

**PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL AND RESPONSES – 3 FEBRUARY 2021**

**(a) Question from Gez Kinsella to Councillor S A Spencer - Cabinet Member - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure**

Last year a study by public health academics from leading UK universities found that the 20 mph zones they looked at were ‘associated with a reduction in the number and severity of collisions and casualties’. In summer this year the government announcement on emergency active travel funding, of which DCC has received over £2 million, recommended a number of measures which the government suggested needed “a step-change in their roll-out... to maintain a green recovery.” These included reducing the speed limits to 20 mph to “provide a more attractive and safer environment for walking and cycling.” Given the growing body of evidence of the benefits and clear guidance from the Government in support of 20 mph speed limits, why is DCC continuing to refuse to reduce speed limits to 20 mph in areas where there is clear public support for such measures?

**(b) Question from Hilary Hart to Councillor S A Spencer - Cabinet Member - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure**

Every member of this Council will be taking preventive measures to protect themselves against the Covid-19 virus. Additionally, they will welcome their prevention vaccination. Speed can and does kill, as does Covid, so please will the individual Council members answer the following questions:

Why does DCC still pursue the dangerous and outdated policy of reducing speed limits only when a determined multiple of ‘fatalities’ has occurred?

Why is DCC not promoting and encouraging 20 mph life protection actions against road fatalities and casualties (as with Covid) rather than as a result of these avoidable tragedies, many of which involve the most vulnerable in society? DCC policy on 20 mph limits states that “We have a policy of introducing 20 mph speed limits and zones sparingly, with casualty reduction being a priority for the selection of such schemes.”

Councillor Spencer gave a résumé of all the questions and answered the individual points that were slightly different to what the main thrust was.

CLLR SPENCER: I would like to thank the public for submitting their questions on this important issue of 20 mph management.

Like I say I am going to give a preamble of the position statement of the Council as it stands and try and pick up one or two of the questions as I go through and I will work with you through the considerable list we have to deal with today.

Firstly, Chairman, it needs to be pointed out that there is a subtle difference between 20 mph speed limits and 20 mph speed zones in the context of many of the questions that

have been asked. The speed limit refers to a limit defined just by signs whereas a speed zone usually includes traffic calming and engineering measures. 20 mph zones are well established and effective in reducing road casualties. There are already numerous schemes of this nature in Derbyshire. There is, however, an ongoing debate around the implementation of what I refer to as 'sign only' limits which are just signs alone.

As members will recall a report was taken to my Cabinet Member meeting on the 31 January 2019 to discuss both its own trial of sign only 20 mph limits in Derbyshire and the consideration of a Department for Transport commissioned study and an evaluation of the nationally selected schemes, which was also published on the 22 October 2018.

A comprehensive study and the report was produced for the Government office outlining whether there was a clear relationship between vehicle speeds and a reduction in casualty figures. It also looked at the wider benefits of reduced speeds on public health; wellbeing; vehicle emissions and adds an incentive to try and encourage drivers to switch to cycling and walking rather than using their cars.

The Council, and indeed Cabinet members, will not dispute the benefits should there be compelling evidence to suggest schemes are effective in this aim but the evidence and research suggests that sign only 20 mph offers little in the way of speed and casualty reduction whereas similar previous schemes with associated traffic calming and engineering measures are much more successful in their aim. The sign only 20 mph schemes demonstrate little in the way of speed reduction compared with similar schemes with engineering measures. The added benefits to health, wellbeing and community are therefore lessened by the small reductions in speed.

As members will appreciate capital Highway investment in Derbyshire and indeed everywhere is driven by service priorities and demands which inevitably means continually repairing our roads, replacing assets at the end of their life cycle such as bridge, street lights and traffic signals. This work is key and fundamental to good asset management of the Council's finances driven by life cycle plans and value for money. Unfortunately these pressures and demands dictate where and how annual budgets are allocated.

