

## **REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**14 JANUARY 2021**

### **20MPH SCHEMES IN MEDWAY**

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive

Author: Michael Edwards, Head of Transport and Parking

#### Summary

This report provides responses to the recommendations of a previous Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting associated with the consideration of the possible introduction of a '20s Plenty' scheme within Medway.

#### 1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1. The setting of local speed limits, including 20mph schemes, falls within the Council's existing policy framework. The setting of speed limits in support of transport objectives links directly to the Council Plan priority outcome of Getting Around Medway, and Local Transport Plan (LTP3) priorities and objectives.
- 1.2. Costs associated with transport schemes pursuant to agreed policy may be met within existing budget allocations. Additional funding to support schemes outside of agreed budgets would be a matter for full Council.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1. At the (then) Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 10 December 2015, the Committee requested that the former Integrated Transport Service report back on the '20's Plenty' campaign, including successes of the scheme within other local authorities and the estimated costs involved should the Committee wish to recommend to Cabinet the implementation of a pilot scheme in Medway. This followed a petition received for a 20mph speed limit in the Darland area of the Watling Ward.

2.2. A report responding to the above request was presented to the Committee by the Assistant Director for Front Line Services at the June 2017 Committee. That report outlined:

- the difference between 20mph 'limits' and 'zones'
- national policy
- local policy
- case studies
- implementation issues
- options available and financial implications

2.3. Following due consideration of the above, the Committee requested the following:

- a) that the Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation monitor the current blanket 20mph zones that have been implemented in London and other Boroughs, including neighbouring local authority areas, to determine their cost effectiveness, their ability to reduce casualties and impact on air quality, also giving consideration to how long the schemes have been in place.
- b) that the Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation establish a baseline for the existing schemes in Medway and review the speed of vehicles and the casualty figures over the coming 12 - 18 months to assess the effectiveness of each scheme.
- c) that no action be taken at this stage in recommending to Cabinet that a blanket 20mph zone is implemented or piloted.
- d) that Councillors be involved in any scoping report for any areas suggested to be the subject of a pilot 20mph zone.
- e) that a briefing note be provided to Members of the Committee in 6 months setting out the methodology to be used by officers in monitoring blanket 20mph zones in other areas.

2.4. In response to item a), a summary report has been produced (included within Appendix A of this report), providing an overview of the monitoring carried out on area wide 20mph sign only speed restrictions within other authorities. It also outlines the most up to date Department for Transport (DfT) commissioned research around the effectiveness of 20mph speed limit signed only schemes. This research was published during the preparation of the monitoring report and was therefore included for completeness.

2.5. In response to item b), a summary report has been produced (included within Appendix B of this report), covering the impact of the 20 mph schemes that have been introduced within Medway over the past twenty years or so, establishing a baseline for those schemes to assess effectiveness.

2.6. Items c) and d) above, have previously been noted.

2.7. In response to item e), the proposed methodology was set out via a briefing note in advance of item a).

### 3. Options

- 3.1. No options are set out in relation to the content of this report, which returns responses to the committee covering previously agreed specific actions.

### 4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1. The Council has now completed monitoring of both other local authority area 20mph schemes along with those within Medway. As part of this monitoring, the Department for Transport's most recently published research into 20mph signed only schemes has also been taken into account.

- 4.2. The responses to the actions requested by the RCE Overview and Scrutiny Committee are appended (A and B) to this report. The key points from those appended reports are set out below.

#### 4.3. **Signed Only Area wide 20mph Scheme Monitoring**

- 4.3.1 In respect of 20mph signed only schemes, the following conclusions and key points can be drawn:

- There is a clear distinction between area wide signed only speed limits and 20mph Zones with physical speed reducing measures.
- 20mph limits are supported by the majority of residents and drivers.
- Most achieve a small reduction in average (median) speed – typically less than 1mph.
- Vehicles travelling at higher speeds before the introduction of a 20mph limit reduce their speed more than those already travelling at lower speeds.
- There is insufficient evidence to conclude a significant change in collisions and casualties following the introduction of 20mph signed only limits in residential areas.

- 4.3.2. Local authorities have responded positively to revised guidelines on the setting of local speed limits (DfT Circular 01/2013) to date, resulting in a substantial growth in signed only 20mph area-wide limits in recent years, covering larger areas and often entire urban areas.

- 4.3.3. The majority of 20mph limits have been implemented on roads where the average speed prior to implementation was typically less than 24mph; and the case study examples have generally been implemented on the basis that they should be self-enforcing, with no expectation of additional police enforcement.

- 4.3.4. The DfT commissioned study substantially strengthens the evidence base on perceptions, speed and early outcomes associated with 20mph (signed only) limits. It is the only major UK study to date to consider multiple case study areas and provide a national view.

