

ROAD SAFETY ISSUES TAXI SCRUTINY PANEL

MEETING **29 NOVEMBER** ~~22 FEBRUARY~~ 2006

Present: Councillors Allen (Chair), Peel, Hayes, Peel, R. Silvester, and R. Wilkinson, and Williamson, ~~and Williamson. A. Connell, Hamilton, Hussain, Ibrahim, Mrs Rothwell, and Shaw.~~

Officers:

Mark Edwards – Principal Road Accident Investigation Officer, Environmental Services

John Evans – Head of Highway Management, Environmental Services

Jeff Fisher – Principal Engineer, Environmental Services

Trevor Higson – Principal Road Safety Officer, Environmental Services

Robert Landon – Head of Democratic Services, Legal and Democratic Services

~~James Dearing – Senior Democratic Services Officer~~ **Tony Kelly – Group Engineer (Highways), Environmental Services**

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Hayes. ~~Andrew Fisher –~~

~~Group Manager (Licensing and Pest Control), Environmental Services~~

~~Roy Fox – Special Projects Manager, Environmental Services~~

~~Robert Landon – Head of Democratic Services~~

~~David Smith – Policy Accountant, Commercial Services~~

~~Hayes, Peel and Williamson~~

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

9.3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING ~~APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR~~

~~Resolved – that Councillor Hussain be appointed cChairman.~~

~~4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING~~

Resolved – That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 8 November 2006, be approved.

~~**10** The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 26 January 2006, were submitted and agreed as a correct record.~~

~~5. THE SCOPE OF THE REVIEW~~

~~The Panel considered the results of the scoping exercise undertaken at the previous meeting.~~

~~During the ensuing discussion of the item, the proposed scope and duration of the Panel's investigations were reconsidered. It was suggested that a thorough investigation was preferable to one that might pursue an over-ambitious timetable, this would mean extending the length of the review from the previously agreed three months.~~

~~The usefulness of gathering witness testimony from all three taxi associations (Bolton Hackney Association, Bolton Taxi Drivers' Association, and the Private Hire Association) was agreed. Similarly, the value of obtaining evidence from private sector garages and from a senior vehicle tester at Wellington yard was expressed.~~

~~Resolved –~~

- ~~(i) That the report be noted;~~
- ~~(ii) and That representatives from the three taxi associations be invited to a witness session on 8 March.~~
- ~~(iii) That it be agreed that a review of longer than three months is required in order to undertake a thorough review~~

~~6. REVIEW OF THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TESTING OF TAXIS AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES~~

~~A report was submitted to the Panel, addressing those matters relating to the testing and licensing of taxis which were identified by the Panel at its meeting on 26 January.~~

~~Following consideration of the report, a number of points were made and clarifications given:~~

~~primary comparisons were made with other AGMA authorities, due chiefly to time constraints;~~

~~the need to investigate local authorities which out-sourced their taxi licensing to the private sector/external supplier was underlined by panel members;~~

~~the need for a provider to have sufficient capacity to be able to satisfy the peaks in demand for taxi testing, particularly given the growing size of the private hire fleet;~~

~~if the contract for taxi testing was put out to tender, a mechanism to monitor the performance of any provider against contract specification would need to be developed and introduced;~~

~~the value of including any 'mystery shopper' methods in performance monitoring was questioned by Panel members;~~

~~the legal requirement for taxi testing is once a year, though it would be beneficial to know the frequencies imposed by other AGMA authorities;~~

~~the likelihood is that in the future the duration of the current forty-five minute test will increase with additional test requirements, possibly up to an hour and 15 minutes;~~

~~the setting of an age limit beyond which a local authority would not license vehicles may be arbitrary and disproportionate – however, a no age limit policy may encourage use of vehicles with exhaust emission levels and safety standards for both passengers and pedestrians that are not in touch with the benefits that result from ongoing improvements in vehicle design;~~

~~the council's responses to a Department for Transport (DFT) consultation on Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles was considered, and the Panel informed that the final guidance from the DFT had not yet been produced;~~

~~the current price charged for testing does not recover the cost to the council of the test – i.e., there is not a business case for Environmental Services to continue to do the work at the current rate – and the absence of a council decision to subsidise taxi testing was highlighted; and~~

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- ~~direct comparisons between AGMA authorities for the 6 monthly testing of vehicles are problematic, but Bolton would appear to be in the mid-range of fees charged.~~

Resolved – that. TRAFFIC CALMING AND CAPS (CALMING ASSESSMENT AND PRIORITISATION SYSTEM) – PRESENTATION

The Panel received a presentation on Traffic Calming and CAPS (Calming Assessment and Prioritisation System). Definitions of “traffic calming”, “speed management/route management”, and “traffic management” were provided to the Panel, along with background information on traffic calming assessments. Also presented to the Panel was information on traffic calming partnerships and funding contributions.