Solely demonstrated health and wellbeing benefits must be sought from funding opportunities elsewhere and cannot be prioritised over more pressing highways demands. A "use sparingly" approach is therefore taken for the introduction of 20 mph signs only speed limits. This also reflects in the Council's Speed Management Plan which reinforces the casualty reduction by a predominant factor. This use sparingly scenario does however also leave the door open for when opportunities arise or be presented to the Council for health and wellbeing reasons.

The Council is of course supportive of the Government's Active Travel agenda and the need to promote cycling and walking. When a recent opportunity arose to secure dedicated ringfenced funding it was successful in a £1.7m figure that has been secured for an east-west link in Chesterfield with ideas and concepts to encourage people to walk and cycle. This will be subject to a public engagement and extensive consultation which will commence over the coming months. It must also be stressed that this funding does not impact upon daily changes in investment in our roads and highway infrastructure and is a dedicated one-off allocation.

To conclude, Chairman, the Council's stance is not in any way to dismiss health and wellbeing benefits but that limited highways' budget must be prioritised and must represent value for money. The Council also shows that when funding opportunities do arise to promote health and wellbeing through highways related initiatives it has been extremely successful in securing these funds. The use of 20 mph sign only limits is just one of many engineering options which will be considered and evaluated as part of the Active Travel Scheme in Chesterfield and further afield. Thank you, Chairman.

Moving on to the questions that have been posed, Chairman, obviously what I have tried to do is summarise in my preamble the issues that are overarching with respect to all these questions but we will try and go through the detail as best we can.

I want to make it very clear from the outset that Derbyshire County Council is not opposed to the introduction of 20 mph speed limits as we have indicated and have provided over the years and, in particular, outside primary schools where young children are more prone to do things that cannot be anticipated, let's put it that way.

I do believe, I think I have answered the first question in my preamble as best I can, Chairman, and I think the "use sparingly" approach is the sensible approach given the financial challenges. We go through a very detailed investment protocol in every initiative the Council puts in place to promote road safety and we take our road safety responsibilities incredibly seriously, always have done. We rely on professional evidence, ie statistical evidence, engineering evidence and professional advice from our officers in every instance but of course this will have to be a partnership approach where the introduction of changes in speed limits or zones takes place that we rely very much on our partners to come along on board and address the issues of speeding vehicles and carry out enforcement duties. Of course that responsibility lies elsewhere.

I hope I have covered the first two questions.

### **Supplementary Question from Hilary Hart**

Cllr Spencer's response prioritised the cost of 20 mph zones over their safety and environmental benefits. Contemporary research and statistics establish that the introduction of 20 mph limits reduces costs. The Government signed up to the Stockholm Agreement in Feb 2020 for 30kph (factually under 19mph) to be introduced where vulnerable road users and vehicles mix. The Government has also set long-term, legally binding environmental targets. Cllr Spencer's reply appears to disregard these protocols and the research.

The groundswell of support for 20 mph limits from Derbyshire residents, via their Parish Councils and other groups, underscores the urgent need to address C21st mobility needs. Coming out of lockdown gives a unique opportunity for DCC to support health, well-being and economic recovery which adopting 20 mph limits would assist. Will Cllr Spencer please re-examine his outdated sources and reassess his response in view of the current empirical and evidence-based facts?

CLLR SPENCER: The Stockholm Agreement is a generalised agreement based upon the principle upon reducing vehicle speeds to have an impact upon road

traffic deaths and injuries. It also indicates that in order for 30 km/h zones, or in our case 20 mph, these must be physically enforced; for example by constructing road humps, plateaus and road narrowings. This is of course entirely consistent with Derbyshire's approach which must be primarily focused upon road safety schemes to address our own casualty problems here. The use of 20 mph zones and speed limits remains to be one of the many intervention measures will have available to tackle such issues. Indeed, we already have a highway network containing many traffic calmed areas which are also subject to 20 mph zones or speed limits.

The impact of lower speeds upon health and well-being were not disputed and my initial response simply references that evidence and research suggests that signed only 20 mph offer little in the way of speed or casualty reduction, whereas similar previous schemes with associated traffic calming or other engineering measures are much more successful in this aim. The signed only 20 mph schemes demonstrate little in the way of speed reduction compared with similar schemes with engineering measures. The added benefits to health, well-being and the community are therefore lessened by small reductions in speeds.