- 4.3.5. Local authorities can work with relevant partners from the police, health, environment, urban planning, education, and the local community to deliver 20mph limits as part of an integrated approach to addressing the necessary transport, community, environment and health objectives as appropriate.
- 4.3.6. It is acknowledged that current guidance is likely to lead to a mix of approaches across the country in terms of speed limits in built up areas, which creates a challenge in terms of embedding a culture of slower speeds in residential and pedestrian environments, along with achieving driver compliance where 20mph limits are in place.
- 4.3.7. There is an evidence gap around the environmental impacts of 20mph speed schemes, where issues can be complex, for example in relation to air quality and greenhouse emissions.
- 4.3.8. There is an established positive relationship between vehicle speed and injury collisions; the higher the speed the greater likelihood of injury collisions, and where collisions do occur higher speeds contribute to higher severity. Therefore, low traffic speeds in residential areas and other areas where a significant number of journeys are made by vulnerable road users remains a valid objective. This is particularly relevant to new road construction and development proposals. Retrospective application of any lower speed limit can be on an evidence-based case by case approach, taking account of the potential benefits.

#### **4.4. The Effectiveness of Medway's 20mph Schemes**

- 4.4.1. In relation to the 20mph schemes that have previously been introduced within Medway Council's authority area, the monitoring indicates the following outcomes.
- 4.4.2. Speeds in the region of 20mph have generally been achieved where the schemes have been applied within Medway. The road speeds prior to implementation dictate the level of speed reduction that will be achieved. It should be noted that almost all of Medway's current 20mph schemes are 20mph 'Zones' and as such they include physical engineering measures or layouts designed to engender operation at or around 20mph.
- 4.4.3. Where the aim is to reduce road casualties this has been achieved. It is also considered likely that the presence of the 20mph zone is a factor in maintaining very low collision numbers, particularly where vulnerable road users and motorised traffic mix, such as within residential areas.
- 4.4.4. Routes where there are high volumes of through traffic have recorded some collision occurrence. Continued monitoring of these locations would allow consideration of the trends on the longer term. It is clear that lower speeds have been achieved on those routes, which is likely to have been a driving factor of the individual proposals.

4.4.5. The use of 20mph schemes to date with engineered road layouts (particularly within 20mph Zones) has resulted in lower general operating speeds and can be effective at reducing road casualty problems.

## 5. Diversity Impact Assessment

5.1. This report is not making any recommendation for a policy or service change, therefore a Diversity Impact Assessment has not been completed.

## 6 Risk management

6.1. No significant risks are anticipated in terms of the completion of this report in that it reports on previously requested monitoring actions in relation to 20mph schemes.

6.2. Related risks are anticipated and therefore assessed below in relation to future implementation of 20mph schemes.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Introduction of inappropriate (low) speed limits.	The introduction of areawide 20mph speed limits are not appropriate for the locations which they are placed, resulting in bringing the speed limit into disrepute.	Speed limits applied following national guidance, taking account of national and local research, and in pursuit of agreed Council policy.	C2
Failure to introduce lower speed limits within appropriate areas.	Failure to utilise lower speed limits as a tool where it may be appropriate.	Existing Council policies provide a framework for the introduction of lower speed limits as appropriate.	D3

## 7. Consultation

7.1 No formal consultation has been undertaken. Should the Council wish to propose speed limit alterations, including introducing 20mph speed limits, statutory consultation requirements would apply in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. In addition, it is common practice for non-statutory consultation to also be undertaken. This typically includes anyone directly impacted by the proposal at the location in question.

7.2 The Portfolio Holder for Frontline Services has been consulted in relation to the preparation of this report and is supportive of the findings and recommendations as set out in Section 11.

## 8. Climate change implications

- 8.1. The Council declared a climate change emergency in April 2019 - item 1038D refers, and has set a target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050.
- 8.2. This report does not make any recommendation for a policy or service change, therefore the climate change implications are considered neutral.

## 9. Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report. Any costs incurred in support of completing the requested actions have been covered via agreed budget allocations with the Transport and Parking Service.

## 10. Legal implications

- 10.1. There are currently no legal implications in respect of this report. Any decision to proceed with a speed limit alteration scheme, such as 20mph, would fall within the Council's existing speed limit setting powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

## 11. Recommendations

- 11.1 The following recommendations are presented for consideration:
  - a) That the Committee notes the findings of the '20mph Area wide Speed Restriction Monitoring Report',
  - b) That the Committee notes the findings of the 'The Effectiveness of Medway's 20mph schemes' report.
  - c) That the Committee notes that 20mph schemes remain an available option for traffic and highway schemes, linking as appropriate to current Council policy and objectives.

## Lead officer contact

Michael Edwards, Head of Transport and Parking,  
Tele no: 01634 331113  
Email: michael.edwards@medway.gov.uk

## Appendices

- Appendix A – 20mph Areawide Speed Restriction Monitoring Report
- Appendix B – The Effectiveness of Medway's 20mph Schemes

## Background papers

As appended.