An account of the council's Calming Assessment Prioritisation System was provided to the Panel, including the role of the Greater Manchester Transportation Unit in conducting the location surveys. A summary of area wide traffic calming schemes introduced since 2000 as a result of road safety concerns depicted an average reduction of 2.1 accidents per scheme per year. Figures were also provided to the Panel indicating projected reductions in accidents, casualties, pedestrians, children, and KSI (killed or seriously injured), for a number of the Borough's road safety schemes.

Panel members acknowledged the benefits of the council's Code of Practice for Traffic Calming Schemes. In response to a request from a Panel member, it was indicated that the results of investigations into the road safety scheme at Long Lane / Brightmet Drive / Blenheim Road would be obtained for the next meeting of the

Panel. This assessment would include details of how the traffic calming measures met regulations and confirmation that the road humps were of an appropriate height and in keeping with council policy.

Next the Panel received information on the council's Code of Practice for Traffic Calming Schemes, approved by the Executive Member in March 2005. Detailed information was provided to the Panel on the Code's consultation, eligibility criteria, innovation, design standards and guidance, and construction and maintenance:

- the Panel was informed that the starting point for the Code of Practice had been concerns over the number of road humps, hostility to traffic calming, and concerns over the effectiveness and damage caused by traffic calming;
- under the Code of Practice, the consultation for traffic calming schemes had a target response rate of 40 per cent;
- the Code's eligibility criteria were speed and volume of traffic, accident history, and accident prediction;
- the Code's design standards and guidance included no round-topped humps on non-residential roads, road humps to be 75mm high or less, the first hump to be 50mm, no more than two 75mm round topped humps, and no measures in cul-de-sacs less than 120 metres long; and
- the need for the traffic calming measure would be reviewed prior to undertaking maintenance works.

The Panel also received a summary of selected findings derived from a recent Greater Manchester Transportation Unit report, commissioned by the council, that researched accident and casualty trends from 1994 to 2005. This summary contained headline statistics comparing Bolton's accident rates with similar size metropolitan authorities, Greater Manchester, the north west of England, and Great Britain. The findings indicated that dominant road users (car drivers, car passengers, and pedestrians) were the biggest numerical casualty groups in all areas. A number of other findings were brought to the Panel's attention in the summary:

- the highest accident day for car drivers was a Friday and the lowest a Sunday, while peak accident times were the peak hours (8.00-9.00am and 4.00-6.00pm);
- of the recorded child casualties, the highest proportion came from the 11-14 years old age group;
- the severity index (a measure of the severity of injury) for pedestrians was highest for the elderly and lowest for children, but children were the biggest pedestrian casualty group;
- a quarter of all cycle casualties were 11-15 years of age;

- over half of Bolton's car driver casualties occurred to drivers aged between 16 and 35 years of age; and
- over a quarter of all two wheeled powered vehicle (TWPV) casualties were 16 -18 years of age.
- ~~Particular geographical areas giving cause for concern should be identified;~~
- ~~Compare the numbers of accidents to a map of area of multiple deprivation taking out vehicle on vehicle accidents but leaving in accidents involving pedestrians;~~
- ~~An analysis should be undertaken of accidents by road user to identify any emerging trends;~~

~~Compare work being done by best performing authorities in this area.~~

- ~~Copy of the calming assessment prioritisation system (CAPS) scheme~~
- ~~Measures being undertaken on site~~
- ~~An analysisA description of education/training/publicity being undertaken in this field~~
- ~~Work being done with partners~~
- ~~Types of scheme being implemented~~

~~Performance targets and statistical information.~~

Resolved – That the results of investigations into the road safety scheme at Long Lane / Brightmet Drive / Blenheim Road be provided to the Panel's next meeting.
~~that representatives of the emergency services (Police, Fire and Ambulance) should be invited to an early meeting of the Panel. Details to be agreed at the next meeting in early November.~~

11. WITNESS SESSION: EMERGENCY SERVICES

Sergeant Dean Memory and PC Stephen Lee, from Greater Manchester Police, addressed the Panel on the topic of road safety and traffic calming schemes.

Sergeant Memory stated traffic calming was one of many strategies to improve road safety. He informed the Panel that the police were not just part of the consultation process but interacted with the council on road safety issues. He informed the Panel that by the time the council proposed a scheme to the police the options would have been discussed already. PC Lee stated that road humps did not have much of an operational impact on the police.