Capital highway investment in Derbyshire and indeed everywhere is driven by service priorities and demands, which inevitably is continually repairing our roads and replacing assets at the end of their life cycles, such as bridges, streetlights and traffic signals. This work is key and fundamental to good asset management of council finances driven by life cycle planning and value for money. Unfortunately, these pressures and demands dictate where and how annual budgets are allocated. Schemes that solely demonstrate health or well-being benefits must be sought from funding opportunities elsewhere and cannot be prioritised over more pressing highway demands.

The council stance is not in any way to dismiss health or well-being, but that limited highway budgets must be prioritised and must represent value for money. The council has also shown that when funding opportunities do arise to promote health and well-being through highway related initiatives it has been very successful in securing these funds.”

The next question is from Lisa Hopkinson. This question also asks about air pollution and PM2.5 with children being especially vulnerable and also mentions Bristol who have a 20 mph zone area or is 20 mph, is saving fuel, and when can the Council implement such a zone in all residential areas.

**(c) Question from Lisa Hopkinson to Councillor S A Spencer - Cabinet Member - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure**

Many parts of Derbyshire have high levels of air pollution, including deadly fine particulates PM2.5 for which there is no safe threshold. Children are especially vulnerable. Department for Transport guidance states, “Generally, driving more slowly at a steady pace saves fuel and carbon dioxide emissions.” Because 20 mph limits are normal in Bristol it is estimated that 42 litres of fuel are saved annually by each driver there. That's a £50 per year saving in running costs per vehicle. Electric cars also contribute to PM2.5 through road, brake and tyre wear and 20 mph limits reduce these toxins too.

As high vehicle speeds are the greatest deterrent to walking and cycling, wide area 20 mph speed limits are proven to encourage some drivers to switch to cleaner travel modes, further improving public health. Because a top priority of Derbyshire's Council Plan is 'resilient, healthy and safe communities' please can this Council state when 20 mph limits will be implemented across all residential areas to improve public health and air quality as has been agreed for 21 million people in other parts of the UK?

CLLR SPENCER: I think it is difficult to compare a county the likes of Derbyshire to the City of Bristol. The makeup of our county is far bigger in scope in many respects. We have 3,500 miles of road. We have over 400 villages and 50 market towns. We need a very different approach in Derbyshire to what you would expect to have in a city.

I think I have highlighted in my initial response my understanding of the health benefits, the social benefits and highlighted the position of the Council. I also have to say, Chairman, I think I have also highlighted the investment protocol which should take place in the future and our prioritisation of those investment protocols.

As a consequence of that I cannot give an assurance we are going to be rolling out a blanket approach to 20 mph across this county. I think we should give every individual application due diligence. We should check and establish what measures can be put in place to achieve the objective and that is what we will continue to do.

### **Supplementary Question from Lisa Hopkinson**

Cllr Spencer notes that health/wellbeing cannot be prioritised over highway's pressing demands. However this is a false dichotomy as 20mph limits will also benefit highways spending in the long term too (through lower wear and tear on the roads), as well as providing enormous benefits to public health which is also a key part of the Investment Protocol (section 8.3 Improving local accessibility and healthy travel) and is entirely in keeping with section 8.4 Better Safety and Security. Note that we are asking for signed 20mph limits for the whole county rather than engineered 20mph solutions, the latter are what is referred to in the Investment Protocol and which would create an ongoing maintenance cost. Our proposal for signed 20mph limits would cost an estimated £2.4 million as a one-off, one tenth of the cost of a single road scheme proposed by the County (the £21 million Ashbourne bypass) and would have minimal ongoing maintenance costs. Does Cllr Spencer accept that the Investment Protocol is referring to engineered 20mph Zones and that signed-only 20mph limits are actually supported by the Investment Protocol sections 8.4 and 8.3?

