Park? This is particularly bad by North Marden where the road is widens and I have had several near misses pulling out from our hamlet onto this road where speeds are reaching 80/90 mph, when 60 mph feels far too fast anyway.

I have been told not enough deaths have taken place so my question is: If carbon is to be reduced and the National park is adopting a 'Green Initiative' what better way than to lower emissions by putting in place a lower speed limit?

The noise levels have a considerably negative impact in the area, particularly at weekends, due to the amount motorbikes and high- performance cars that seem to have a made this road their personal racetrack! For the impact on the environment sake... if not on lives and quality of lives - both human and animal - can some restrictions be put in place!

Officer Response to Question 5 (the local member, Cllr Kerry-Bedell was not present):

The enforcement of speeding and noisy vehicles is currently undertaken by the Police and they have asked that any issues are referred directly to them. In a very small number of instances, the issue of speeding can be attributed to the layout and alignment of the existing highway infrastructure, but in most cases this is linked to poor driver behaviour. If you have an interest in engaging with the Police, the first thing you can do is to contact your local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) or appropriate local officer. These details are available from Sussex Police online at www.sussex.police.gov.uk or by telephone on 101.

Contact with the Police can lead to discussions about what is already known regarding the area, in terms of any traffic and speeding problems. If appropriate, and considered a priority, the Police will be in a position to undertake initial speed surveys to understand the extent of the problem and begin to consider the potential solutions. While, we do not want to pre-empt the evidence gathering and analysis stage, possible outcomes might be to undertake some specific enforcement activity in the area, or initiate some type of speed awareness campaign, possibly in conjunction with the County Council Road Safety colleagues, or possibly even getting the wider community involved in monitoring speeds via Community Speedwatch:

<https://www.communityspeedwatch.org/>

Another Sussex Police initiative that you might find useful to know about is Operation Crackdown. Again, details about this are on the Police website or can be found at www.operationcrackdown.org. This gives residents the specific opportunity to report incidents of anti-social driving that the Police will then follow up and investigate.

If you would like to propose a material change to the highway, I suggest that in the first instance you refer to the following link which sets out a process that we have in place and allows any community, which demonstrate wider community support and local County Councillor support, to put proposals together to modify the highway. Click here for more information about [Community Highways Schemes](#).

On the subject of changes in speed limit, we have a County Council policy that sets out what criteria needs to be met. [Click here for more information](#).

There is a lot of information provided above to digest but it is important that any applicant putting forward a proposal or range of proposals understands the processes and policies that are expected to followed. It is also important that any potential applicant is aware that cut off dates for Community Highway Schemes is currently at the end of July every year. Those successful schemes taken forward will then be designed the following financial year and subject to available funding, implementation will take place the year after, so this is not a quick process.

As intimated above, you will need to provide evidence that you have engaged with the parish council, local residents and the County Councillor, as they may have a strong position on traffic calming which can lead to excessive braking and acceleration, air pollution, noise pollution and ground borne vibration that can present issues to adjacent properties.

I hope the above information helps explain the County Council's position and I wish you luck in any future applications.

Supplementary:

Maria Legge reported witnessing regular high speeds of up to 90mph and claimed that the wide road encourages motorists to speed. Concern was also raised for deer crossing the road from the adjacent section of the South Downs National Park.

The local member, Cllr Kerry-Bedell has been in contact with the resident offline to offer his support and help investigate the issue.

Response from members:

Cllr Richardson, Adviser to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on Road Safety, noted that this issue will come into consideration in his role as the Chairman of a Task and Finish Group due to review speed limit policy across the county. He added that the national speed limit on country lanes is not appropriate in most cases. Cllr Richardson promoted the recent improvements made to Sussex Safer Roads Partnership's report mechanism and again referred

the resident to Sussex Police's 'Operation Crackdown'. He explained that evidence built up through multiple reports of anti-social driving would mean the Police are more likely to attend hot spot areas and carry out proactive patrols. Cllr Richardson noted that Police Action Days have been carried out across the area over the last 12 months to target issues, and encouraged the resident to liaise with their local parish council with regards to applying for a [Community Highways Scheme](#). Cllr Hunt suggested that the resident attend their local parish council meeting with their local Police Community Support Officer in attendance.

The local member, Cllr Kerry-Bedell has since been in contact with the resident offline to offer his support and help investigate the issue.

Verbal Question 6 from Mr R. Keyworth:

Mr Keyworth raised concerns over potential plans for the re-location of the bus station and depot, near Chichester rail station, and questioned the likelihood of WSCC increasing its budget for road maintenance.

Response from the local members:

Cllr Hunt referred the bus station question as a matter for the District Council and signposted the resident to their [Southern Gateway project for more information](#).

Cllr Oakley explained that the fading of white lines is, in places, a deliberate tactic in an attempt to inhibit motorists' speed. Junction markings are considered critical to safety and therefore an exception to the rule.

Verbal Question 7 from Mr J. Beckett of Bepton Parish Council:

Why was WSCC's Climate Action Plan rated lowly in comparison with other national councils in a recent review by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change? (IPCC)

Response from members:

Cllr O'Kelly explained that WSCC recognised the urgency, not emergency, in the development of its Climate Action Plan and added that the portfolio has been allocated an additional £10million as part of the budget for 2022/23. Members voiced their advocacy of the climate agenda and drew attention to examples of projects being delivered by WSCC including the new Electric Vehicle Strategy and solar panel installations at schools. Cllr Oakley highlighted that, in 2022/23, WSCC had a net revenue budget of £648M and reminded the resident of the significant time and cost implications involved with transforming West Sussex into a sustainable and environmentally-friendly place to live. He concluded that WSCC has a statutory responsibility to its residents to balance service spend across the board.

The meeting ended at 6.10pm.