

Notes from Parking at Schools Task and Finish Group Meetings

Appendix 4

Minutes of the Meeting of the Task and Finish Group held on 10 September 2024 at 6.00 pm

Attendees: Cllr D Day, Cllr A Green, Cllr F Massey, Cllr C Sisterson, Cllr L Watson (as Portfolio Holder for Good Growth), Michael Dineen, Peter Wright, Lucy Tricker, Emma Trencher

Apologies: Cllr P Arnold, Cllr S Shinnick

Item 1 – Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr S Shinnick and Cllr P Arnold

Item 2 – Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

Item 3 – Items of Urgent Business

There were no Items of Urgent Business

Item 4 – Election of Chair

Councillor Green nominated Councillor Massey, seconded by Councillor Sisterson, to be Chair of the Task and Finish Group. Councillor Massey was duly elected as Chair.

Item 5 – Election of Vice Chair

Councillor Sisterson nominated Councillor Green, seconded by Councillor Massey, to be Vice Chair of the Task and Finish Group. Councillor Green was duly elected as Vice Chair.

Item 6 – Terms of Reference and Scoping Document

The Terms of Reference and Scoping Documents were agreed.

Item 7 – Discussion of Potential Activities and Timelines

Members noted this was the first formal meeting of the Task and Finish Group and this would run for 10 weeks, giving the 19 November 2024, as the finish date. Members discussed the timeline and agreed they should have sight of the draft policy by the end of October, to allow time to discuss and make any changes before the 10-week period is complete. To achieve this, it was agreed the meeting schedule should be fluid with possible bi-weekly meetings which could include a mixture of in-person, MST, school visits and meetings with residents and parents. It was felt important to gather views on this subject from a variety of sources.

Suggestions from Officers and Members on how best to reach residents and schools included:

- Liaise with the Comms Team to request views of residents
- Liaise with School PTAs
- Liaise with road safety team, who have expert knowledge and historic data
- Possible Facebook Poll
- Speak to Community Forum Groups
- Place information in Libraries
- Speak with the Youth Cabinet

Members asked how parking enforcement could solve some of the problems. Officers explained the process and statutory requirements of enforcement procedures and advised although this could help, it should not be relied on as the solution and that ongoing education of parents and children should be a focus.

The Portfolio Holder advised that every school should have a Travel Plan and schools should be encouraged to look at and enforce them. She also informed the members that she had recently visited a school and spoke to pupils, who came up with some very good ideas themselves. Officers informed the members that in some schools, the location would always be a barrier to finding a solution as it was the locality that was the problem and not entirely the parking.

It was requested that a road traffic officer attend the next meeting.

It was agreed that not every school or area could be visited, and that research should be carried out to identify hotspots.

Following the debate, the action points that arose were:

- Officers to:
 - provide data identifying hotspots.
 - provide data on historic school parking complaints.
 - provide historic enforcement data.
 - provide information on any accidents or injuries suffered due to school parking.
 - research regulations on engine idling.
- The Scrutiny Officer to:
 - liaise with the Comms Team and Libraries.
 - research if other Boroughs have successful school parking policies.

The meeting finished at 6.34pm.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Task and Finish Group held on 25 September 2024 at 5.30pm

Attendees: Councillor Massey (Chair), Councillor Day, Councillor Green (Vice-Chair), Councillor Shinnick, Councillor Sisterson, Navtej Tung (Strategic Transport Manager), Julie Cooper (Thurrock Road Safety Lead), Lucy Tricker (Scrutiny Officer), Emma Trencher (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Cllr Arnold

Item 1 – Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr P Arnold.

Item 2: Road Safety Lead (RSL) Introduction

Julie Cooper introduced herself and outlined her roles and responsibilities as Road Safety Lead.

The RSL advised she had worked for Thurrock Council for 22 years working within the wider Passenger Transport Unit and had been in the road safety team for the last 18 years, with the last 8 years being the manager of the Road Safety Team.

The RSL explained she managed the road crossing patrols, Bike-ability scheme, road safety team which formed part of the Safer Essex Roads Partnership (“SERP”).

It was further advised there were two additional officers who formed part of the road safety team but due to the roles being non-statutory, as the two road safety officers were on secondment they had not been able to back-fill the roles. Part of the road safety officers role would have been to go into schools to educate children and parents on how to keep safe on the roads.

