

Information/Discussion Paper

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee –

19 January 2011

Review the signing and rules for cycling within pedestrianised areas of Cheltenham Town Centre

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

Background

A number of years ago the Borough Council asked the County Council to look at the issue of permitting cyclists to ride in the pedestrianised areas of the town centre.

The Borough Council's view over a number of years has been that it is illogical and impractical to permit cycling in the Strand and Cambray Place but to ban it in the other pedestrianised areas. This view is shared by the police, who find the present arrangements very difficult to enforce.

For some years, the proposal to allow cycling in pedestrianised areas where it is currently banned remained on the back burner. Then, in September 2009, it was discussed at a meeting of the Multi Agency Focus Group for Cycling. This is a body on which the Borough Council is represented, along with the County Council, Gloucestershire Highways and the police.

The group decided to consider conducting an experimentation initiative through engagement, education and supported by effective enforcement.

The aim being to reduce anti-social cycling where it is evident whilst relaxing cycling restrictions around the Promenade and other identified areas in the Town Centre and Lower High Street.

2. Summary of the Issue

Gloucestershire Highways was tasked with launching a safety audit and consultation exercise in preparation for a trial scheme to be introduced.

In December 2010 Gloucestershire Highways wrote to a number of organisations in the town to inform them that they were ready to proceed with an engagement and consultation process in preparation of preparing a trial scheme.

The Multi Agency Focus Group for Cycling holds a view that a majority of cyclists behave responsibly. However, it is recognised that the safety and wellbeing of pedestrians, especially older people and disabled people, need to be taken fully into account.

3. Summary of evidence/information

Gloucestershire Highways have now started work on their safety audit to review the signing and rules for cycling within the pedestrianised areas of Cheltenham Town Centre. They will still need to carry out a consultation exercise before preparing an experiential order to allow cycling in the pedestrianised areas for a trial period.

The engagement and consultation process being undertaken by Gloucestershire Highways is with the view to allow cyclists to use the Promenade and High Street (in the permitted direction) on an experimental basis.

Gloucestershire Highways lead Officer, Mr Peter Godwin has begun to engage with a number of interested parties, which includes Cheltenham Borough Council, Police, Cycle Groups and the Civic Society all of whom have expressed an interest to participate in the engagement and consultation process.

In addition Mr Godwin has requested that the Borough Council assist in identifying other interested parties who would wish to participate in the process.

The purpose of the engagement and consultation process is to review what is currently known, what is proposed, what can be learnt from a proposed experiment and how judgement will be made on the experiment.

Gloucestershire Highways hope to arrange a meeting of the interested parties in February 2011 with a view to undertake an experiment some time in March 2011.

4. Next Steps - possible next steps for the committee to consider e.g. potential witnesses, further report, site visit etc.

The concern is that it has been several years since the issue was last discussed by the Borough Council.

It is important that the Borough Council should be involved in the consultation process, and therefore Councillor John Rawson has asked for the issue to be considered by the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting.

Councillor Rawson believes the Borough Council will want to clarify a number of issues in respect of the new traffic order.

1. First of all, that the Borough Council be satisfied that a sensible assessment of risk is made before the experimentation traffic order is introduced to enable a trial scheme. This should follow a careful study of pedestrian and cyclist behaviour in the Strand, where cycling is already permitted, and other pedestrianised areas.
2. Secondly, that the Borough Council will need to be satisfied that the police can and will take action against anti-social and dangerous cyclists in the pedestrian area.

Because cycling is permitted, that should clearly not mean that anti social behaviour by cyclists is acceptable.

3. Thirdly, that the Borough Council would want to be involved in monitoring any experimental scheme, along with the police and Gloucestershire Highways, to ensure that it is working as intended.

Background Papers

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Accountability	Cabinet Member Built Environment, Councillor John Rawson
Scrutiny Function	Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee