



Minutes of the meeting of the SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT AND ROAD SAFETY FORUM held on THURSDAY 5 OCTOBER 2000 at 7.00 PM

Present: Councillor O'Sullivan (Chair)

Officers: T Dove (Traffic and Transportation Manager), S Davy (Team Leader Traffic Management), T Mabbott (Committee Manager) and D Shrubsole (Committee Manager)

Forum

Representatives:

B Moore	-	Hanslope Parish Council
H Gilbert	-	Haversham Parish Council
A Francis	-	Stantonbury Parish Council
R Osbourne	-	Campbell Park Parish Council
D Stabler	-	Neath Hill Residents Association
N Perry	-	North Buckinghamshire Motorcycle Action Group
N Biggs	-	Thames Valley Police
A Burley	-	Bletchley Neighbourhood Council
D Lean	-	Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council
M Galloway	-	Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council
G Boston	-	Milton Keynes Cycle Users Group
A Swanson	-	Shenley and Tattenhoe Parish Council

Also present: Councillor Hoyle

Apologies:

I Fraser	-	Campbell Park Parish Council
A Irwin	-	Newport Pagnell Town Council
J Sidebottom	-	Newport Pagnell Town Council
D Dodman	-	Moulsoe Parish Council
P Higgins	-	Milton Keynes Cycle Users Group
Emberton Parish Council		
J Inman (Head of Transport)		

1.0 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Forum agreed the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2000.

(a) Whaddon Way/Watling St. Interchange

G Boston raised how work carried out as part of the alterations to Watling St to facilitate the construction of a new Auto Centre has made things more difficult for cyclists. The installation of a central barrier had diverted the redway crossing and diminished safety. He asked a number of questions to Officers regarding the alterations:

- (i) Was a Safety Audit carried out?
- (ii) Were the plans discussed with the Cycling or the Road Safety Officer?
- (iii) Were any cycling or pedestrian organisations consulted about the proposed works at the planning stage?

T Dove replied that a safety audit had been completed and the **Cycling Officer had been involved in this process. He was not aware that the Milton Keynes Cycle Users Group had not been consulted.** It was agreed that Officers would re-examine the issue.

N Biggs asked for the Police to be consulted on all cycle-junction layout changes such as this in future.

(b) Park and Ride UCL Report

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting of 23 March stated that a study on Park and Ride undertaken by University College London would be circulated to representatives, but this still had not occurred.

It was agreed that copies of this study would be made available.

(c) CMK Transport Group

It was noted that the Minutes of the meeting of 9 May stated that the CMK Transport Group was not representative enough both in the number of bodies allowed to participate and the size of their representation.

It was agreed that the Chair would contact the **Steering Group** and ask it to consider widening the membership of the Transport Group.

(d) Local Transport Plan

It was noted that several Members of STARS had not received copies of the final version of the Local Transport Plan.

It was agreed that the distribution list would be checked and corrected.

MATTERS RAISED BY REPRESENTATIVES**(a) Wolverton and Greenleys Neighbourhood Council**

- (i) Reduction to 30mph on residential part of Old Wolverton Road.

The road is a narrow and winding one with several access points and subject to a number of potential accidents in proceeding months.

T Dove replied that a meeting had been held with residents in recent months and a response was imminent. A speed camera would hopefully be installed before Christmas. **A reduction to 30mph would be considered and the road would be potentially included within the 3-year traffic-calming programme.**

N Biggs noted that any speed limit reductions had to be extensively researched before being approved.

- (ii) Blanket 20mph on all other roads off main roads in Wolverton and Greenleys.

It was recorded that this would be referred directly to officers however, T Dove stated that Council Policy is in line with DETR guidance to only install 20 mph limits where there were also traffic-calming measures. It was noted that if current speed limits were not being adhered to then simply lowering the limit would not be the answer.

- (iii) Blanket 40mph on all single carriageway main roads.

N Biggs asserted the need to always be realistic in seeking speed reductions. **The Council were shortly to implement experimental reductions in grid road speed limits in order to assess their effectiveness and the impact of differing signing.**

- (iv) Buses to call at Wolverton station proper.

A Francis (Wolverton Rail Users Group) stated that improved bus, cyclist and pedestrian access to the station had been requested two years ago and a response from the Council was still being awaited.

T Dove stated that station access had been included in the updated LTP and a report would be brought to a future meeting.

(b) Haversham cum Little Linford Parish Council

(i) Positive measures in the Local Transport Plan to impose weight restrictions on certain roads unsuitable for HGVs.

(ii) HGVs on rural roads – a safety issue.

Both of these items were discussed under the Countryside Traffic Management Strategy.

(iii) Milton Keynes Traffic Model – why the 41% drop in expected traffic flow on Haversham Road by 2010. (Road Traffic Reduction Report July 2000 p.17)

T Dove replied that this drop was predicted because the base figure used in the model had been artificially high at the time observed. John Harper (Transport Policy Manager) could offer a fuller answer.

(iv) Hi-Speed North-South Rail Link - the adverse impact of increased traffic travelling through Haversham to Wolverton and CMK stations if the Link is to be looped past Northampton.

It was noted that a Parkway station was under consideration on the branch line near Northampton. The provision and arrangement of rail services in the area would rest on the outcome of the current re-franchising process. Both of these would impact on traffic levels. J Harper/T Kirk will report back with any developments.

(v) Vehicles speeding down the hill towards Haversham Village.

T Dove replied that the signing would be reviewed to increase awareness of the 30mph restriction. The matter will be included in the 2000/01 LTP.

(vi) Speed limit on the Wolverton Road

T Dove stated that a restriction to 40mph is planned for later in the year.

(c) Campbell Park Parish Council

(i) Closing the Grafton Street entrance to Oldbrook.

It had been agreed that this item would be referred directly to officers.

(d) Neath Hill Residents Association

(i) Provision for cycle parking at Xscape

(ii) Secure and weather proof cycle bays in CMK multi-storey car parks.

Both of these items were discussed under the Cycling Strategy.

- (e) Hanslope Parish Council (Supplementary Agenda Item)
 - (i) Hartwell Road/Higham Cross Road Junction - safety problems, including regular vehicle collisions, caused by parked cars and excessive traffic speed, requiring a more lasting solution beyond the recent speed limit enforcement.

S Davy stated that the problem was there are few possibilities for off-street parking and parking restrictions are hard to enforce. However, the junction warning signs would be reviewed and any other possibilities considered and reported back.

3.0

COUNTRYSIDE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

In line with government guidance a Countryside Traffic Management Strategy had been included in the provisional Local Transport Plan but the Council was now looking to expand upon this and produce an action plan. A draft Countryside Management Strategy was presented to the Forum with an invitation for any comments which would be taken into account before the final draft is approved at the Transport Committee meeting on 29 November. The action plan has yet to be prepared. T Dove stated that any funds within the strategy would be allocated on the basis of historic requests with HGV flow issues being a priority.

It was noted that the following form measures in the Countryside Traffic Management Strategy:

- (a) Speed Management:
 - (i) SpeedCheck, (ii) Speed Limits and (iii) Traffic Calming
- (b) Quiet Lanes Initiative
- (c) Lorry Management
- (d) Cycling and Walking
- (e) Buses
- (f) Walking
- (g) Horseriding
- (h) Motorcycling

Representatives of the Forum raised the following issues:

HGVs on Rural Roads

H Gilbert argued that the construction work for barn conversions had increasingly resulted in large HGVs using narrow country lanes with implications for the safety and freedom of movement of others. This problem was only likely to increase when the maximum weight limit for HGVs increased to 44 tonnes.

R Osbourne suggested that some roads could have blanket lorry bans as had been proposed by Brent Council

N Biggs replied that the use of such large HGVs was more economical to contractors and there was little the Police could do to restrict them because for access purposes all lorries were exempted from restrictions.

RESOLVED

The Chair would investigate the possibility of putting restrictions on the size and volume of contractors' vehicles within the conditions of granting them planning permission. However, there would be serious difficulties in enforcing any such measures.