The RSL also advised she helped all Thurrock schools to produce their School Travel Plans, which promotes sustainable and active travel, linking in with the obesity agenda. It was noted Thurrock was the first authority in the country to have a travel plan in every school in the borough. All plans were robust and active, and Thurrock were currently top of the leader board for having ‘good’ rated Travel Plans. The RSL explained Schools with ‘good’ Travel Plans, who were actively seeking parent and pupil feedback were the schools that the team have no complaints from around parking. Two of the top schools were Warren Primary and Lansdowne Primary.

Item 3: ‘Problem’ schools in the borough regarding parking, as witnessed by the RSL

The RSL advised parking problems around schools (including poor, dangerous and inconsiderate parking) occurred in every school in the Borough and was a national issue. It was advised there were 54 schools in Thurrock, and it was further advised the schools that historically had the most complaints and problems were:

- St Thomas’ Catholic Primary.
- Quarry Hill Primary.

- Grays Convent High School.
- Harris Academy (Mayflower Road) schools.

It was advised the problems in the morning are limited to 20-25 minutes, but the afternoon pick up was much longer as some parents arrived around 2pm and parked for up to an hour before school finished.

It was noted that St Thomas' School have a new head teacher who was not engaging at present due to other more pressing issues.

Findings have found if a parent does not deem it to be safe for children to walk, then they would not allow their children to walk. Therefore, it was advised if you could educate and you encourage a few children to walk, then it has been found more will walk.

Chafford Hundred is particularly problematic. A new road crossing officer has recently been put in place in Mayflower Road and this was proving successful. It was further advised the transport delivery unit are looking at funding a parking area in this location, this would be funded through a grant falling within the safer routes to school initiative.

Item 4: Discussion and confirmation of site visit locations.

The RSL asked for clarification of what the outcome of the Task and Finish Group was. The Scrutiny Officer advised that the Assistant Director for Highways and Transportation was producing a policy that could be implemented and was achievable for all schools within the Borough. The outcome was to have a framework for how, in the future, Thurrock would tackle parking around schools, to include education and active travel.

Members agreed to visit 4 schools, to include two of the best schools and two of the worst schools for parking complaints and to look at a potential school street.

Action Point the RSL to provide a list of best and worst schools and a potential school street.

Action Point members agreed they would visit the schools in their own time and make their own individual arrangements and trips and would then report back to the scrutiny officer.

Item 5: General Q&A with the RSL.

Members asked if the British Transport Police were involved in SERP. The RSL advised no they were not, some of the members include National Highways, Essex Police, Fire Service, Ambulance Service. An explanation was given as to the purpose of SERP, with the primary aim being to ensure safer roads across the Borough and wider Essex. It was advised the partnership work to deliver messaging and education across the Borough to help promote safe use of the public highway, including walking and cycling.

Members enquired if there were problems with Kennington School as many complaints had come into members from residents. The RSL were not aware of any.

Members advised they were aware that the Mayflower Road Schools were going to go out to consultation with the wider Chafford Community on this subject.

Action Point it was noted there was a bollard missing from outside Warren School which members agreed was dangerous – RSL agreed to investigate this.

Members questioned the small person bollards that some schools have. RSL advised they were around £120 per bollard and permission was obtained from the police every year to place these for a limited time during the school day on the zig zags outside the schools. It was advised around 15 schools in the borough use them and it was felt they were very effective.

Members advised that school parking does not only affect the immediate school area but the wider borough, for example Mill Lane is congested because of the Mayflower Road Schools. Officers advised Mill Lane was being looked at as an example of a very congested road and caused problems for residents. Solutions were being considered to include a formal order to restrict access during peak periods of the school day – i.e. implementing a school street. It was explained this in effect blocked most traffic from using the roads with exception of residents. However, officers advised, by closing the road, it would push the traffic to busier road, i.e. London Road. Therefore, it was advised before implementing school streets, all possibilities would need to be looked at as consideration must be given to the wider implications – for example, if a road was closed, this would force vehicles onto other more congested roads, which could then lead to parents deeming it unsafe to walk on a more congested road, which in turn would result in more parents driving, which would create more vehicles on the road.

It was advised by Officers that putting more parking in, is not always the best solution as if there is more parking, this invites more parents to drive.

It was felt the most effective way is through education and changing the culture.

Members noted that drop off points work well for secondary schools, but not primary schools, as primary aged children need to be walked into the school rather than just dropped off and it was also noted drop off points encourage parents to drive.