CLLR SPENCER: The impact of lower speeds upon health and well-being were not disputed and my initial response simply references that evidence and research suggests that signed only 20 mph offer little in the way of speed or casualty reduction, whereas similar previous schemes with associated traffic calming or other engineering measures are much more successful in this aim. The signed only 20 mph schemes demonstrate little in the way of speed reduction compared with similar schemes with engineering measures. The added benefits to health, well-being and the community are therefore lessened by small reductions in speeds.

Capital highway investment in Derbyshire and indeed everywhere is driven by service priorities and demands, which inevitably is continually repairing our roads and replacing assets at the end of their life cycles, such as bridges, streetlights and traffic signals. This work is key and fundamental to good asset management of council finances driven by life cycle planning and value for money. Unfortunately, these pressures and demands dictate where and how annual budgets are allocated. Schemes that solely demonstrate health or well-being benefits must be sought from funding opportunities elsewhere and cannot be prioritised over more pressing highway and road safety demands. This does not contradict the council's aspirations to its own Investment Protocols, but merely that all its commitments must be carefully balanced and weighed against each other and the most immediate and pressing needs of the council. A 2.4 million investment in a county wide replacement of all Derbyshire signed only 30 mph limits with 20 mph signed only limits from our allocation for network safety improvements could not at this time being prioritised due to the national evidence suggesting there are limited reductions in speeds, but we do not dispute the benefits to health and well-being.

The council stance is not in any way to dismiss health or well-being, but that limited highway budgets must be prioritised and must represent value for money. The council has also shown that when funding opportunities do arise to promote health and well-being through highway related initiatives it has been very successful in securing these funds.

Should an Ashbourne Bypass be agreed by Central Government, it would of course be funded through a dedicated fund for nationally agreed road building projects rather than through the council's annual allocations for managing its own network.

**(d) Question from Alistair Meikle to Councillor S A Spencer - Cabinet Member - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure**

When will Derbyshire County Council adopt default 20 mph speed limits to reduce casualties and to encourage active travel? 20 mph should be the standard speed limit for streets where people live. Rather than just reacting when casualty numbers dictate, 20 mph should be the standard speed limit for streets where people live. A study into 20 mph zones in London found that casualties fell by an average of 42%. Lower speed limits are linked with increased levels of cycling and walking.

CLLR SPENCER: I was actually looking at the statistical evidence for KSIs, Killed and Seriously Injured here in Derbyshire only the other day. Obviously every individual Authority across the country faces different challenges. It is interesting to note the challenges that Derbyshire County Council are facing - and we have had a bit of a blip in the statistics and the downward trend of the statistics on KSIs just recently - but interesting to note that the predominant area we need to be focusing on is our rural roads because that seems to be the area where we have an increase in those dreadful statistics. I am not going to question whether there has been a reduction or not in the city, I am sure the facts speak for themselves.

I do recognise, as I have said in my preamble, that there are benefits to 20 mph zone/limits but it is like anything else: you have to implement these schemes properly; you have to put the engineering measures in place as well as the signage and that is what brought about the failure of the Padfield trial to be fair. We just threw some signs up and consequently we had a situation where we had an increase in accidents, be it minor, but we did have an increase. We went from 0 to 3 in the period the 20 mph zone trial was taking place.

I think we need to be more diligent in the way we implement these schemes. This was carried out by the previous administration so I wasn't going to comment on whether it could be improved upon, but what I would say to you is if we are going to implement these schemes we need to do them properly and we need to do them in the full understanding of what the measures need to be.

**(e) Question from Peter O'Brien to Councillor S A Spencer - Cabinet Member - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure**

The County Council has been awarded £1,684,350 Active Travel funding by the Government for new cycling and walking initiatives, including low traffic neighbourhoods and pedestrian improvements. Can you tell me if it has been determined where this funding will be utilised (and if so by whom the decision was made), when it is intended to publish the plan for consulting with communities in Derbyshire on the development of schemes to benefit from this funding, and whether proposals for the introduction of 20 mph speed limits which enable roads and streets to be more safely shared between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles will be considered for inclusion?

