

North Somerset Council

REPORT TO THE COUNCIL

DATE OF MEETING: 24 SEPTEMBER 2019

**SUBJECT OF REPORT: POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT -
WESTON-SUPER-MARE TRANSPORT WORKS PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

TOWN OR PARISH: WESTON-SUPER-MARE

**OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: COUNCILLOR JOHN CROCKFORD-
HAWLEY, CHAIRMAN STRATEGIC PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& REGENERATION POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SPEDR)**

KEY DECISION: N/A

REASON: THIS IS NOT AN EXECUTIVE DECISION

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Councillors receive and consider the report from the Chairman of the Strategic Planning, Economic Development & Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel (SPEDR)

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report provides an update on the recent activities and outcomes in respect of work undertaken by SPEDR to engage with key stakeholders and members of the public in respect of proposed transport works at Station Road, Walliscote Place and Alexandra Parade, Weston-super-Mare

2. POLICY

SPEDR supports the council's corporate aims of improving the way we work to deliver improving prosperity and opportunity; quality places; and health and well-being in the district.

3. DETAILS

3.1 There have been two open SPEDR meetings dedicated exclusively to the proposed Station Road / Walliscote Place / Alexandra Parade transport works.

The first was an informal panel meeting on 12 August, at which the following councillors were present: Cllrs John Crockford-Hawley (Chairman), Mike Solomon (Vice-Chairman), Gill Bute, Peter Crew, Ciaran Cronnelly, Ann Harley, Karin Haverson, Sandra Hearne, Ian Parker, Robert Payne, and Richard Tucker. A substantial number of other people were in attendance – residents, businesses, town councillors, and other interested parties including transport representatives.

The second was more of a drop-in gathering on 19 August, at which about 100 people were in attendance over the two-hour session.

At both meetings councillors, officers, residents and interested parties were encouraged to engage fully with one another so that we have been able to collect a worthwhile sample of public thought.

3.2 SPEDR FINDINGS

3.2.1 The Station Road and Walliscote Place proposals are generally acceptable with most people responding positively to what we are trying to achieve in terms of traffic flow, cycle routes including clarity of delineation, pedestrian convenience and safety, business environment improvement, healthier lifestyle encouragement, tree planting and visual enhancement. Concern was expressed at the currently poor rail/bus interchange at the railway station (First Group confirmed improvements are planned). More detailed notes are available.

3.2.2 Alexandra Parade proposals are more controversial.

Issues raised:

- A. Some thought the whole of the northern part of Alexandra Parade should be pedestrianised with an extension to the green area.
- B. Proposed bus stops are too far from High Street, particularly for people with disabilities.
- C. The number of buses in service does not require 12 dedicated stops.
- D. Compliant drop kerbs and weatherproof shelters are needed.
- E. Hutton bus service users will be disadvantaged.
- F. Multiple bus stops will confuse the travelling public.
- G. Rationalisation of bus stops will be required.
- H. Unhelpful location of taxi ranks, especially in front of residential properties.
- I. Lack of customer and delivery loading bays in Walliscote Road north.
- J. General lack of parking and loading bays.
- K. Restricted traffic flow.
- L. Impact on local businesses.
- M. Loss of too many trees.
- N. Need for correct tree species in any new planting scheme.
- O. Possibility of removed healthy trees being transplanted elsewhere.
- P. Need to retain trees for climate reasons.
- Q. Importance of high quality streetscape design with bus shelters, signage and information systems.
- R. The need for improvements to the bland Tesco frontage.
- S. Need for catering and toilet facilities, both for drivers and passengers.
- T. Negative impact on catering businesses in Regent Street/James Street north resulting from pedestrianisation west of the Tavern Inn.
- U. Timescale for works to start and conclude.
- V. Need to engage meaningfully with the public before decisions are made.

More detailed notes are available.

3 ANALYSIS OF WIDER CONSULTATION

As well as two SPEDR meetings officers have spoken with businesses, residents and visitors to gain further understanding of concerns and preferences. Two Executive Members personally delivered door-to-door neighbourhood leaflets.

Further to these two public SPEDR meetings 161 comments have been received and all have been acknowledged.

Key themes of interest raised by consultation:

- A. Greening /rewilding. Some people have expressed a need for more green space though others have argued for less in order to discourage those with challenging behavioural habits from congregating in the area. Some ask for more flowers as well as more trees
10% of comments
- B. Trees should remain for the benefit of birds and climate. Plant more.
15% of comments
- C. Proposed taxi rank on north side in front of houses unpopular
6% of comments
- D. Proposals will be good for local businesses.
6% of comments
- E. Proposals will be harmful to local businesses.
12% of comments
- F. Location of bus stops.
13% of comments
- G. Cycle lanes and safety of dual use with pedestrians
4% of comments
- H. Waste of time as decisions have already been made
8% of comments

The final point should be of major concern to all politicians. There is a sense of public anger; an emotively expressed feeling that the public has never been listened to; that NSC is not to be trusted; that information is never provided in a timely manner; that decisions have already been made and that a 'hidden agenda' is at play. During these two SPEDR meetings Members have consistently emphasised our scrutiny role in this process and have assured all interested parties that public support is critical to the policy's success and that all comments will be given due consideration by SPEDR and the Executive Member(s). It is unfortunate that plans, albeit in embryonic form, have been known about since 2017 but have not been released for public consideration until recently.

We must be consistent in our message that the current Council's desire is to engage fully with the public before any decisions are made and that all decision making will be adequately explained.

Further to these public consultation meetings the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of SPEDR, appropriate Executive Members and officers have participated in a plan-based exercise to see if changes can or should be made to the original design concepts. The results of this work will be reported as soon as possible

4. CONSULTATION

As set out above.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

N/A

7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Implications include the encouragement of more sustainable modes of transport and efficient journey planning together with landscape impacts including the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

1: Given that funding for these schemes is externally provided we are required to complete work within an acceptable time frame.

2: Any changes which we propose must be compliant with the original concept for which funding has been allocated.

3: Current funding will not permit completion of all parts of the scheme.

4: Contractor costs could escalate.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

10. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

N/A

11. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

N/A

AUTHOR

Councillor John Crockford-Hawley
Chairman, SPEDR Panel

APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None