Members questioned if large car parks in the borough could be used for parking and then walking to schools, i.e.. supermarkets. Officers advised that this had been used in the past under the park and stride scheme and had been successful. However, as the road safety team reduced there were no longer officers available to facilitate the scheme and some car parks had been sold or had stopped the Council using them for this purpose and over time the service had reduced. It was also advised walking buses were also very successful in the past, however, this had also reduced due to a reduction of resources. These initiatives could be revisited as they were successful.

Members questioned the data of fatalities and accidents outside school. It was confirmed by officers we have a very good record with virtually no accidents recorded.

Officers shared an interactive dashboard on the SERP website showing details of road casualties in the borough - [Data - saferessexroads.org](https://www.saferessexroads.org)

Members questioned if running competitions could be introduced to encourage children to engage. The RSL explained there was a scheme where schools have junior safety officers. This encourages the children to get involved to gather views from their peers and encourages full involvement from all to discuss amongst other things, parking and general safety.

Item 6: Update on the progress of the Task and Finish Group from the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

The Scrutiny Officer provided an update. She advised data had been circulated with members showing the number of complaints, accidents and enforcement notices issued.

She further advised that a questionnaire was sent out last week. These are on the general newsletter, head teacher's newsletter and staff newsletter. It was confirmed the communication team would publicise the questionnaire through social media. Hard copies were now in the libraries with a poster designed to accompany this. It was noted, the campaign ended on 20 October 2024 and to date around 150 responses had been received.

After 20 October analysis would be carried out on the data and information would be collated which would form part of the feedback.

In addition, a meeting was being arranged to discuss and gather the thoughts of the Youth Cabinet.

Members agreed that their site visits would take place by the 20 October 2024 and feedback would be provided to the scrutiny officer.

It was noted that the work of the School Parking Task and Finish Group overlaps with the Childhood Obesity Task and Finish Group and the public health team are keen that information is shared between the two groups. It was confirmed there are early discussions to share information and to look at a possible joint session. Action Point to confirm the position and set up a joint session.

Item 6: Any Other Business.

There was no other business.

The meeting finished at 6.31pm.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Joint Childhood Obesity Task and Finish Group and Parking at Schools Task and Finish Group held on 10 October at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Fraser Massey (Co-Chair), Elizabeth Rigby (Co-Chair), Tony Fish, Aaron Green (Vice-Chair), Sue Shinnick, Cathy Sisterson
Georgina Bonsu, Thurrock Coalition

Apologies: Councillor Paul Arnold

In attendance: Helen Horrocks – Head of Public Health
Sareena Gill -Senior Public Health Programme Manager
Navtej Tung - Strategic Transport Manager
Claire Dixon- Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Carly Parker- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Emma Trencher – Senior Democratic Services Officer

1. Welcome

Councillors Massey and Rigby as Co-Chairs welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

2. Overview of each Task and Finish Groups aims and objectives

Councillor Massey gave an overview of the work to date of the Parking at Schools Task and Finish Group. He advised that members had carried out individual visits to schools, looking at not only bad parking but also looked at schools with good parking history and statistics. He advised that a well-publicised survey had been sent out and the group were awaiting feedback. The members were advised that a meeting had taken place with the Thurrock Road Safety Team who provided an overview of School Travel Plans and parking at schools in the borough. It was advised that a meeting was being arranged with the Youth Cabinet to seek their views. It was acknowledged that within the 10 week timeframe the Group were not going to be able to solve all the parking problems at schools and the hope was to draft a policy that would allow improvement to school parking and reduce the dangerous parking.

Councillor Rigby gave an overview of the work to date of the Childhood Obesity Task and Finish Group. It was advised the Group were looking at a timeline from pre-conception – onwards to tackle the underlying causes and what interventions could be recommended to try to reduce the incidents of Childhood Obesity. It was advised meetings had taken place with the Public Health Team, maternity services and health visitors. Further meetings have been arranged with Primary Care, schools, youth groups and at a Family Hub. Realistic recommendations would then be made but it was acknowledged not everything would be feasible.

It was further advised, one of the main objectives was to achieve linking up with all the different agencies and Council departments as it was acknowledged there were many different initiatives, but it needed to be joined up.

The link between the two Task and Finish Groups was acknowledged, if children walked to school this would alleviate parking concerns and would also have health benefits for children by increasing physical activity.

It was questioned what good looked like in terms of school parking. Councillor Massey advised smaller schools produce less cars and this made a big difference. He had visited Horndon-on-the-Hill Primary and felt that given the village setting lots of people did walk to school. Councillor Massey's view was larger schools on main roads, who generally had one way in and one way out, had the biggest parking problems.