CLLR SPENCER: This question is going to come up later in the meeting in a Member's question so I am not going to go into the detail of that particular aspect, the £1.684m, but what I will do is give a summary of the Active Travel Fund that we have bid in for over the Covid-19 period, this fund that has driven many initiatives in town centres and further afield.

The County Council bid into tranche 1 at the beginning of the Covid pandemic and was successful in receiving just under half-a-million pounds, I think it was about £450,000 for measures related to the Active Travel Fund. At that particular time the Active Travel Fund the criteria that was used consists of two pages of particular things that this could be used on and it ranged from cycling; walking; 20 mph reduction; modal filters; pedestrian zones; providing cycle stands; junction alterations; changes in routes; one-way streets. The list goes on. I think there were about twelve individual aspects that the initial Active Travel Fund could be used for.

I can tell you that that fund, the £450,000 the Authority received from Central Government was utilised in 121 locations across Derbyshire ranging from town centre distancing measures right the way through to addressing parking issues in hot spots across Derbyshire as a whole. We have installed many many miles of yellow lines and temporary Traffic Regulation Orders which were put in place to manage scenarios the public were concerned about and the bus operators were concerned about and the emergency services were concerned about. I have every confidence that that particular budget was used effectively, efficiently, and in the public interest. I will cover the £1.684m in Members'

Questions later on during the meeting.

**(f) Question from Charlotte Farrell to Councillor S A Spencer - Cabinet Member - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure**

Duty of care, Equalities Act and disability legislation require Councils to protect vulnerable people. Despite Covid deaths, this county has an ageing demographic with rising numbers disabled by hearing loss, sight impairments, mental health issues, dementia, who use walking aids such as sticks or wheelchairs or who are unstable on their feet and vulnerable to a fall. About a half of all adults have some disability by age 65 years old. Falls account for 1:9 ambulance call outs. Older people fear road injury as their reactions to avoid a hazard are slower and drivers cannot tell by looking who is disabled and who is not. Research says the most effective prevention intervention for vulnerable road users is to make 20 mph the normal road speed limit. What is the timescale for making 20 mph normal for the ageing and vulnerable in our county? <http://www.20splenty.org/invisible-disability>.

CLLR SPENCER: Well, Charlotte, I recognise the issues that you have raised in your question and of course the County Council here in Derbyshire does everything it can with the resources it has available to deliver safe projects across the highways' network. As I have said earlier today 20 mph zone limits outside schools and in other locations across the county have been used but also we have used many other methods of highways' management and highways' safety measures, which I applaud the Council for. We have protected the School Crossing Patrol services outside primary schools. We have installed engineering measures outside many primary schools and secondary modern schools as well and we have also delivered significant highways' improvements in many many locations and will continue to do so.

I refer Charlotte back to the investment protocol that we use. I also refer her to the Highways Network Management Plan which was published in March 2020 which highlights all the ways in which the Council addresses - it is 49 pages of ways in which this Council addresses the public need as far as highway safety is concerned.

**(g) Question from Trevor Page to Councillor S A Spencer - Cabinet Member - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure**

Does the Council agree with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents when they state:

“20 mph limits are not just a road safety measure. Therefore, when assessing their value and effectiveness, it is important to consider increases in walking and cycling and improvements in quality of life indicators, such as health improvements, community cohesion and better air quality, as well as reductions in vehicle speeds and road crashes and casualties.”

CLLR SPENCER: I actually went on to the RoSPA website when I was researching this particular question, as I have done in the past. The RoSPA website is a massive website with lots and lots of different quotes about lots of different positions that RoSPA sees



as important issues that should be addressed by local authorities and others in the prevention of accidents. This particular quote I couldn't find but I am sure it was there.

All I would say is that the Authority takes its responsibility seriously as far as highway safety is concerned and the prevention of accidents. A blanket coverage, as I have already said, of signage only will not achieve the objective that the public would hope it would do. We have to put in place the engineering measures that go with it. As I have already explained in my preamble we have to take into account the financial implications and whether we are investing the public money we have available to us in the most effective, efficient way to deliver highway safety.

