

SCRUTINY BOARD (INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH)

THURSDAY, 16TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor P Truswell in the Chair

Councillors J Bentley, N Buckley, K Dye,
B Gettings, J Goddard, A Hussain,
M Shahzad, J Taylor and P Wadsworth

1 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals.

2 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information.

3 Late Items

There were no late items. Additional information had been circulated for Agenda Item

4 Declarations of Interests

5 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors L Martin and N Sharpe.

Councillor K Renshaw was in attendance as substitute.

Apologies for absence were also submitted on behalf of Councillor H Hayden who was due to attend in her role as Executive Member.

6 Minutes

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.
- (2) That the notes of the consultative meeting held on 22 July 2021 be noted.

7 Referral to Scrutiny: Temporary Closure of Leeds Road in Scholes

The report of the Head of Democratic Services presented details of a referral that fell within the Board's remit. The referral had been made by Councillor

Matthew Robinson and details of the referral were outlined in an appendix to the report.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Matthew Robinson
- Gary Bartlett, Chief Officer, Highways & Transportation
- David Varley, Principal Legal Officer
- Oliver Priestley, Principal Engineer
- Robert O'Brien, Principal Engineer
- Adrian Hodgson, Traffic Manager
- Daniel Fryer, Balfour Beatty

Councillor Robinson addressed the Board. He highlighted the following:

- The referral was submitted in July and required consideration at a formally constituted meeting.
- The concerns raised related to the closure of Leeds Road in Scholes for a minimum period of six weeks. The closure was scheduled as part of the programme of works associated with the progression of East Leeds Orbital Road (ELOR).
- The temporary closure had now ended and the road re-opened. Cllr Robinson noted that the substantive concerns raised via the referral relate to the processes surrounding the implementation of the closure rather than the closure itself.
- Residents of Scholes and neighbouring villages had expressed dissatisfaction at how the decision to close the road had been reached due to the impact on residents and businesses.
- The process and decision to close the road was not communicated early enough.
- A concern that the process did not, in this instance, allow the public to be fully engaged and therefore did not fulfil the Council's own aspiration to be citizen focused in its approach.
- Due to other road closures the local road network was full to capacity and there would have been a difficulty to respond to any emergency incidents.
- The need to improve communication in advance of future closures which could include the A64 and A58.
- Residents had submitted Freedom of Information requests with regards to the process and there was a need to be open and transparent.
- There was a desire from residents to contribute to the discussion on any future closures.

In response to the concerns, officers addressed the Board. The following was highlighted:

- Measures were taken where possible to mitigate any inconvenience caused by road closures.

- With regard to temporary closures, there are very short notice periods of 7 to 10 days before an order can be passed. There is no right of objection to these closures and the only requirement for consultation is with the Police and Fire Service. In this instance a community working group was notified as well as all emergency services including the Ambulance Service.
- Officers went significantly beyond the required processes associated with such closures as set out in Government regulation. This included additional consultation and engagement.
- Feedback had been received from the community before the decision to close the road was made.
- Once a decision is made to implement a closure mitigating factors then need to be considered. In this case a decision was taken to close Leeds Road during the school holidays when traffic flows would be significantly reduced.
- Other closures and street works during the period were also taken into consideration.
- A number of localised concerns were identified but these were resolved through engagement with local interest groups - such as farmers who required flexible access during harvest.
- Initial problems with access for refuse vehicles had been resolved swiftly.
- With regard to the Freedom of Information requests, officers were working on gathering evidence for this and information would be provided within the required deadlines. National legislation sets out specific processes for dealing with Freedom of Information Requests.
- Officer highlighted the relatively small number of officers involved in the project and the resource limitations this brought.

In response to Members comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- The importance of communication was recognised and engagement is always carried out to a level above and beyond the statutory requirements. Wherever there are road closures, businesses and residents are not always supportive but there remains a requirement to complete necessary works safely and efficiently as possible.
- To open wider consultation on all road closures could hinder the progress of necessary work and cause delay to the delivery of major projects.
- The decision for the closure in this instance was for technical and construction reasons. It was felt appropriate to carry out the works during the school holidays when traffic flow was reduced. The scheme was successfully completed within deadlines and disruption for local communities would have been more severe had the works been carried out during term time.
- Efforts had been made to provide as much communication as possible to all stakeholders and there was also distribution of an ELOR newsletter.

