

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date:	6 February 2024
Title:	School Streets
Report From:	Director of Hampshire 2050

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current School Streets trials and to set out a proposed way forward for the existing trial sites and other interested schools.

Recommendations

2. That Cabinet confirms the Council's approach to School Streets as supportive in principle of individual future schemes, on the condition that the costs of commissioning and decommissioning are fully covered by external parties, that they are managed by the school requesting them and that the proposed locations meet appropriate qualification criteria.
3. That Cabinet approves the continuation of existing School Streets for as long as the schools wish to and are able to continue running them.

Executive Summary

4. This paper is to update Cabinet on the current School Street schemes in Hampshire and sets out a suggested future direction.

Contextual information

5. A School Street is a timed temporary road closure outside a school at the start and end of the school day. During the closure period, only permitted vehicles are able to enter the closure, and are accompanied by a volunteer marshal. A school street is expected to improve the road environment for pedestrians and cyclist and make the area generally more comfortable for all users. There will also be improvements in terms of perceptions of road safety, although School Streets are unlikely to impact directly in terms of reducing collisions leading to death or serious injury (KSI), which is the primary focus of the road safety work of the Council. As such, the provision of School Streets is a discretionary service.

6. Previous reports on School Streets were considered at Cabinet meetings in February 2021 and March 2022, following on from a petition to Council in September 2020. The first Cabinet report sought agreement to running trials of School Streets at three locations in Hampshire and the second Cabinet report provided an update on the trials and sought authority to keep running the trials.
7. Trials were initially set up at three locations; Harrison Primary school in Fareham and Cadland Primary School in Holbury and Alverstoke Infants School in Gosport. The later of these ceased operating in November 2021, mainly because of the difficulty in finding and retaining volunteers to run the scheme, but the other two continue running.
8. The schools report that, as well as significantly improving the road environment, the schemes also improve the start of the school day, with a calmer atmosphere and less potential for conflict immediately outside the school.
9. All three Hampshire School Street schemes have operated with the support of volunteers, who manage removable barriers and act as marshals for traffic needing to enter the street, as required.
10. The trials have proven useful in assessing the effectiveness of such schemes and in assessing how School Streets could potentially work in the longer term.

Experiences from the trial schemes

11. The two remaining trial schemes are considered by the schools to be successful and are popular with parents and pupils. There have been no complaints from the respective local communities. From the County Council's perspective the trials have shown clear benefits in terms of managing the use of the network, reducing conflict and supporting walking and cycling. They have also, however, shown the heavy level of reliance on volunteers, which could prejudice long term viability. Work is ongoing with Harrison School to identify potential measures to reduce reliance on volunteers.
12. Initial monitoring outcomes were reported in March 2022. More recently, a survey of parents only undertaken at Harrison School in July 2023 showed that there was 94% support for the scheme and that 91% of respondents wanted the scheme made permanent. Again, 91% considered road conditions to be safer, 82% felt there was more space and 72% said there was less congestion. Of the respondents, 65% said there were no disadvantages. 64% of respondents to the survey 'strongly agreed' and 18% 'agreed' that it was now easier to walk, cycle or scoot to school.
13. Neither scheme has created any reported objection from local residents or as a result of displaced parking.
14. The County Council involvement is in securing the legal permission to implement road closures are governed by Traffic Orders and to ensure the safe operation of closures being managed by school volunteers. Initially temporary Orders were in place and these were superseded by permanent Orders when the continuation of the trials was consented. The operation of the schemes are governed by operating agreements that reflect the requirements of a risk assessment. These specify details such as closure arrangements (which is currently managed by deployment of barriers), Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and training for volunteers.

15. The volunteers have two main functions, which are to have someone actively manage the barriers to prevent unauthorised access and to act as marshals for vehicles that are allowed to enter the School Street during operation periods (when the vehicle is escorted at walking pace).
16. Harrison School has reported that it has been difficult to recruit and retain volunteers, given the level of commitment required to provide eight volunteers every day during term time. Occasionally school staff have had to be deployed, when sufficient volunteers were not available. Alverstoke's trial scheme ended because the school was unable to retain sufficient volunteers. The Cadland scheme is effectively run by the school site manager, but the requirement is significantly reduced because it just involves one point of closure and the scheme requires minimal vehicular access because of the nature of the road.
17. Harrison School in particular has sought an alternative approach to reduce the burden on volunteers and a potential low-cost scheme is currently under development to assist with that.
18. As reported in March 2022, the estimated cost of setting up School Street schemes was £12,000-£15,000 per school, although some inflation since that date could be expected. Lower but similar costs are incurred for decommissioning. The introduction of physical measures, like those being explored at Harrison cost in the region of £5,000 - £10,000 plus fees and may be required for a proportion of schools.

