

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhood's and Community Services Scrutiny Panel
DATE: 2 April 2014

CONTACT OFFICER: Savio DeCruz, Acting Head of Transport
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875640

WARD(S): All

CABINET PORTFOLIO: Councillor Munawar (Commissioner, Social and Economic Inclusion)

PART I

FOR DISCUSSION

Traffic Congestion Working Group

1. **Purpose of Report**

To provide members with the progress made to date since the working group was formed in April 2013.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Panel is requested to consider the progress that has made with businesses and schools to reduce peak time congestion in the borough and options for further improvements to the road network.

3. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Regeneration and Environment – to improve public transport, cycling and walking facilities to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions; and maintain and improve the general road network through better management of traffic signals to facilitate access to employment and improve development opportunities.

4. **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

Traffic congestion has been steadily increasing over the past few years and this has contributed to other problems in the borough. From a health perspective Slough has four Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA), with pollution from cars being the main contributor. The economy, regeneration and housing are vital to Slough in order to attract new businesses and development in the town.

The council is addressing these problems by delivering improvements on the public highway to facilitate better management of traffic and is working with businesses and schools to address the morning and afternoon peak periods. Improving traffic flow will help to reduce CO2 levels and providing alternatives to the car will help reduce NO2 levels which is good news for the communities inside the AQMA's.

5. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications of proposed action

(b) Risk Management

Recommendation	Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation(s)
None identified	None identified	None identified

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act Implications as result of this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for the completion of an EIA related to the content of this Report.

6. **Supporting Information**

- 6.1 On 10 January 2013, the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel agreed the terms of reference for a review of traffic congestion on the highway network.
- 6.2 On 6 March 2013 findings of the Traffic Congestion on the Strategic Route Network in Slough Scrutiny Review were published. This review put forward the following recommendations:
- formation of a Working Group to investigate solutions and report back findings;
 - group to include relevant Cabinet members and a representative from the Scrutiny function; and
 - that the group's terms of reference were published for information at the next Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel.
- 6.3 On 24 April 2013 Cabinet approved the above recommendations.
- 6.4 The following are the projects and outcomes discussed at the various Working Group meetings held over the past year:
- i) delivering stages of the LTP 3 implementation plan, including bus service improvements, cycling and walking infrastructure;
 - ii) implementing the first Bike Hire scheme outside of London in the South East funded through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund;
 - iii) providing easy to access "live" traffic information to the public for bus, rail, tube and air, with further access to the Highways Agency motorway cameras;

- iv) commencing work on eight junction improvement schemes to reduce congestion and improve journey time reliability funded through the Better Area Bus Fund and ITS Capital fund;
- v) submitting a bid to the DfT for pinch point funding for the Copthorne roundabout;
- vi) increasing the number of bus stops with Realtime bus information;
- vii) providing further bus lanes operating at peak times where congestion is at its worst;
- viii) tendering of Bluetooth units and Variable Message Signs (VMS) to provide the public with journey time information;
- ix) open discussions with the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce about staggering finish times in the area;
- x) open discussions with Schools about altering start and finish times; and
- xi) exploring options for a schools bus pass scheme.

7. **Progress with Businesses**

- 7.1 Work place change has already commenced with a number of businesses including Slough BC. The group has focussed on more engagement with key organisations such as O2 to improve services to the estate.
- 7.2 Work shops and meetings have been held to encourage some of the larger companies in Slough to take on match funding projects such as cycle storage and training to encourage specifically residents to travel by other modes of transport.

8. **Progress with Schools**

- 8.1 School behavioural change is also underway and again workshops have been held recently to incentivise schools to take up cycle and scooter storage, cycle training, walking, Bike It and further improvements to encourage travel plans.
- 8.2 The schools, through the working group, have asked to start discussions with the bus operators to offer discounted bus passes to school children. This is being explored as an option to potentially increase large numbers of children taking alternative transport modes to the private car.
- 8.3 The education representative will be addressing the next schools forum about the potential take up prior to discussions with the operators.

9. **Progress with the Highways Agency**

- 9.1 Dialogue has commenced with the Highways Agency with regard to the SMART Motorway project. The project looks to utilise the hard shoulder during specific times where congestion is at its worst, to reduce journey times. The project limits are between junction 3 and 12 of the M4. The consultation is already underway with Slough exhibition being held on the 27th March at the Copthorne Hotel. The council, members and public will be invited to comment on the proposals before the scheme is submitted for approval. Work is due to commence in 2016 and be completed in 2021.

10. **Working Group Attendance**

10.1 Co-ordinating attendance with the business community and schools representatives has been challenging, results in some meetings having to be cancelled. Whilst the Group has managed to progress a number of projects, getting all the parties around the table at the Working Group meetings will be vital to achieving a cohesive approach to the transport challenges facing the borough.

11. **Conclusion**

Based on the information above it is evident that progress is being made with various initiatives including infrastructure and that this work needs to continue.

12. **Appendices Attached**

A - Traffic Congestion on the Strategic Route Network (review)

B - Minutes from the Traffic Congestion Working Group

12. **Background Papers**

None.