3. Synergies between the School Parking and Childhood Obesity Task & Finish Groups

Councillor Massey advised in his ward, East Tilbury Primary School had the use of a car park which was a short walk from the school, and this had improved parking outside the school, he acknowledged however, this took investment to implement. Councillor Fish said this idea would link the two Task and Finish Groups as children would have to walk from the car park to school and would therefore be getting some physical exercise.

It was advised the Parking at Schools Task and Finish Group had been looking at contacting local supermarkets, gyms, private car parks etc to ascertain if they could be used for school parking and this would give parents somewhere to park and would encourage children to walk together.

It was advised Brentwood and Braintree had set up walking to school policies however, it was acknowledged a lot of work had to be done to improve routes and pavements and this would have cost implications.

The Road Safety Manager advised to enable and reduce the need for parking outside of schools, it is more than just what we do immediately outside the school, it is the need to provide enhanced provisions on the way into school. It was advised, there are lots of barriers as to why parents do not walk and part of that is improving infrastructure around schools. He further advised there are opportunities to seek funding for those enhancements. It was felt if enhancements were made to the infrastructure this would not only benefit schools but the wider community and this would help change the culture of parents driving to school.

It was acknowledged to benefit both Groups, it was not to provide drop off zones or onsite car parks at the schools for parents to use as this would not encourage walking to school and walking to school should be the focus. It was thought residents are now open to the possibility of School Streets and the time had come to think in those terms.

4. Opportunities for collaboration

The Head of Public Health gave a presentation highlighting the health challenges, health and equality, lifestyle and increasing trends in obesity. It was acknowledged this was highly complex with several factors attributing to the increased trend, including:

- Where we live.
- Lifestyle.
- Employment and income.
- Built and natural environments.

Members noted the opportunities to collaborate included:

- Increasing daily physical activity.
- Reducing traffic and congestion.
- Improve air quality.

Examples of how to achieve this included:

- School streets.
- Road safety training.
- Active travel infrastructure.
- Park and stride.
- Modeshift Stars.
- Walking Buses.
- Bike-ability.

It was acknowledged that each initiative on its own would not have a significant impact, however, if a number of the initiatives were embedded it could have a significant impact in changing current trends.

Action Point – Scrutiny Officer/Democratic Services to update Head of Public Health on results of Parking at Schools survey.

The Chair of Parking at Schools Task and Finish Group clarified that the policy they were working on would not be a “one size fits all”. They were looking at a toolbox of initiatives that could be presented to schools to improve the parking as due to infrastructure and engagement different approaches would work at different schools.

It was acknowledged that the survey should go to children as well as parents and residents as quite often they have some good ideas.

It was acknowledged, even when there are initiatives in place, for example using public car parks and walking a short distance to school, parents still do not engage.

The chair of the Parking at Schools Task and Finish Group advised that it had been agreed enforcement was not the sole solution and the policy would not be designed to penalise parents, but to come up with some solutions to benefit all.

It was questioned how could walking to school be made more attractive to children and parents.

It was advised trials were being rolled out in South Ockendon to “gamify” walking to school with challenges for children to engage in. It was further advised Sport England were being approached for securing funding to fully implement throughout the Borough.

Action Point Public Health to share information on the Scheme once approvals and funding has been granted. However, it was agreed some generic information could be shared in the interim regarding Beat the Streets.

5. AOB

It was agreed the two Groups would meet again after the Parking at Schools Policy had been drafted to discuss and refine it before it goes to Cabinet.

It was agreed, the results of the parking at schools consultation/survey would be shared with both Task and Finish Groups and relevant officers.

The meeting closed at 18.52

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parking Task and Finish Group and Youth Cabinet held on 22 October 2024 at 11.00pm

Attendees: Councillor Massey (Chair), Councillor Green (Vice-Chair), Councillor Sisterson, Navtej Tung (Strategic Transport Manager), Julie Cooper (Thurrock Road Safety Lead), Angela Surrey (Participation and Engagement Officer), Youth Cabinet Members x 2, Lucy Smith (Scrutiny Officer), Emma Trencher (Senior Democratic Services Officer),

Apologies: Councillor Arnold, Councillor Shinnick and Julie Nelder

Item 1 – introductions from Councillors, Officers, and Youth Cabinet Members

Introductions were made.

Item 2 – discussion on issues surrounding parking at schools from Youth Cabinet's perspective.