Future of Existing Trial Schemes

19. The existing trial schemes at Cadland and Harrison schools are popular and it is suggested that they be allowed to continue to run for as long as they remain operationally viable. If that ceases to be the case then the existing Orders and associated signing would need to be removed at cost to the County Council of making a new Traffic Order. There are no costs to the County Council if the schemes continue albeit there would be a need to periodically check compliance with operating agreements.
20. They would no longer be considered to be 'trials' although officers will still remain in contact with the schools.
21. As noted above, the retention of volunteers at current numbers for Harrison school is a particular problem but may be lessened by the plan to invest in supporting infrastructure.

Potential for a future wider programme

22. The trial schemes have shown that School Street have good impacts at the local level. The dependence on volunteers is an issue and remains an ever present threat to their continuation which has seen one of the three end, one of them need physical measures to be developed and one has continued.
23. The trials were undertaken to consider if a bigger programme should spin off from the trial. Whilst they are undoubtedly effective and popular when working the conclusions drawn from the trial are that they require a great deal of coordination by schools, depend on volunteers and that they can end at short notice due to lack of them.
24. In reviewing the resource implications of the County Council to support the trial it is not proposed to roll-out a programme of schemes as this would take a great

deal of officer time, incur set up and decommissioning costs and would be subject to the ability of each scheme to attract volunteers which is likely to be ephemeral. However, in light of the good impacts the council policy on school streets should be clarified as supportive on the condition that the costs of commissioning and decommissioning are fully covered and that they are managed by the school requesting them.

25. While not able to commit to a programme of schemes, it is recommended that the Council indicates its willingness to support the introduction of School Streets, in suitable locations, where fully funded by schools and where officer resource is available to support the establishment. Criteria for the assessment of site suitability are set out in Appendix 1. These are based on the original trial criteria previously approved by Cabinet.

Finance

26. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. The existing trial schemes are funded and the cost and funding source for any potential low-cost infrastructure proposals will be considered as part of the standard development and approval process.

Consultation and Equalities

27. As noted in the report there has been consultation with parents of children at Harrison School, who are strongly supportive of the scheme.
28. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. This identified an overall neutral impact, though in some cases there may be positive impacts for younger people and people with disabilities.

Climate Change Impact Assessments

29. There are no direct impacts on climate change because of the small scale of the scheme.

Climate Change Adaptation

30. Not applicable (see above)

Carbon Mitigation

31. Not applicable (see above)

Conclusions

32. The trial School Street schemes at Harrison and Cadland schools have been generally successful, although recruitment and retention of volunteers is an issue for the longer term. A low-cost infrastructure scheme is under

development in support of the Harrison School Street and this may provide a model for any potential future schemes.

33. There is limited scope to introduce a programme of School Streets, but the report included provision for self-funded schemes to come forward in suitable locations and where there is sufficient officer resource available to support their implementation.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	no
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. This identified an overall neutral impact, though in some cases there may be positive impacts for younger people and people with disabilities.

Appendix 1

Draft Criteria for Assessing Potential School Street Sites.

Hampshire County Council will only consider the introduction of a School Street scheme where the following conditions apply –

1. Stated Interest from the School (head and governors) enough staff to manage the trial and confirmation of the availability of funding.
2. School already engaged in or that commits too travel planning measures including STARS accreditation to at least Bronze level.
3. County Councillor local member support.
4. An access on a suitable road (public highway, speed limit 30mph or below, access on a minor road).
5. Limited negative “knock-on” impact (e.g. offset parking) on schools very nearby.
6. Infant, primary, junior or secondary school (i.e. not colleges).
7. Hampshire maintained school (this is for insurance purposes – an application from a private school may be considered where it can be demonstrated that appropriate and fully funded insurance can be put in place).
8. Unfortunately we cannot normally accept applications from a Special School due to greater associated travel distances and complex needs of some pupils in relation to travel.
9. The proposed school street would not be the only means of access for large number of residential properties.
10. The school is able to fully fund the scheme – this will include the cost of developing and introducing the scheme including scheme design, recruitment and training of volunteers, maintenance and Traffic Orders. Schools would also be required to commit to meeting decommissioning costs at the end of the trial/scheme.

In assessing the feasibility of a proposed School Street scheme, the County Council will take account of the following factors –

1. Percentage of pupils that live within the school catchment area.
2. District Council support.
3. Site of previous trial scheme.
4. School Crossing Patrol site(s).
5. Bus route diversion required.
6. Any alterations to Home to School transport required.

7. Good public transport available, where appropriate to the site/catchment area.
8. Safe walking and cycling options available.
9. Sufficient cycle and scooter storage.
10. Suitable traffic alternative/ diversion routes.
11. Car parking alternatives available, if it is projected that they would be needed.
12. Impacts on businesses, public facilities and places of worship.
13. Are affected businesses/public facilities supportive?
14. Access for staff to enter/leave site.
15. Coach/bus access for school trips.
16. Emergency Services route affected (this would be established through formal traffic order process).
17. Very high car use for travel to school
18. Within or adjoining a residents' parking permit area
19. Casualty record in the local area
20. Reported near miss information from school travel plans.
21. Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Assessment outcomes and mitigation requirements.
22. Proximity to an Air Quality Management Area.