

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

8 September 2020

Statements and Questions from Simon Hetzel – Social Distancing Highway Scheme – Bradford on Avon Bridge

Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation

To Cllr Bridget Wayman – Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste

Statement 1

I understand this trial was requested by the BoA Town Council, (months and months ago when the current C19 situation was very much worse), but designed and implemented only recently by Wiltshire Council. In my view the Town Council was spot on - there is after all:

1. A C19 Global Pandemic (with a likely resurgence over the winter months)
2. An Obesity Crisis (further fuelling C19 deaths)
3. An Air Quality Crisis (also worsening C19 deaths)
4. A Climate Emergency
5. An Environmental Emergency

I believe previous traffic studies have shown that a significant proportion of journeys through the town are less than a few miles - there's just no excuse for that anymore. People, especially local able-bodied people, need to be forced out of their cars and into walking and cycling and using public transport and that's going to be uncomfortable for many. 8/10 for the BoA Town Council.

Wiltshire Council appear not only to have taken a great deal of time and failed to fully grasp the above but they chose to implement the "max version" of a number of possible permutations for the trial first. Then they seem to have measured nothing apart from social media sentiment. What sort of an experiment is that? Finally, they cite the school run by car as a reason for removing the lights in the face of Government and the schools themselves trying to encourage walking and cycling to school "wherever possible". It's tempting to infer a conspiracy by certain Wiltshire Councillors and Officers but I suspect it's just the usual ineptitude and incompetence. 2/10 Wiltshire Council.

Question 1:

Who and how will anyone be held accountable – your contractor, your officers, your communications, your procedures? Will you resign?

Response:

The traffic management measures introduced in Bradford on Avon were a trial. The potential benefits of providing additional space for pedestrians on town bridge and on the main streets in the town was appreciated, and that is why the arrangement was trialled. Unfortunately, it became clear that the temporary traffic signals on the Town Bridge were leading to excessive delays, especially as traffic flows were expected to increase with the schools returning. Consequently, the decision was taken to remove the signals.

The Council encourages walking and cycling for school journeys where it is safe to do so. Not all children can realistically cycle or walk to school because of the size of the school catchment areas. Many children travel by bus, but in the current circumstances this may not be practical because of capacity limitations due to social distancing, and an increase in car transport was anticipated as the schools return.

Whilst it is appreciated that the temporary traffic signals on the town bridge were a problem, the remainder of the scheme appears to have been successful.

Question 2:

How much of the £30,000 committed by the Town Council to the scheme do you think it fair for Wiltshire Council to refund?

Response:

The majority of the traffic management measures installed in Bradford on Avon remain in place, including the advance signing, one-way system and additional pedestrian space. Further amendments may be made to the scheme in the future if further improvements are identified.

The situation will continue to be monitored because it was installed as a trial. It would appear that it is operating successfully at the moment and has improved conditions for pedestrians and shoppers in the town, without the congestion and delays associated with the temporary traffic signals.

With limited road space and competing demands from pedestrians, cyclists, shoppers, visitors, public transport, vehicle users, and delivery vehicles it may not be possible to meet the requirements of all the road users. However, this scheme does appear to have been a good example of partnership working to deliver a significant improvement for the town.