

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Old Town Transport Plan (East Street)</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>25 November 2014</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director, Environment Development &amp; Housing</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Tom Campbell</b>	<b>Tel: 29-3328</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>Regency</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 On 7 October 2014 the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee requested Officers investigate the feasibility of closing East Street between 11am and 7pm on weekends only (Appendix A). This report is a response to that request.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Committee authorises Officers to advertise an Experimental Traffic Order allowing East Street to be closed to traffic between 11am and 7pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

**3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Old Town Transport Plan is a continuation of the Council's Walking Network programme. The project has been through extensive consultation and scrutiny over the previous 2 years. A full description of the project's progress was included in the report considered by the Environment, Transport & sustainability Committee on 7 October 2014.
- 3.2 An Experimental, rather than a permanent Order is recommended in order to allow the effects of the closure to be fully assessed. Following the trial period, of no more than 18 months, the findings will be presented to a further Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee for a decision on whether to proceed with permanent measures.
- 3.3 A detailed description of the scheme was included in the previous report to the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee. No changes from the proposals outlined in that report, other than enforcing the closure for weekends only rather than 7 days a week, are proposed.

- 3.4 The previous report to the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee detailed the findings of an independent safety auditor that the scheme was low risk. There are no further road safety concerns relating to a weekend only closure.
- 3.5 The Public Space Public Life Study was adopted as council policy in 2007 and is a long term Public Realm vision for the city. It says *“East Street is an example of a heavily used street [by pedestrians], whose quality and character drastically deteriorate when moving south, resulting in a poor connection between lively areas in The Lanes and the Seafront.”*
- 3.6 East Street is used by over 20,000 people a day at peak times and acts as a showcase for the city but, although it is the major pedestrian road in the Old Town, it is currently dominated by vehicles with poor facilities for pedestrians. This Order will create a pedestrianised route for 8 hours a day along one of the city’s key walking network links, connecting the seafront, the Lanes and the Pavilion.
- 3.7 Studies of similar schemes elsewhere show that pedestrianisation schemes generally have a positive effect on local businesses. A 2001 study summarised existing evidence about the effect of vehicle restricted areas on retail sales and local economic activity and concluded:
- i) Pedestrian flows increase significantly over and above other comparable vehicular streets.
  - ii) Turnover for retailers and restaurateurs increases significantly over and above that in other comparable vehicular streets, though there is no significant change for hoteliers.
  - iii) A larger proportion of businesses report an increase in profits for those located within pedestrianised areas compared to those outside those zones. The differential in turnover for retailers and restaurants was 40-60% and the differential in profits was 10-15%.
  - iv) Generally, traders and trading organisations are often highly sceptical and anxious about measures that restrict traffic movements, believing (rightly or wrongly) that their trade is dependent on vehicle access, while shoppers are more enthusiastic about pedestrianisation schemes. For example, of twenty schemes surveyed in Scotland pre-implementation, only five were viewed positively by local traders whereas shoppers were positive in fourteen of the towns. This illustrates a widely reported trend.
  - v) Post-implementation, traders are more likely to support a pedestrianisation scheme once the effects of a scheme are clear.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 A permanent Traffic Order is the primary alternative. An experimental order has been recommended to reflect the divergence of views on the scheme and how it

will operate in practice. An experimental order will allow the effects to be observed and a permanent decision be made based on operational evidence.

## **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The Old Town project has been through extensive public consultation over the last 2 years. A full description of the project's consultation history was included in the report considered by Committee on 7 October 2014.
- 5.2 Before the Council makes an experimental traffic order it is obliged to consult the Police, Fire and Ambulance services and organisations representing road users.
- 5.3 No provision of an experimental order shall come into force before the expiration of the period of seven days beginning with the day on which a notice of making the order in relation to the order is published in a local newspaper.
- 5.4 The Council is also obliged to make a copy of the order and relevant documents available for public inspection, at the times and at the places specified in the notice of making in relation to the experimental order, for a period beginning with the date on which that advertisement is first published and ending when the order ceases to have effect.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 This report details the feasibility of closing East Street to traffic between 11am and 7pm at weekends only. An experimental closure is recommended in order to allow the impacts of the measure to be assessed before a permanent decision is taken.

## **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The capital costs associated to the recommendations in the report will be funded from the Local Transport Plan (LTP) capital programme. The total budget allocation for the Old Town Transport Plan project in the 2014-15 financial year is £33,000.

Any potential loss of parking income associated to recommended traffic order will impact on the existing Parking revenue budget within the Transport service. It is difficult to estimate the potential loss of parking income as it is not possible to predict whether vehicles will be displaced elsewhere, migrate to off-street parking or be discouraged from parking.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Steven Bedford*

*Date: 04/11/14*

### Legal Implications:

- 7.2 An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order will be required to introduce these changes and will need to be advertised in accordance with the relevant legislation set out in Section 9 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
- 7.3 Experimental orders can continue in force for up to 18 months only. Objections can be made to an experimental order for six months from the date that it is made.
- 7.4 It is not possible to lodge a formal objection to an experimental traffic regulation order until it is in force. Once it is in force, objections may be made to the order being made permanent and these must be made within six months of the day that the experimental order comes into force.
- 7.5 If the experimental order is changed, then objections may be made within six months of the day that the experimental order is changed.
- 7.6 There are no adverse human rights implications arising from this report

*Lawyer Consulted: Katie Matthews*

*Date: 31/10/2014*

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Appendices:

1. Environment Transport & Sustainability Committee minutes, 7 October 2014