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| Report to | Communities Scrutiny Committee |
| Date of meeting | 8th December 2022 |
| Lead Member / Officer | Lead Member for Environment and Transport / Head of Planning, Public Protection and Environment |
| Report author | Traffic, Parking and Road Safety Manager |
| Title | Introduction of 20 mph Speed Limit on the County's Road Network |

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. To explain the background to the forthcoming 20 mph limit in towns and villages across Wales, including the Welsh Government's criteria for identifying exceptions to the default speed limit. The report also explains the process followed by officers to identify exceptions to the default limit.
- 1.2. To provide an overview of the tasks that the Council is required to undertake in preparation for when the default speed limit comes into force on the 17th September 2023.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. To provide the Committee with a detailed understanding of the principles behind the default 20 mph limit, and criteria for making exceptions to the default limit.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That Committee considers the content of the report and attached appendices, and provides observations on the process being followed by the Council.

4. Report details

Background

- 4.1. In 2020, the Welsh Government (WG) accepted all 21 of the recommendations made in a report by a Task Force they had commissioned to look at the case for making 20 mph the default speed limit in towns and villages across Wales. A copy of the Task Force's report is provided in Appendix A.
- 4.2. The report cites overwhelming evidence that a default 20 mph speed limit will result in fewer road traffic collisions and less severe injuries from collisions.
- 4.3. The report also referred to evidence that 20 mph speed limits lead to more walking and cycling because of roads feeling safer for vulnerable road users, with associated health and wellbeing benefits. Where these journeys replace car journeys, they will also contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions.
- 4.4. In 2021, the WG selected a number of pilot locations for “area-wide” 20 mph speed limits, one of which was Buckley in North Wales. These pilots were undertaken to test the process and any potential issues that resulted.
- 4.5. Roads that have street lights are legally referred to as “Restricted Roads”, and currently they have a default speed limit of 30 mph, unless a Traffic Order has been made to change the speed limit to something else. Nearly all of the roads within our towns and villages are Restricted Roads.
- 4.6. It is Section 81(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 states that Restricted Roads are subject to a speed limit of 30 mph.
- 4.7. In July 2022, the Senedd passed the main Statutory Instrument to amend Section 81 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1988 as it applies Wales, so that 20 mph will become the mandatory speed limit for restricted roads. This legislative change will come into force on the 17th September 2023.

Exceptions to the default 20 mph speed limit

- 4.8. The WG recognises that a 20 mph speed limit will not be appropriate for all roads in towns and villages. They have developed guidance to help Councils identify roads, or sections of road, that should not be included. These roads are

referred to as “Exceptions” because they will be exceptions to the default 20 mph limit.

- 4.9. To make a road an exception to the default 20 mph speed limit, it will be necessary to make a new Traffic Order that makes its speed limit 30 mph.
- 4.10. The setting of local speed limits is the responsibility of local highway authorities, like Denbighshire. However, the WG strongly recommend following their guidelines to ensure a consistent approach across Wales. This will also help with the wider acceptance of the default speed limit.
- 4.11. The WG has developed exception criteria based on the likelihood of “significant numbers of pedestrians and cyclists travelling along or across the road”. To help local authorities make this assessment, they’ve developed the following “place criteria”:
 - (i) Is the road within 100 metres of a school or other educational establishment?
 - (ii) Is the road within 100 metres of a community centre?
 - (iii) Is the road within 100 metres of a hospital?
 - (iv) Do residential or retail properties front the road, and exceed 20 properties per kilometre of road (i.e. 5 or more properties every 250 metres of road)?
- 4.12. The intention of the above criteria is to avoid the need for a 20mph limit where there is little chance of pedestrians and traffic mixing. Example locations include roads with pedestrian subways, or footbridges crossing them. The WG provided an example image of such a location in their initial project documentation, please see Appendix B. In general, we do not have these types of road in Denbighshire towns as they are more prevalent in larger towns and cities.
- 4.13. In practice, most of our roads within towns and villages meet criteria (iv) in paragraph 4.11 above.
- 4.14. The WG has also suggested that if only one side of a road is developed, with no footway on the undeveloped side, then there is little reason for pedestrians to cross the road, and thus such roads may be suitable to stay at 30 mph. We have applied this logic when identifying our list of exceptions.

4.15. The WG ran an algorithm to determine potential exceptions, this identified 14 potential exceptions in Denbighshire. The algorithm did some anomalies, such as identifying exceptions for parts of roundabouts and for some residential areas. Officers corrected these and also identified exceptions that had been missed by the algorithm, such as where the A525 enters Rhyl from Rhuddlan.

4.16. Appendix C contains a list and location maps of our proposed exceptions i.e. those roads that we are proposing should remain at 30 mph.

4.17. We intend to commence the statutory Traffic Order making process for these proposed exceptions in the coming weeks and will be in contact with all the local members for these locations to discuss the consultation.

4.18. Officers attend a regular working group with colleagues from other North and Mid Wales local authorities, the trunk road agency, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Welsh Government. The purpose of these meetings is to monitor progress, discuss technical queries, share good practice and to ensure our approach is “broadly consistent” with other authorities.

Traffic signs and road markings

4.19. The change to a default 20 mph speed limit will require a significant volume of work to replace existing 30 mph speed limit signs. It will also be necessary to change some road markings at the entry points into towns and villages where a “gateway treatment” incorporates a “30” roundel marking on the road.

4.20. We will also need to change our existing electronic signs (Vehicle Activated Signs) that display a “30” symbol when illuminated. The speed such signs are triggered at will also need to be amended in light of the new default speed limit.

4.21. Officers have been developing the above tasks into work packages by geographic area, and will use a number of different contractors to do the work.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

- 5.1. It supports the key objective of “A better connected Denbighshire”. A lower speed limit will help reduce the number and severity of road traffic collisions, whilst encouraging greater use of active travel modes.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1. The project is being fully funded by a WG grant. We received £23,281 of grant funding last financial year. We have received £239,010 this financial year, the majority of which is for traffic signage. The WG has recently asked local authorities to calculate how much further grant funding they will require in financial year 2023-24. We are currently in the process of assessing this. Our current estimate is that the whole project cost for Denbighshire will be in the region of £350,000, which would mean a requirement for a further £88,000 of grant funding in 2023-24, however, the exact figures are still to be confirmed.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment has not been undertaken because this is a national initiative being introduced by the Welsh Government.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1. A Traffic Order will be required for the roads that will be made exceptions to the default 20 mph speed limit. Public consultation will be undertaken as part of the statutory Traffic Order making process.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1. There are no direct financial implications of this report as the WG is providing funding for the changes. There may be less pressure on the budget for sign maintenance in the medium term due to this programme of replacement.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. The biggest project risk is public opposition to the default speed limit. However, as this is a national programme, we can minimise these risks by taking a consistent approach to how we apply the Welsh Government's guidelines for exceptions. Also, our Communications and Marketing team will promote the national publicity campaign being undertaken by the Welsh Government.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Section 21 of the Local Government Act, 2000.

11.2. Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.3 of the Council's Constitution outlines Scrutiny's powers with respect of considering actions to be taken by the Council in connection with the discharge of its functions and matters which affect residents.