

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 14 September 2016
Report Subject	The Final Stage of the Review of Existing Speed Limit Orders on the Councils Highway Network and Proposed Process Improvements for any Future Changes to Speed Limit Orders.
Portfolio Holder	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment
Report By	Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation)
Strategic / Operational	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2015, Cabinet approved the revised timetable for the review of speed limits on the Council's classified Highway Network and work on this initial phase of the speed limit project is now broadly completed. This report details the intended approach for the next and final phase of the work, which will address the historic anomalies within the existing speed limit orders on all other routes on the Highway Network, which have greatly impacted on the time taken to deliver of the first phase of the speed limit review.

In addition, the current process for implementing speed limit orders is both complex and time consuming and there is a clear need to adopt a more efficient method of working and a number of potential improvements to the existing process are also identified within this report.

Final completion of this review will provide the Authority with confidence in both the accuracy and legality of all speed limit orders on all of Flintshire County Council's Highway Network. Adopting the revised process will also provide a consistent, transparent and more simplistic approach for any future revisions to speed limit orders.

Recommendations

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| (1) | That Scrutiny recommends Cabinet approve of the revised process to deliver the final phase of the review of speed limit orders on all of the Council's Highway Network. |
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(2)	That Scrutiny recommends Cabinet approve the proposed changes to the process which will be adopted for any future revisions of highway speed limit orders.
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REPORT DETAILS

<u>1.00</u>	THE NEED FOR A REVIEW OF SPEED LIMITS ON THE HIGHWAY NETWORK
1.01	The Authority recently undertook a review of all existing A & B classification roads within the County, in order to evaluate the effectiveness and suitability of the existing speed limits. The review commenced in 2012 and was broadly completed earlier this year.
1.02	The work to complete the review has been both time consuming and excessively complex. This is mainly due to the complex requirement to revoke and amend existing Traffic Regulation Orders, both on the classified network itself and on adjoining side roads, where the existing speed limit orders abuts those in place on the classified network.
1.03	The complications arise from the fact that Traffic Regulation Orders do not simply state the start and end of a speed limit on a single stretch of carriageway and most include multiple sections of the network within a single Order. The Orders often intersect with numerous other side road Orders along their length and it is important therefore that the details within each Order correctly align. Given that the speed limits in a given area may have been subject to a number of revisions over the past 60 years, in some situations, this is not always the case.
1.04	During the course of the initial review it also became apparent that (in some cases) when the need had previously arisen to revoke or amend a section of an existing Order, the records held within the Authority's files did not always correspond to the Orders displayed on site. Sections of existing Orders had also previously been revoked in error, or (in some isolated instances) the Order had been incorrectly revoked in its entirety.
1.05	Other complications which have developed over time include the utilisation of historical data and out of date information within old Orders. This includes the use of conflicting road names, unofficial local variations to road names and reference points which are no longer in existence (e.g. demolished bridges). Given the occasional and isolated nature of previous speed limit changes, until the recent undertaking of a broader review, such inaccuracies had previously gone undetected.
1.06	Given the complexity of the individual Orders it is essential that an accurate and 'controlled system' of recording details of each speed limit is maintained by the Council. This process is both time consuming and requires a high level of resources - with failure to do so leaving the Authority vulnerable, with incomplete records offering little resilience to support potential legal and technical challenges.

1.07	In order to easily implement any future speed limit Orders on the Highway Network (to an enforceable standard), it is essential that this situation is addressed as a matter of urgency. To enable this to happen it is proposed that the Authority adopts a system whereby all speed limit Orders, both past and present, are contained within a single controlled environment and within a single consolidated Order, covering all speed limits across the whole of Flintshire County Council's Highway Network. The single Order will confirm and support the speed limits in place across the County at a given point in time and all other historical orders will then be revoked.
1.08	A similar situation existed at the time of the Civil Parking Enforcement review in 2013 whereby all parking Orders were revoked and consolidated within one Order to enable the multitude of anomalies and inaccuracies across a number of individual Orders to be corrected in a single operation and it is proposed that the same method be used to address the anomalies associated with the Authority's speed limits.
1.09	Prior to consolidation, a mapping exercise must firstly be conducted in order to accurately record the positioning of all existing speed limits and once this work has been completed the single consolidated Order can be introduced. This approach will also allow the Authority's speed limits to be both viewed and advertised within a simple and easy to understand map-based format, which will promote a transparent approach to both existing records and for all future changes. The information on all speed limits will also be easily accessible to members of the public via the Flintshire County Council website.
1.10	Following the consolidation, it is proposed that all speed limits within the County (i.e. those not previously encompassed within the recent speed limit review) will then be reviewed following a risk based route approach, to ensure compliance with national guidelines on every road in the County. It is anticipated that such a review would require a 5 year programme with the implementation of any changes being made as an ongoing process of amendment to the main consolidation Order.
1.11	Although the above arrangements will greatly improve the validity of existing speed limits within the County, it is also important to review the existing process by which speed limit Orders are made. This will improve the efficiency and speed of the amendment process and reduce the resources needed to introduce any required changes to speed limit Orders in future.
1.12	Streetscene officers currently write the legal Order for any given proposal, following which every Order is then passed to Legal services for checking. Although this is an improvement on the previous process whereby the Traffic Services team required Legal services to write all Orders, there is still substantial scope for improvement, particularly to improve the overall time taken to implement revised orders.

1.13	In order to eliminate the reliance on Legal services, Streetscene officers are currently drafting a system of templates, which once approved by Legal services, will standardise the Order writing process for any given future eventuality. Not only will this approach provide consistency to all future Orders, Legal services approval will only be required for amendments of templates, and no longer be required on an individual case basis.
1.14	Adoption of this revised process will streamline the current (often over complicated) process and will also reduce demand on legal officers time.
1.15	<p>Whilst reviewing the existing Order making process, a number of other improvements have been identified, which will reduce the cost to the service and to provide time savings to the existing process;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To update the Statutory Consultee list with valid email addresses and provide all future information relating to proposals electronically, as opposed to issuing hard copy correspondence and associated drawings. b) For purposes of future consultation with the Public, the notice of proposals will be provided electronically to the nearest Flintshire County Council Connects Office and relevant Community Council to enable wider consultation with the general public (in accordance with recent change in consultation procedure). This will alleviate the current requirement for Officers to create multiple information packs to be deposited at local libraries, Post Office's and Leisure Centres. All proposals will continue to be advertised in the local press and in County Hall.

<u>2.00</u>	<u>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</u>
2.01	Approval of the proposed process will greatly reduce current demand on Legal services.
2.02	The utilising of approved templates will reduce demand on Streetscene resources.
2.03	A mapping exercise is required to accurately record the positioning of existing speed limits within the County. This will require additional Technical Officer services, which will funded through existing service budgets.

<u>3.00</u>	<u>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</u>
3.01	With Cabinet Member

<u>4.00</u>	<u>RISK MANAGEMENT</u>
4.01	Should the review of existing speed limit orders not be undertaken, the Authority is at risk of challenge against the legality of both existing and future speed limits.

4.02	Flintshire County Council may also be at risk of not adhering to the statutory duty of care in relation to road safety in the event that speed limits are not enforceable.
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<u>5.00</u>	<u>APPENDICES</u>
5.01	None

<u>6.00</u>	<u>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</u>
6.01	Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk

<u>7.00</u>	<u>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</u>
7.01	None