



Serving You

Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

19 December 2024

Call-in: Safer Healthier Streets Programme – School Streets Tranche 2

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Summary

This report advises the Committee of a notice of call-in received from six Members of the Council regarding the Cabinet decisions made on 19 November 2024 relating to the Safer Healthier Streets Programme – School Streets Tranche 2.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Committee is asked to consider the called-in Cabinet decisions (decision numbers 135/2024 to 144/2024) and decide either to:

1.1.1. accept the Cabinet decisions and therefore take no further action **or**;

1.1.2. refer the decisions back to Cabinet for reconsideration, setting out the reasons for the referral back **or**;

1.1.3. refer the decisions to full Council for consideration.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. In accordance with Chapter 4, part 5, paragraph 15.3 of the Constitution with regard to decisions, Cabinet decisions 135/2024 to 144/2024 have been called-in to this Committee by six Members (from the Conservative Group) of the Council.

3. Background

3.1. The Cabinet considered a report (attached at Appendix A) at its meeting held on 19 November 2024 regarding the details of Tranche 2 of the School Streets programme including the results of the recent informal public consultation and proposed next steps. The report sought approval to progress

to a formal statutory consultation, and where appropriate, for the School Streets to be implemented.

- 3.2. The discussion and decisions from the Cabinet meeting are set out below.
- 3.3. The Cabinet considered the report which provided details of the School Streets included in Tranche 2, including results of recent public consultation (detailed at Appendix A to the report) and sought approval to progress to statutory consultation and subsequently implement School Streets where appropriate.
- 3.4. The report stated that the continued roll out of School Streets would help the Council manage the road network, improve safety and traffic flow at specific locations during key parts of the day and support Council priorities and key objectives in the Local Transport Plan. It was also reported that the School Streets projects contributed to the implementation of the Council's Environment Strategy, the Sustainable School Travel Strategy, the Air Quality Action Plan, Local Transport Plan (LTP) and emerging Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). A Diversity Impact Assessment had been undertaken and was attached at Appendix F to the report (the report is attached at Appendix A).
- 3.5. The Cabinet's decisions were as follows:

Safer, Healthier Streets Programme – School Streets Tranche 2

<i>Decision number:</i>	<i>Decision:</i>
135/2024	The Cabinet agreed to progress School Streets at Cliffe Woods Primary School, Cliffe Woods Pre-School and the City of Rochester School, Cliffe Woods to statutory consultation.
136/2024	The Cabinet agreed to progress School Streets at Fairview Primary School, Rainham to statutory consultation.
137/2024	The Cabinet agreed to progress School Streets at High Halstow Primary Academy, High Halstow to statutory consultation.
138/2024	The Cabinet agreed to progress School Streets at Hilltop Primary School, Frindsbury to statutory consultation.
139/2024	The Cabinet agreed to progress School Streets at St Margaret's Church of England Junior School and St. Margarets Infant School, Rainham to statutory consultation.
140/2024	The Cabinet agreed to progress School Streets at St William of Perth Catholic Primary School, Canon Close, Rochester to statutory consultation.

- 141/2024 The Cabinet agreed to the proposed amendments to the School Streets at Crest Infants School / Delce Academy, Rochester following the feedback received during consultation and agreed to proceed to statutory consultation for a period of 6 weeks which would provide opportunity for additional stakeholder feedback on the changes.
- 142/2024 The Cabinet agreed to the proposed amendments to the School Street at Horsted Primary School, Chatham, following the feedback received during consultation and agreed to proceed to statutory consultation for a period of 6 weeks which would provide opportunity for additional stakeholder feedback on the changes.
- 143/2024 The Cabinet agreed to the proposed amendments to the School Street at The King's Pre-Preparatory School and Nursery, following the feedback received during consultation and agreed to proceed to statutory consultation for a period of 6 weeks which would provide opportunity for additional stakeholder feedback on the changes.
- 144/2024 The Cabinet agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement to consider the outcome of the statutory process (where necessary any amendments) and to take forward necessary infrastructure work and implementation (subject to the statutory process).

Reasons for decision:

- 3.6. The School Streets initiative, within the Safer Healthier Programme, meets several key strategic policies and action plans set out by the Council. The implementation of the recommendations would create a safer environment for students, the wider school community, and residents, by enabling and encouraging more sustainable transport choices.
- 3.7. Decision numbers 135/2024 to 144/2024 were subsequently called in by six Members of the Council from the Conservative Group. The reasons for the call in are as follows:

“Serious concerns about the decision and public support for the proposals.”

4. Director of Place's response to the call-in
- 4.1. School Keep Clear markings were first established in the 1964 Traffic Signs Regulations and keep the space outside of schools free from parked vehicles so children can be seen more easily when crossing the road. In 1964 there

were fewer than 7 million vehicles on the road, today this figure has increased to more than 38 million. School Streets extend this original principle of increasing road safety and protecting children by closing the road outside a school to motor vehicles during drop-off and pick-up times. Access restrictions do not apply to residents and the schemes only operate during term time.

- 4.2. In the 1960s there wasn't the technology of today to record air quality, traffic speed or counts throughout a neighbourhood but this didn't stop the requirement or need to improve road safety outside a school gate.
- 4.3. Roads around schools have become increasingly busy with a surge of traffic concentrated over a 50-minute period at drop off and pick times. This results in increased risk of collisions with vulnerable road users and other motorists, unlawful parking, traffic jams, road rage. People on foot and cycling are left with the feeling that roads are no place for them, and this has long term implications for everyone, especially children.
- 4.4. Statistics from the Department of Transport reveal that 14% of children killed on Great Britain's roads in 2018 were between the morning school run (7-9am) and 23% after school between 3-5pm. A report from insurer Admiral shows a 43% fall of road collisions during the holidays at school run time.
- 4.5. In Medway, over the 3-year period up to the end of December 2023, there were 223 collisions which involved 248 child casualties up to the age of 16. This was an increase from the previous 3-year period (up to the end of December 2022), were 199 collisions, involving 220 child casualties occurred.
- 4.6. The cabinet report provides information on the informal consultation stage of the school street programme. The focus of the informal engagement was to understand any potential issues and identify design solutions to help address them prior to formal statutory process.
- 4.7. The majority of residents within the proposed school street zones indicated support for the proposed plans. Those residents within the school street zones which didn't support the programme were often due to concerns over access. As outlined in the cabinet report the Council has policies in place to support those who are concerned with access via our exemptions policy.
- 4.8. Respondents who indicated they didn't agree with the proposals were often parents or those on the outside of the zone. Reviewing this feedback, where concerns were raised over the design or identified safety improvements we have amended the proposed designs, to respond to main concerns raised.
- 4.9. The Cabinet has approved the recommendations to progress to statutory consultation, which provides further opportunities for comment on the schemes. In some cases, an extended consultation has been recommended so all stakeholders have opportunity to feedback on proposed amends, to help confirm designs prior to any decision to implementation.

5. Monitoring Officer and Chief Operating Officer's response to the call-in

- 5.1. The report to Cabinet provides details of the decisions taken by the Cabinet and further details on the rationale.
- 5.2. The Council's policy framework is defined in paragraph 4.1a of Article 4 of the constitution. The proposals are not contrary to the policy framework and is in accordance with the budget agreed by Council.

6. Options

- 6.1. The options open to this Committee in dealing with this call-in are to:
 - a) to consider the matter and accept the Cabinet decisions, or;
 - b) ask Cabinet to reconsider its decisions if Members have concerns about it/them (setting out in writing the nature of any concerns), or;
 - c) refer the matter to full Council for consideration.
- 6.2. In accordance with rule 15.8 of the Constitution, to avoid the possibility of very many emergency Council meetings, Overview and Scrutiny Committees should normally only use the power to refer a matter to the full Council if it considers either:
 - a) that the decisions are contrary to the policy framework (i.e. those policies and plans listed in Article 4.1 of Chapter 2 of the Constitution) or contrary or not wholly in accordance with the budget;
 - b) where a request for call-in is signed by six or more members representing at least two political groups.
- 6.3. If the Committee considers the Cabinet decisions are, or would be, contrary to the policy framework or not wholly in accordance with the Council's budget, then it must first carefully consider the advice from the Monitoring Officer and/or Chief Operating Officer. If the officer advice is that the decisions taken by Cabinet are within the policy framework or budget, and this is accepted by the Committee, then a referral to full Council, on these grounds, would not be possible. As referred to in section 5 above, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Operating Officer have confirmed that the decision(s) taken by Cabinet set out in paragraph 3 above are not contrary to the Council's budget or policy framework.
- 6.4. In the event of a referral to full Council for reasons relating to the budget or policy framework, Cabinet will then meet to consider the views of the Monitoring Officer and/or Chief Operating Officer, together with the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Having considered these views, Cabinet will decide what action to take and prepare a report for Council.
- 6.5. When the full Council meets following such a referral, it can decide:

- a) that the Cabinet decisions falls within the existing budget and policy framework, in which case no further action is required, or;
- b) to amend the Council's budget or relevant policy framework document to encompass the decisions, in which case the Cabinet decisions takes effect immediately and no further action is required, or;
- c) to accept that the decisions are outside the policy framework or budget, in which case Cabinet must reconsider the matter taking into account the views of Full Council and take decisions which are in accordance with the advice of the Monitoring Officer/Chief Operating Officer and which comply with the budget and policy framework.

6.6. When the full Council meets following a referral on other grounds then it can decide:

- a) to accept the Cabinet decisions and therefore take no further action (in which case the decision will become effective on the date of the full Council meeting) or;
- b) refer the decisions back to Cabinet for reconsideration, setting out the reasons for the referral back.

7. Risk management

7.1. Risk management is addressed in section 7 of the Cabinet report attached at Appendix A.

7.2. The accompanying report guidance provides assistance in completing this table.

8. Climate change implications

8.1. The climate change implications in relation to the Cabinet decision are set out at section 9 of the Cabinet report attached at Appendix A.

9. Financial implications

9.1. The financial implications in relation to the Cabinet decision are set out at section 10 of the Cabinet report attached at Appendix A.

10. Legal implications

10.1. The legal implications in relation to the Cabinet decisions are set out at section 11 of the Cabinet report attached at Appendix A.

10.2. In accordance with Chapter 4, part 5, paragraph 15.3 of the Constitution, six members of the Council may call in a decision for scrutiny by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Call-ins must be dealt with in accordance with Rule 15 of the Overview and Scrutiny Rules and Rule 7 of the Budget and Policy Framework Rules, set out in the Constitution.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Cabinet report 19 November 2024

Background papers

None