A brief outline was given by members of the Parking Task and Finish Group and Officers to the Youth Cabinet Members explaining the purpose of the Task and Finish Group, the realistic outcomes of what it is hoped can be achieved and what has been carried out so far.

Updates and outlines were given regarding:

- Active travel and School Travel Plans.
- How enforcement could be used, but not to be relied on as the solution.
- The possibility of school streets.
- How obesity was linked with school travel and the parking problems.
- The survey/consultations carried out so far by the Task and Finish Group.

The Youth Cabinet Members were asked to give their views and share their experiences of school travel and parking.

The Youth Cabinet Members agreed that parking at their respective schools (primary and secondary) had been a big problem with issues including:

- Poor road infrastructure around the schools.
- Do not park signs and yellow lines were ignored.
- Blocked roads caused by school traffic.
- Parked cars on both sides of the street stopped the passage of two-way traffic.
- One-way streets were felt better as this allowed the traffic to flow.
- Dangerous driving by parents, including mounting curbs and pulling into laybys that children were standing in.
- Traffic calming platform outside the school was used as a crossing point for children, but this was not a legal road crossing point and was therefore very dangerous as children walked across it, but cars did not stop.
- Staff parked outside the schools as well, causing more problems.

Item 3 – discussion on Active Travel and how this is promoted in schools.

Officers explained what School Travel Plans were and how these were used to promote safe and sustainable travel to schools. The Transport Safety Officer explained how she engages with schools regarding their school travel plans and explained the nationwide initiative (Modeshift), how this promotes safe and sustainable travel and how the accreditation scheme and rewards work. The Members and Youth Cabinet were given an example of how temporary cones (shaped as young people) were put outside Warren Primary School by teachers at the start and end of the day to stop parents parking outside the school and how these were purchased with Modeshift funding.

The Youth Cabinet Member asked if you could train teachers in road safety and give them permission to move people on who were dangerously parked. Officers explained that only the police, road crossing patrol officers or enforcement officers can legally move cars on.

School Streets were explained, advising how at certain times of the day a designated school street would be closed to everyone, except residents and emergency vehicles, to allow for children so safely walk to school using the closed off street. Advantages were discussed:

- Safer travel for children
- Health benefits of children walking, even for a short distance, every day
- Reduces congestion directly outside a school.

The disadvantages were also discussed:

- Closing a street just pushes the problem onto other streets
- Where does the traffic go if a street is closed and possible congestion into the wider community.

Designated drop off points were discussed. It was advised that these are a good solution for secondary schools but do not work as well in primary schools, as younger children need to be walked into school by an adult. Further, it was discussed that although drop off points reduce parking issues they do not reduce traffic in and around schools and do not promote children walking to school, which is the ideal as air quality, pollution and health are also a factor that needs to be considered.

Item 4 – discussion on potential solutions to problem parking outside school.

The Youth Cabinet were asked if they could give any ideas/proposals of how to reduce parking problems. Some ideas were:

- To teach children within the school setting to discuss the ongoing problems with their parents.

- To incentivize walking to school. Examples incentives given were amazon vouchers, food vouchers, gym incentive – anything that would promote good physical and mental health. It was acknowledged funding of any incentives could be an issue/barrier.
- More education to be given to children and parents on the dangers of school parking and the health benefits of walking/cycling to school.
- For schools to communicate with parents through Apps.
- Subsidised school transport schemes with bus companies.
- More cost effective and affordable public transport.
- Promoting and including the Modeshift Travel Plans more with pupils and parents.
- Speak to Community Forums to help promote active travel and to gather the wider community's views on how to enable more children to walk and possible funding options.
- Provide and promote safe travel zones, including safe car parks for parents to use that pupils can walk to school from.
- Appealing alternatives to driving to school need to be given
- A cultural change to the way children and their parents view getting to school.
- Education – schools to educate pupils / pupils to educate their parents
- Stricter enforcement and punishment

The Youth Cabinet were asked at what age were they allowed to walk to school on their own. Both agreed it was around 10 years old (Year 6). They were asked if they felt more could have been done to make them feel safe when walking to school and both agreed, safer crossing points would have made a big difference, especially when crossing main roads. Also, more schemes run in schools to promote road safety.

Item 5 – any other business.

Members and Officers thanked the Youth Cabinet for their time and insightful views and knowledge and agreed to keep everyone updated following the results of the survey/consultation.

Meeting finished at 12.00pm