

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
Wednesday 14 July 2021

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR DEWHIRST
Re: Parking outside Schools

When dealing with parking issues outside schools our Devon Civil Enforcement Officers have expressed frustration to me that they were not able to deal with minor moving traffic offences by motorists.

I note that newspapers have reported that Local Authorities will be able to apply to issue fines to drivers committing minor traffic offences such as banned turns, stopping in box junctions and driving in formal cycle lanes from December. Local Authorities will have to publicise this well in advance to ensure that drivers are aware that enforcement will be taking place.

Can the Cabinet Member for Highways report if Devon County Council will be applying to Government for these powers to enable our Enforcement Officers to keep our roads moving, keep them safer, particularly for young people, and keep our air cleaner.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

Changes to the Traffic Management Act 2004 later this year will allow Local Authorities (outside of London) to apply for powers to enforce additional moving traffic offences, including yellow box junctions and banned turns.

It is most likely that Local Authorities will adopt automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technologies to enforce where powers are adopted. It is unlikely that this would be a role for our Civil Enforcement Officers who are fully committed to undertaking important work managing parking to keep our network moving.

The decision to take on these powers is a significant matter for any Authority, both in terms of reputation, efficacy and sustainability. We need to ensure this is the right decision for Devon.

Therefore, I would propose, and ask of our Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny committee to undertake a working group to develop and propose a position for the Authority on this matter.

2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR CONNETT
Re: Supporting Vehicle Activated Speed Signs in Exminster

Exminster Parish Council wishes to install 'flashing speed alert signs' or Vehicle Activated Signs in the village as part of its excellent work to promote road safety.

However, Devon County Council has insisted that before anything can be done, new 'speed readings' must be taken. It advised the Parish Council of this on 18 March 2021.

Exminster Parish Council advised on 31 March of four possible locations that speed readings would be helpful.

Since then, more than 3 months have been lost and no speed readings have been put in place by Devon County Council... and without them County Hall refuses to progress sites for flashing speed alert signs!

Will the Cabinet Member (1) explain the reasons for the long delay in supporting Exminster Parish Council and (2) expedite the 'speed readings' so the Parish Council can progress the Vehicle Activated Signs the community supports?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

The use of vehicle activated signs (VAS) can reduce vehicle speeds which in turn can lead to fewer and less severe casualty collisions. We support communities who wish to provide their own VAS. Members will recall that our Traffic Management Team circulated an updated procedure in December last year to make it easier for communities to fund their own Vehicle Activated signs.

In that procedure it laid out the continued use of our SCARF (Speed Complaint Action Review Forum) process to sign sites off. It is important that as a responsible Highway Authority that we fully understand the behaviour of drivers in these locations of concern and data is gathered to ensure there isn't a need for the Authority to intervene or recommend the site for police enforcement.

It is acknowledged that the Parish Council contacted us in mid March, and locations were agreed for their desired sign by mid April. A request was made in May to our data team from speed detection radar to be deployed.

Our Data Team have been particularly busy catching up with requests following the impact of Covid, and managing their workloads accordingly. They will endeavour to arrange for the surveys to take place before the school holidays, and data to be available at the beginning of August.

In March, the process was explained to the Parish Council and a backlog of requests was explained. I am sorry if the timescales were not made suitably clear but maintain that the decisions we make should be data led and the review via the SCARF process remains an important step in ensuring additional support is provided by the County Council where required.