IT Provision and Reducing the Need to Travel

A Swanson was concerned that issues concerning IT provision and access to the internet were not included in the strategy. Central to any attempt to manage countryside traffic was the need to reduce the number of journeys. Greater provision of services over and use of the internet would reduce the need to travel and funds should be diverted to this end.

A section on reducing the need to travel will be included for November's Transport Committee, however, any funding for IT or other projects would be best to come from other sources.

4.0

CYCLING STRATEGY

The Council has produced a Cycling Strategy to set out how the Council is to meet the challenging targets of the Government's National Cycle Strategy and to assist in meeting the objective's of the Council's own Sustainable Integrated Transports Strategy alongside the Local Transport Plan. A draft Cycling Strategy was presented to the Forum with an invitation for any comments which would be taken into account before the final draft is approved at the Transport Committee meeting on 29 November. The purpose of the strategy is to set down a strategic plan for increasing the number of trips made by cycling within the Milton Keynes Council area. The Forum noted that this would be achieved by:

- (a) Developing a safe Strategic Cycling Network.
- (b) Ensuring that cycles can be used safely and easily throughout Milton Keynes.

- (c) Promoting cycling as a safe and sustainable way of travelling.

The Forum was encouraged to see the linkages between the objectives, targets and mechanisms of the Strategy which should aid its success.

Representatives of the Forum raised the following issues on the Cycling Strategy:

(a) Cycling Parking Facilities

- (i) D Stabler argued that if the Council was serious about achieving a modal shift to greater cycling then a greater number of safe and undercover parking areas should be provided in CMK, particularly next to all the main facilities. This could best be achieved by converting spaces in each of the multi-storey car parks to cycle parking. To encourage their use, all cycle parking facilities should be clearly signed.

T Dove replied that there would be cycle parking installed at the Xscape facility and secure undercover cycle parking at Midsummer Place and the Theatre complex. The Council was also seeking to cover the cycle spaces at the station and to install a new CycleSafe facility (lockers, showers and toilets) in the old toilets at Secklow Gate. The Council also has a number of cycle lockers to re-deploy. All improvements to cycle parking facilities would be based on current or expected demand. When granting planning permission, requirements to install suitable cycle parking can be included but within areas already developed, the Council can only encourage and not force the owners to improve cycle facilities.

- (ii) A Swanson stated that there currently were no cycle parking facilities at Caldecote. M Galloway argued that re-deploying the cycle lockers to Wolverton Station would ease the problems there.

T Dove would investigate both.

(b) Condition of the Redways

- (i) G Boston stated that new paths and cycle routes must be of high visibility and a high standard. A key issue missing from the Cycling Strategy was ensuring the maintenance of the redways and ensuring that the Council had sufficient resources to afford and maintain them? It was thought that there was little sense in funding new redway construction if there were not the funds for subsequent maintenance.

T Dove said the Council had the results of a redway audit which was mainly concerned with the functions of redways but which may also be of help in assessing maintenance needs. The need was recognised for targets for redway inspections and maintenance although the Council was very constrained in funding terms. T Dove would investigate the possibility of securing more funds for redway maintenance, possibly by using funds raised through Central Milton Keynes Parking Charges.

- (ii) R Osbourne suggested community involvement with redway maintenance, as is used to clean the canal, could be organised and encouraged.

This comment was noted, however Insurance and Health and Safety issues would impact upon such proposals.

- (iii) M Galloway highlighted the potentially dangerous problem of tree roots breaking through the redway surface to the rear of the Radcliffe School in Wolverton.

T Dove would investigate

- (iv) D Lean argued that the Local Plan should site construction near redways to encourage their use and reduce safety concerns. The strategy should also tackle the lack of redway and cycle provision within the old towns of the Milton Keynes Council area.

It was noted that Sustrans was considering plans for new routes around Bletchley.

- (v) D Stabler, further to a letter of 23 March, raised the issue of the paved areas around buildings in CMK and whether cyclists could use them or they were reserved for pedestrians.

It was agreed that the Chair would consult and clarify this issue.

- (vi) G Boston urged for the creation of a cycle path in the gap between the Centre and Midsummer Place shopping centres.

T Dove will investigate and report back.