- Ongoing mitigating measures were taken during the scheme such as the provision of extra signage. These were as a result of communications with stakeholders and the position was monitored throughout the closure.
- There has been a similar number of road closures annually in recent years and it was predicted that there would be a slight rise in future years.
- Members were informed of the statutory notification periods required for temporary road closures and that notification had been made above and beyond the necessary requirements.
- Councillor Robinson informed the Board that when residents were first briefed they were informed that there would not be a road closure. It was felt that further communication could have helped local residents understand the wider potential implications of the proposed work.
- Communication with the Ambulance Service – an offer had been made to assist the Ambulance service with improving access to available information on road closures and restrictions. This engagement could also be extended to other emergency services.
- The One Dot Network provides information on local road closures. A link to this system could be included in newsletters, public communications and could also be sent to Members. The network was publicly available through the Council website.
- The Ambulance Service was informed of all closures.
- Communications were sent out as early as possible to give notice to residents in advance of works.
- There had been other instances of problems for emergency vehicles during road closures and major events but these were still rare.
- Communication took place with all the emergency services as key stakeholders for any works on the ELOR scheme.
- There was concern that the ELOR newsletter was only circulated to 500 people and this was not enough due to the number of people affected by these closures. It was suggested that other methods of communication should be identified to broaden the number of recipients.
- Officers would be willing to work with Ward Councillors on future projects in order to highlight issues surrounding future closures to residents.

In summary, Councillor Robinson stressed the need for improved communication both with internal and external partners and to learn from previous schemes and improve practice in future.

It was suggested that further consideration be given to the issues raised at a future meeting to see how existing practices could be complemented and enhanced.

Members proposed an examination of protocol for engagement and communication in relation to closures such as this to identify any ways in which to improve current practice.

RESOLVED – That a consideration be given to the protocol associated with communication and engagement in relation road closure. This should be scheduled for discussion in this municipal year.

8 Powered Two-Wheeler Access to Bus Lanes

The report of the Head of Democratic Services referred to the Board's recommendation that Leeds City Council should establish a trial of powered two-wheeler access to bus lanes.

The following were in attendance for this item:

Gary Bartlett – Chief Officer, Highways & Transportation
David O'Donoghue – Principal Transport Planner

Reference was made to the meeting of the Board's working group on this issue and the following recommendations that the Board were asked to consider:

- a) That the Board recommends to Executive Board that the proposed trial of powered two wheelers using the bus lane on the A65 is still progressed.
- b) That an initial indication be provided to Executive Board that in due course other segregated routes such as the A647 and A61/A639 should similarly be considered as possible locations for powered two-wheeler access to bus lanes.

The following was discussed:

- A trial had been proposed and that consideration would not be given to the use of bus lanes across the city.
- Blood Bikes were identified a specific user group who had recently requested shared use of bus lanes to assist in emergency blood deliveries. Members were supportive in principle of recommending access for this group subject to an assessment of such arrangements on the part of officers.
- It was noted that officers would be meeting counterparts from other West Yorkshire authorities where such access was already in place to better understand the process of establishing exclusive city-wide access and the implications for the local authority.
- Concern that a trial on the A65 would not provide the necessary information for a scheme to be rolled out across the rest of the city.
- Proposals had been supported by other stakeholders including the bus companies.
- The possibility of including private hire vehicles in any trial.
- A trial would give the evidence and facts required for powered two wheeler vehicles to use bus lanes.

- Following any trial there would be monitoring information regarding speed, usage and kind of vehicles used. There would be a full evaluation process.

Members were asked to vote on the proposed recommendations outlined in the report.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the Board recommends to Executive Board that the proposed trial of powered two wheelers using the bus lane on the A65 is still progressed.
- b) That an initial indication be provided to Executive Board that in due course other segregated routes such as the A647 and A61/A639 should similarly be considered as possible locations for powered two-wheeler access to bus lanes.

9 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Democratic Services asked Members to consider the Board's Work Schedule.

A copy of the schedule was appended to the report along with recent minutes of the Executive Board.

Following the earlier discussion, it was requested that an item be included on the work programme to enable consideration of the protocol for engagement and communication in relation to future road closures.

RESOLVED - That the works schedule be noted and revised as discussed.

10 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 29 September 2021 at 10.30 a.m. (Pre meeting for Board Members at 10.15 a.m.)