



**To/
Councillor Andrew Stevens
Cabinet Member for Environment &
Infrastructure**

BY EMAIL

cc: Cabinet Members

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Scrutiny

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SPC/2023-24/12

28 February 2024

Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member following the meeting of the Committee on 16 January 2024. It is about the follow up on the Road Safety Scrutiny Working Group. A formal written response is required by 20 March 2024.

Dear Councillor Stevens,

Follow up – Road Safety Scrutiny Working Group

The Committee takes responsibility for following up on previous Scrutiny Working Groups, to check on progress with the topic / issue(s) and response to any specific suggestions or recommendations made and agreed action coming out of the Scrutiny session.

At our Committee meeting in January, we followed up on the Road Safety Scrutiny Working Group, which originally met in December 2022. The Working Group had met to discuss issues including speed controls (signs, humps and cameras), the new 20mph limits, road conditions and partnership working. The Scrutiny Councillors involved in this activity highlighted:

- Concern that the Welsh Government Road Safety Grant had been held back for the 2nd year in a row due to the 20mph speed reduction scheme and the potential impact this would have.
- Asking you, as a member of the Go Safe Partnership, to appeal to the Partnership to be more proactive in the area of Gower Commons. You had agreed to work constructively with Go Safe to remove barriers limiting enforcement activity.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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- The need to increase signage and banners outside schools as a deterrent to remind drivers to drive and park safely around schools.
- The need for developments in the Kerbcraft Programme, suggesting a module on encouraging walking to school and general active travel whilst Welsh Government is reviewing the Programme.

Key issues for our follow up was progress on:

- Progress with 20mph implementation and its impact on road safety
- Update on issues with Road Safety Grant
- The Council's relationship with GoSafe and input – main focus over past year (any discussion regarding Gower Commons).
- Whether we have increased the use of Countdown Crossings.
- The success of new initiatives around schools, e.g., traffic restrictions trial in Pontarddulais; any developments that will help with measures, such as signage / banners, around schools to remind motorists about safety.
- Developments in the Kerbcraft programme.
- Experience of shared use paths – any more work on information, signage and guidance to encourage tolerant behaviour between cyclists and walkers, awareness of incidents, etc.

Thank you for providing a report on progress since the Working Group, including update on the issues raised by the Working Group and actions taken, as well as updating on progress with the introduction of the new 20mph default limit. The Road Safety Manager, Alan Ferris, took the Committee through the report highlighting certain aspects, including the Council's success in reducing the level and intensity of accidents and injury. It was reported that since 2010 there has been a significant improvement in the road safety record in the Swansea area. Analysis shows that in 2022 Swansea saw a reduction in the numbers of collisions resulting in death or serious injury of 59% from the baseline data from 2010. This reduction is even greater on those collisions classified as slight with a 79% reduction recorded. Welsh Governments target was to achieve a 20% reduction in both sets of figures. These figures are very impressive.

We thank Alan and other lead officers for attending the meeting along with yourself to answer questions.

Committee Views, including any outstanding issues / actions:

20mph Implementation

Thank you for updating the Committee on the implementation of the 20mph default speed limit. We recognised that highways staff have faced additional workload pressures with its implementation, requiring extensive work to signage and posts across the whole of the City and County. You reported that works will continue on these programmes of work for the remainder of the financial year and will expand to include the removal of all repeater signs and

roundels which show 20mph. It is envisaged that all works will be completed by 31 March 2024 as required by the Welsh Government grant conditions.

Having been introduced in September 2023, we noted from your report that the Council have received a limited number of queries on roads which residents believe should be returned to 30mph, however the roads identified for exemption accord with the guidance provided by Welsh Government, and you reported that it is not proposed to look at individual exemptions at this time.

It was also highlighted that it was not intended to remove existing traffic calming schemes in light of the reduction in the default limit. However, where road resurfacing on traffic calmed roads required the removal of traffic calming consideration may be given on whether they should be reinstalled. For example, we noted there was local support for the permanent removal of speed humps on Cecil Road in Gowerton.

On the impact, you reported that a number of speed surveys were undertaken in advance of the 17 September introduction and these surveys will be repeated once all signage works have been completed. However, it was stressed that locally it may take up to three years to get a clear understanding of how change in speed limit has impacted on the network of roads in the wider Swansea area, in terms of collision and casualty reduction.

Safety Around Schools

Traffic around schools remains an issue of concern. We asked about current / future School Crossing Patrol provision, as a topic of concern for Councillors. We heard that the Council remains committed to School Crossing Patrols and noted that whilst there were no discontinued patrols, challenges existed with regard to recruitment. **Could you confirm how many vacancies there are, both in number and as a percentage of the total number of patrols, and tell us about the approaches taken to promote and encourage interest?**

We were disappointed to hear that there has been no progress in increasing signage and banners outside schools on road safety. We noted that this aspect depended on external financial support – and the arrangement with a major local employer has expired. We understand that workload has meant this has not been a matter of top priority over the past year. **We would reassert the Working Group's recommendation and hope that you can make progress in finding the support necessary during 2024.**

We followed up on any developments in the Kerbcraft Education Programme. The Committee had some concern around national cuts to PCSO budgets which may impact as we understand they are involved in much of the training in schools. You acknowledged that the Kerbcraft Programme required updating and representations had been made to the Welsh Government, as it was a national programme so any changes would need to be made by it.

Your report stated that in the current Programme it is aimed to provide road safety training to 1500 year 2 children, around 60% of the total number of children in the county. You clarified for the Committee that 50 out of the 74 (just over two-thirds) Primary Schools participated in the Programme, with parents encouraged to be involved via the website and literature provided to children to take home. We acknowledged that that size of the Welsh Government grant does, however, impact on the provision of the programme.

We noted that whilst outline details of road safety programmes are currently included on the Council's webpages, officers are exploring the potential to broaden this information to enable parents to continue with their child's development once the training programmes have been completed.

Active Travel

The introduction of Shared Use Paths is becoming increasingly widespread as the network of Active Travel routes develops and expands across the county. Your report stated that incidents are relatively few but are focused on route sections which carry high volumes of traffic, such as the foreshore link. To assist in addressing this the Council promotes 'share with care' and have added signing to key routes around the city to encourage people to use paths in a way which is safe for everyone.

Committee members raised some issues with safety on Shared Use Paths, indicating that the provision of signage could be improved. The concern was around signage that has faded or otherwise not clear, obscured or been moved out of position, and you were asked whether there is planned maintenance programme to address this. There was reference to prominent signage in other Council areas, for example asking cyclists to be mindful of pedestrians. It was stressed to the Committee that Councillors should always direct issues to the Highways Help Desk, as work would be led by reports coming in, as opposed to officers routinely inspecting the entire network for such issues given limited resources.

It was pointed out to the Committee that all Shared Path users had a responsibility to be safe – it was everyone's responsibility not just cyclists. We acknowledged that some people would disregard signage even if it is prominently placed along Shared Use Paths. **Nevertheless, because of the speed differential we felt it was important that cyclists are reminded to be mindful of those walking, and welcome periodic communication around this.** We want to encourage the use of Shared Paths / Active Travel routes, and it will depend on people having a good experience. We were reassured that the Council does monitor the safety of routes / paths and will not hesitate to make changes based on evidence gathered.

We also asked about the extent of coordination between planning, design and delivery of Active Travel Routes and the Road Safety Team. We were assured that whilst challenges exist in terms of balancing different considerations, both services are integrated and work closely together to ensure any safety issues are raised regarding Active Travel routes. This includes both structured meetings and day-to-day discussions.

Some members commented generally on issues with Active Travel routes in their local areas, including usage.

Road Safety Grant

The Committee was concerned that the loss of Grant has impacted on potential projects that otherwise may have been progressed. We heard that it was difficult to quantify the impacts from the loss of Road Safety Grant. We were told that the impact has been clouded by the change in the default speed limit, and furthermore Swansea has been relatively successful with Road Safety Grants which makes it a challenge to secure further funding, as it is becoming more difficult to identify problem areas and make a case for funding. We noted that road safety measures can take years to evaluate with appropriate data.

Your Response

We thank all concerned for the informative report and discussion, and thanks to the Road Safety Team for their work, which now concludes our formal follow up of the Road Safety Scrutiny Working Group.

We hope that you find the contents of this letter helpful and would welcome any comments on any of the issues raised within. Specifically, we would be grateful for your response to the following:

- **The number of School Crossing Patrol vacancies, including percentage of the total number of patrols, and approaches taken to promote and encourage interest.**
- **What you will be doing on this issue of increasing signage and banners outside schools on road safety.**
- **Ensuring that cyclists are reminded to be mindful of those walking on Shared Use Paths.**

Please provide response to these, and any other comments about our letter by 20 March 2024. We will then publish both letters in the agenda of the next available Committee meeting.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Black', written in a cursive style.

COUNCILLOR PETER BLACK

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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