

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30 JANUARY 2014

MEMBER'S ITEM: TRAFFIC FLOW IN CHATHAM

Report from: Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture

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Summary

This report updates Members following a site meeting that took place as a result of concerns raised by Councillor Mackinlay, regarding traffic flow in Chatham.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Under Medway Constitution Overview and Scrutiny rules (Chapter 4, Part 5, Paragraph 9.1) Councillor Mackinlay has requested that an item on this matter is included on the agenda for this meeting.

2. The Issue

- 2.1. Councillor Mackinlay raised concerns regarding traffic flow in Chatham at the January 2013 meeting of this committee and requested that an item be placed on the agenda. At the committee meeting he raised the issue of the road network in Chatham and how, in his opinion, it did not flow properly with two major 'pinch points' which made journeys through Chatham town centre difficult. He acknowledged that the Chairman had offered to consider this matter as part of the 'De-cluttering Town Centres' task group review but considered that it was an issue to be looked at in its own right.
- 2.2 Officers provided an update at the 27 June 2013 meeting of this committee. The report advised that the key objective of the new traffic management arrangements was to remove the traffic barrier between the town centre and the River Medway to enable the regeneration of this area. The early phases of this strategy have proved successful with the opening on the new Chatham Waterfront Bus Station, which has also improved pedestrian accessibility to the river and improved public realm. The report provided the results of annual traffic counts to enable a comparison of traffic flows. The report acknowledged that travel journey times do increase during busy peak times and this is symptomatic of travel demand exceeding highway capacity, with the key locations generating congestion on the network in Chatham town centre being

The Brook in the vicinity of Whiffens Avenue/Chatham Waterfront Bus Station and Union Street. At the committee meeting it was agreed that:

- a) Members and officers will meet to discuss traffic flow;
- b) A report will come back to committee in six months time.

3. Director's comments

3.1 In accordance with the request from committee, a site meeting between ward councillors and officers took place on 26 September 2013 to review traffic conditions along The Brook and Union Street.

3.2 The table below details the issues that were raised and the Director's comments.

| Issue | Director's comments |
|---|---|
| Signage scheme required for the Salvation Army end of the High Street. | A scheme has been designed. Funding has yet to be identified to fund implementation, which is estimated to cost £20,000. |
| Parking enforcement required at The Brook end of the High Street. In addition consideration of possible physical measures to prevent vehicle incursion in the pedestrian zone during operational times. | A gating scheme has yet to be investigated. |
| Some businesses on The Brook constantly has vehicles or goods obstructing the footway - enforcement action needed. | Parking team have been instructed to carry out enforcement at this location. |
| Bachelor Street junction with The Brook - investigate the possibility of shutting off these signals. | <p>Counts will be undertaken at this junction and also the car park exit. The junction will then be modelled and safety audited. The existing pedestrian phase of the signals may also have to be accommodated, so pedestrian flow figures will also be surveyed.</p> <p>Counts could not be programmed before the signal changes at Dock Road/Globe Lane and Whiffens Avenue junctions. After the signal changes we were then in a non-typical traffic period on the run up to Christmas.</p> <p>Counts are taking place in January on Bachelor Street and the multi-storey car park exit, with a small tracking</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>survey for traffic exiting the multi-storey as well.</p> <p>If it is proven practical to remove the signals then costs will be determined. Implementation has yet to be programmed as funding has not been identified.</p> |
| <p>Access road into the multi-story car park - there is an old temporary sign this needs to be removed if no longer required. If it is required then a better sign is needed.</p> | <p>This is in the ownership of the Pentagon and we will liaise with them.</p> |
| <p>Missing footway link between the multi-storey car park and Military Road ramp. The verge is very worn through pedestrian use - can a footway be installed here?</p> | <p>This will be investigated but the level difference at the end of the verge cannot be easily overcome. This is likely to be an expensive project to deliver and will need to programme funds from the LTP to support this project.</p> |
| <p>Whiffens Avenue junction with The Brook - Investigate the possibility of shutting off these signals.</p> | <p>Counts will be undertaken at this junction, the junction will then be modelled and safety audited. The existing pedestrian phase of the signals may also have to be accommodated.</p> <p>Counts could not be programmed before the signal changes at this junction. After the signal changes we were then in a non-typical traffic period on the run up to Christmas. Counts are taking place in January.</p> <p>If it is proven practical to remove the signals then costs will be determined. Implementation has yet to be programmed as funding has not been identified.</p> |

- 3.3 The report to the committee of 27 June 2013 set out a number of traffic management improvements including adjustments to improve capacity along The Brook and Union Street and a number of these actions have now been implemented. Officers have introduced new timing plans for traffic signals from the junction of Dock Road/Globe Lane (Chatham Waterfront Bus Station) to Union Street. These timing alterations and upgrades show visible improvements to traffic flows. These improvements were undertaken in late November.

- 3.4 The upgrade works include converting the existing signal controlled pedestrian crossings to puffin crossings at all crossing points along The Brook. These new controllers will detect the presence of pedestrians at crossing points and will cancel a demand to cross if pedestrians cross before the display of the 'green man' symbol. This will stop unnecessary pedestrian crossing phases being triggered that cause delays to traffic. The signals at Dock Road/Globe Lane and Whiffens Avenue junctions have been upgraded to puffin crossings. The installation of further puffin crossings along The Brook has been delayed due to a shortage of equipment from the supplier.
- 3.5 At the committee meeting on 27 June 2013 officers advised Members that the project to change to puffin crossings was a scheme that was proposed to be rolled out across Medway and not just Chatham.
- 3.6 The signals at the old bus ramp exit are planned to be removed to aid traffic flow. In addition the remaining part of the corridor between Slicketts Hill to Union Street forms part of the approved list of schemes for the Local Transport Plan for 2014/15, where further improvements will be investigated to improve traffic flows and reduce congestion.

4. Risk Management

| Risk | Description | Action to avoid or mitigate risk |
|------------|--|---|
| Congestion | Slow vehicle journey times in Chatham town centre impacting on growth, business, visitors, bus services and deliveries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adjustment to traffic signal timings; - Removal of traffic signals that are judged surplus to requirements; - Information on Variable Message Signs - Improve dissemination of traffic information |

5. Financial and Legal Implications

- 5.1 The cost of the works identified from the site meeting will be determined by officers during the investigation and design stage, and programmed where appropriate. The works to signals identified in section 3 are programmed to be funded from the Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport block 2013/14 allocation.
- 5.2 There are no legal implications.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1. Members are asked to note the report and the work underway to improve the traffic flow in Chatham town centre.

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Background Papers

Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee *Member's Item: Traffic Flow in Chatham* 27 June

2013 <http://democracy.medway.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MId=2860&Ver=4>