(c) Safety

Safety was recognised by all to be a prime concern, particularly at road-redway junctions. It was felt that a key problem was a lack of awareness of rights of way amongst redway users - both pedestrians and cyclists - and drivers.

- (i) D Lean raised the issue of child cycle training and whether payment of instructors, as in Northampton, and better advertising would improve its take up and effectiveness.

T Dove replied that last year 180 children participated in cycle training. Volunteer tutors are recruited through schools, however it is hard to get sufficient number. Currently the whole service is in review during which will be considered the issues of the number and length of sessions, the possibilities of charging and the payment of tutors, the inclusion of cycle training within the school curriculum and the option of providing adult cycle training. The experience of other Councils' cycle training would be sought.

- (ii) N Biggs said that any education needed to stress that redway users do not have any right of way over road users.

T Dove replied that there are bollards and give way signs at redway-road junctions and crossings and where there is a major problem the traffic officer does go into schools. The Safer Journey Strategy urges drivers not to motion cyclists across roads which can encourage them to believe they have right of way. The Council was also seeking to tackle the issue of children cycling on pavements, although children under 16 cannot be fined.

- (iii) It was noted that traffic-calming schemes, although reducing vehicle speeds and increasing safety for other users, increase pollution as vehicles are constantly speeding up and slowing down between road humps.

T Dove stated that the Council had to balance cycle casualty reduction targets against pollution reduction targets. Councillor Hoyle observed that the use of chicanes as opposed to road humps could help to achieve this.

- (iv) Safety was thought to be an issue not just between vehicles and cyclists but between pedestrians and cyclists. Pedestrians need training in redway use. The option of segregation of redways between pedestrians and cyclists was considered, perhaps with use of a dotted white line.

It was felt that redway segregation would be a significant departure from what redway users are used to and so would be unlikely to be adhered to and very hard to enforce, as well as very expensive to implement.

- (v) Obstruction of redways, particularly by the parking of vehicles, continued to be a problem in some areas.

T Dove replied that domestic parking required access protection markings and adequate enforcement of these.

- (vi) G Boston stressed how redways would always remain potentially dangerous and perhaps it may be better to shift the emphasis of any cycling strategy back onto roads themselves and how to make them safer and more suitable for cyclists. The vegetation alongside redways at least needs to be regularly cleared.

T Dove stated that there are funds for cycle safety and improvements and the redway audit had shown the need to concentrate them on the road-redway junctions as these were the most dangerous. There is £140,000 over 3 years allocated to improve road-redway junctions.

- (vii) There was debate over the level and recording of cycle casualties. Currently the Council refers to Police Accident records. G Boston noted that figures obtained from MK Accident and Emergency suggested that the level of cycle accidents was significantly higher than Police records

T Dove will seek to expand on the Council's accident data and break it down as to the cycle casualties on roads, redways and at road-redway junctions respectively.

- (viii) A Francis questioned the targets on cycle usage included in the Strategy and enquired as to what they were derived from and how they might be met.

S Davy replied that the figures were based on the Government's National Cycling Strategy (1996). The NCS and its targets had now been reviewed with the aim to achieve them by 2012, and the targets will be similarly revised in the Milton Keynes Strategy. However, though there are cycle counters on some routes it is very difficult to maintain statistics on cycle usage and journeys and therefore to monitor progress towards meeting targets.

- (ix) A Burley enquired whether any cycle usage surveys had been done in Milton Keynes both to ensure the cycling strategy is effective and that the redway maintenance budget is targeted to areas of greatest usage.

T Dove referred to a joint cycle usage survey conducted with Bucks CC in 1995 and stated that the Sustainable Integrated Transport Strategy was based on extensive research. MK Cycle Users Group conduct a cycle census on a twice-yearly basis.

(d) Other Issues

- (i) H Gilbert highlighted the apparent lack of information and statistics management on all cycling issues, compared to crime statistics for example.
- (ii) N Perry suggested that the required improvements in transport and cycling facilities could be funded by an increase in Council Tax.
- (iii) N Perry enquired why there was not a parallel motorcycle strategy. The Motorcycle Action Group would be willing to add to or help draft such a strategy.

The MAG's offer was accepted

5.0

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in February/March 2001.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.50 PM