

REPORT TO HADLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL – 21st June 2018

Cllr Mick Fraser – County Councillor for Hadleigh Division

Dear Mayor and fellow Councillors,

Benton Street

I met with Suffolk Highways (SH) officers to discuss the way forward and how to progress with the Benton Street (BS) traffic safety management project. A number of options designed to tackle this issue were presented to Hadleigh residents at a presentation held in the Guildroom in December 2017, after which the officers took away a large number of feedback questionnaires for consideration. I was able to display these options after this event, on the Hadleigh Chamber of Commerce website, where I received further comments and suggestions which were forwarded on to the officers. One Hadleigh resident took it upon himself to get group responses to the options from both The Hadleigh Society and The U3A. These reports promised to provide valuable comments and hence my delay in moving this project further until lately.

The SH officers have now completed their report for me and have advised how we might proceed, which I am presently considering. There is no obvious solution to managing better traffic through BS, other than building a new road linking Hadleigh south to the A12; and that will require us identifying where the funding for a new build will come from. With my Local Highways Budget (LHB), we can experiment with some minor changes to BS that might affect better the traffic flow and alleviate the need for vehicles to mount and drive on the footways. Changes which can be installed and removed easily or made permanent, include:

- a. Remove, relocate and rationalize some of the on-street parking.
- b. Install chicane measures.

An option favoured by some residents is the installation of a false-one-way with a No-Entry sign at the north end of BS at its junction with Station Rd. The Hadleigh Society carried out some very impressive analytical time-distance research for this option, which concluded had few benefits, especially to those living on BS. Another measure which was suggested in some of the feedback, is changing the speed limit to 20mph, with appropriate signage and I have asked the officers to consider trialling this also. I believe it has merit and might cognitively modify some road users' speed appreciation at the pinch-points in the road.

Being a designated B-road and our main arterial route south to the A12 and beyond, I am also campaigning to have the northern stretch between Station Rd and Ravens way resurfaced. It is crumbling and the numerous potholes which appear during wet periods, add to this issue.

School and Post-16 Travel

Suffolk County Council (SCC) has listened to the views of services users, schools and other stakeholders and adapted its approach to school and post-16 travel. This follows a major review involving months of detailed work with schools, public consultation, analysis and financial modelling. It was done because, in Suffolk, over £21 million of taxpayers' money will be spent this year getting 12,700 children to and from school. Whilst SCC has

already introduced several changes to the service saving around £2.6 million, financial modelling indicates that the cost of the existing policy will continue to grow over the next decade to £45 million a year unless further action is taken. As a result of this work, the following recommendations were presented to the cabinet on 19th May:

- **Retaining the current Post-16 Travel policy**, (in line with Option 3 from the consultation)
- **Providing children aged 4-16 years old with transport to their nearest school with an available place, but phasing in the policy from September 2019.** This would only apply to children starting a new school, or moving home, and would be based on the current minimum distance criteria (i.e.: over 2 miles for those under 8 years old and 3 miles or over for 8-16 year olds) (Option 2 from the consultation)
- **Giving priority to Suffolk schools**, allowing those whose nearest school is over the county boundary the option to choose transport to their nearest Suffolk school if they meet the criteria (an enhancement to Option 2 of the consultation)
- **Providing travel for 4-year olds**, known as 'rising 5s' (an enhancement to Option 2 of the consultation)
- **Requiring parents whose children qualify for funded travel to opt in each year**, reducing the number of seats paid for by the taxpayer but not used
- **Offering students who are nearest to a three-tier school the option of travel to the nearest two-tier school**, if they meet the criteria
- **Offering unallocated seats on school buses for pre- and post-16 students to buy on a first come, first served basis** at £750 in September 2019 with phased in increases of £30 per term (£90 per year) to reduce the public subsidy Suffolk County Council provides.
- **Continuing with the current cost increase of £10 per term (£30 per year) for unallocated seats to pre- and post-16 students with special educational needs** (in September 2019 this will be £690)
- **Implementing a revised individual exceptions policy for both school and post-16 travel**
- **Working with schools and communities at a local level to implement a range of local solutions**, e.g.: changing school start and finish time, putting in place hub collection points, ride and stride schemes and increasing the size of the vehicles used.
- Agreeing the anticipated overspend in the 2018/19 budget will be **funded from the council's reserves**
- **Providing an additional £3.025 million for the school travel budget from 2019/20 onwards.** This will help the service cope with increasing demand forecast in the next decade

- **Allocating £4.7 million from the council's reserves to fund** the new policy being phased in over seven years and reduce the impact on families
- Reviewing the inflation and demand pressures annually
- Continuing to implement a series of efficiency savings to reduce the cost of transporting children with special education needs
- Establishing a group of stakeholders to monitor the impact of the new policy.

New Leader of SCC

Mathew Hicks has been elected as the new leader of Suffolk County Council. He has promised a new era of working in partnership and listening, with all parties which contrasts the approach of his predecessor. With our current budget restraints this might be the best way to deliver services to the people that need them most and has stated that our highways are SCC's number one priority.

He will take personal responsibility for economic development and major infrastructure projects in addition to his leadership duties, and amongst his cabinet, he has appointed Mary Evans, also a Babergh DC, as deputy leader and cabinet member for highways, transport and rural affairs

Community Self Help – Highways

I have pursued this matter with SH, as it was their initiative that has gone quiet lately, to realize its merits. I am waiting to find out what tasks a volunteer group might be authorized to carryout, sign cleaning and grit clearing perhaps? SH would have to provide the necessary PPE and appropriate equipment, but the team would have to have insurance cover provided by HTC.

Other LHB Issues

Spooners Lane. A resident here has unsuccessfully applied for a disabled parking space. However, traffic often speeds along this road, likely following satnav, I have asked for a quote to install improved (larger) No-Through Road signage at the junction with Angel Street.

Stone Street. Work has progressed on this issue after it was previously delayed and I have requested an update for its completion.

I have nothing further to report.

Yours Sincerely

Mick

Cllr Mick Fraser
Hadleigh Division
Suffolk County Council