Following this opening statement a short discussion and a question and answer session ensued:

- Sergeant Memory confirmed that the affects of road humps on police response time had not been raised as an issue within the police force;
- Sergeant Memory informed the Panel that the police had never stated that they would not enforce speed limits, but that they were mindful of the

implications for scarce traffic resources. He indicated that any serious traffic calming problem that needed enforcement would be addressed, but that less serious problems were best resolved through a re-design of the scheme;

- Panel members indicated that a borough-wide 20mph limit in residential areas, while an aspiration, would not be enforceable by the police;
- Sergeant Memory indicated that Access Only signs were enforceable; and
- Sergeant Memory stated that he judged Bolton council's approach to traffic calming to be both comparable to that of other councils in Greater Manchester and reasonably successful and innovative.

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Mr. Brian Wiggins, Station Manager, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, addressed the Panel on the topic of road safety and traffic calming schemes. He informed the Panel that while ten or so years ago the Fire and Rescue Service would have objected automatically to traffic calming, and typically have quoted a figure of eight seconds delay per road hump and the adverse impact on vehicles and staff health, nowadays wider community safety issues were taken into account. He stated that road humps did not cause Fire and Rescue a significant problem meeting their response targets.

Following this opening statement a question and answer session ensued during which a number of points were made and clarifications given:

- Mr Wiggins indicated that Fire and Rescue were always consulted on traffic calming schemes and had successfully challenged some proposed measures (for example, the road humps on Whitegate Drive were not included in the final scheme following objections);
- Mr Wiggins stated that the wearing of seat belts and the illegal use of mobile phones would have a bigger impact on road safety than traffic calming. However, he also indicated that the time implications of traffic calming schemes needed to be understood, particularly if implemented on primary routes;
- Mr. Wiggins indicated that fire appliances could now only respond to certain incidents with blue lights on;
- Mr. Wiggins raised concern at the number of high speed roads which did not have high accident levels but when an accident occurred it was often fatal. He indicated that there appeared to be a lack of consistency in this regard, usually on roads towards the edge of the borough;
- Mr Wiggins confirmed that Fire and Rescue were not concerned with traffic calming in principle, but would be concerned if there were too many schemes constructed;

- Mr. Wiggins stated that the Fire and Rescue response time target was seven minutes, and that this was met 90 per cent of the time, except in Horwich (65 per cent) where the problem was due to crewing rather than roads; and
- Mr. Wiggins indicated that good working relationships had been developed with the council through the forum of the Traffic Management Unit.

It was indicated to the Panel that the Traffic Management Unit was a mechanism available for the Fire and Rescue Service to contribute suggestions on traffic calming, but that the forum could be improved.

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Mr. Stuart Bradshaw, Assistant Operations Manager, Greater Manchester Ambulance Service, addressed the Panel on the topic of road safety and traffic calming schemes. He informed the Panel that the response time for Category A (life threatening) calls was currently eight minutes and that this target was achieved in central Bolton but not in external areas. He stated that a significant number of factors impacted on response time, not just traffic calming. He also indicated that 90 per cent of callouts were to areas of deprivation and that traffic calming in these areas was causing problems. He cited Blenheim Road, Highfield Road, Lucas Road, and Anchor Lane as examples of locations where not just road humps but other traffic calming measures caused problems.

Following this opening statement a brief question and answer session ensued during which clarifications were given:

- Mr. Bradshaw informed the Panel that treating a patient who had suffered a heart attack was made more difficult if travelling over road humps; and
- Mr. Bradshaw agreed congestion had a significant impact on response times.

Following this testimony, the Panel expressed thanks to Sergeant Memory, PC Lee, Mr. Wiggins, and Mr. Bradshaw for their attendance and testimony at the meeting.

Resolved – That the emergency services be requested to provide details of their respective target response times and the response times achieved.

~~the issues detailed above.~~ 12. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel considered the approach to be taken to the remainder of the scrutiny review in the light of information gathered to date (for example, future meeting dates, information required, methods to obtain information, and future witness sessions).

Panel members agreed the value of obtaining best practice information and guidance for the next meeting of the Panel, and indicated that the January meeting of the Panel would identify areas for the Panel's recommendations.

Resolved –

(i) That information be obtained concerning best practice of those councils awarded Beacon status for road safety; and

(ii) That the next meeting of the Panel be arranged for 1.30pm on 20 December. ~~early November, 2006. for the next meeting of the Panel a report be prepared investigating local authorities which out-sourced their taxi licensing to the private sector/external supplier(s).~~

~~7. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS~~

~~Resolved – That, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted of the nature of the proceedings, it is likely that if members of the press and public were present during the following items of business there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 7 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and that, in pursuance of Section 100A(4) of such Act, members of the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.~~

~~78. FINANCIAL ASPECTS RELATING TO PRIVATE SECTOR GARAGES~~

~~A report was submitted to the Panel which contained a comparison with private sector garage costs and details of any prior investigation of the possible outsourcing of the taxi testing service to recognised garages.~~