**(h) Question from Diane Fletcher to Councillor S A Spencer - Cabinet Member - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure**

Derbyshire County Council in its Health and Wellbeing Strategy cites five priorities, the first two of which are:

1. To enable people in Derbyshire to live healthy lives
2. Work to lower levels of air pollution

At the same time NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) gives its own guidance on healthy living and air pollution. NICE recommends planning for walking and cycling<sup>1</sup> as essential to promote healthy living and, alongside this notes the importance of traffic speed. Studies estimate that reducing speed limits on residential roads to 20 mph is likely to result in a 26% reduction in pedestrian casualties of all ages. In its guidelines on Air Pollution<sup>2</sup> NICE advocates reducing speed to 20 mph to promote healthy living as the reduced speed across an extended zone will avoid rapid acceleration and decelerations, lower vehicle emissions and reduce both fuel costs and air pollution.

So will the Council explain why, in order to achieve its own Health and Wellbeing priorities, it is not following NICE guidance and implementing a 20s plenty limit in urban and village developments across the county?

<sup>1</sup><https://www.ciht.org.uk/knowledge-resource-centre/resources/streets-and-transport-in-the-urban-environment/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng70/chapter/Recommendations#smooth-driving-and-speed-reduction>

CLLR SPENCER: Thank you, Chair. As I highlighted in my preamble to encourage people to use other forms of transport to travel to and through their days of work, to school etc is definitely a good thing. Many of our schools have school travel plans in place. I think over the Covid period I actually do believe that people have looked at alternative forms of transport. It is really quite refreshing to see so many people choosing to walk or cycle, whatever the case may be, in preference to getting in the car or other means.

I have already highlighted in my preamble the effectiveness to health and wellbeing as a consequence of not implementing these schemes correctly and appropriately. I would also say, Chairman, when you look at the implementation of signage only and the miniscule

reduction in speed you can understand that the benefits, the health benefits and the other benefits related to that will not be as significant as they would be if there were engineering measures put in place and the reduction in speed was more significant.

I refer the questioner back to the issues that have been highlighted in the question and my preamble and point out to her that we have a situation where we must continue to invest and use our investment protocols in the best interests of all the public, which we will continue to do.

**(i) Question from Philip Taylor to Councillor S A Spencer - Cabinet Member - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure**

I am a wheelchair user. Does the Council recognise that manipulating a wheelchair in villages such as Bamford in the High Peak, where I live, where very often pavements do not exist or are too narrow to use properly, is particularly dangerous. I am often forced into the road where it puts me and others like me, at severe risk of being hit and that the impact of that collision would be that much more severe at 30 mph than 20 mph and that severe injuries themselves cost the county significantly in terms of social care provision. Will it therefore say when it intends to implement 20 mph in all residential areas?

CLLR SPENCER: Chairman, I have a certain amount of empathy with Mr Taylor on this particular subject. I do recognise that the very geography of our county causes significant problems for people who are using wheelchairs. We have a lot of narrow pavements, purely and simply because of the geography of the county. We have a lot of areas that have no pavements at all. I live in a village myself with no pavements and I know some years ago when I couldn't get around under my own steam it was challenging to get out and just walk down the street, so I have a lot of empathy with Mr Taylor's circumstances.

Mr Taylor would expect me to say that whatever I do moving forward as a Cabinet Member I have already said that this Council does moving forward as far as highway safety is concerned, I refer him back to my preamble about the investment protocols; the Highways Network Management Plan and all the other measures that we put in place to deliver a safe network. Taking a blanket approach will not address these concerns and like I say if there are particular issues of speeding in particular communities I would be interested to hear if that was the case. I think it is only appropriate that we share that information with the enforcement agency who hopefully through the CREST partnership will work with us to address those issues. I can't give Mr Taylor an assurance that tomorrow I can resolve the issues he faces or the challenges he faces as a wheelchair user but I can empathise with him that it is difficult in some areas of our county.