

**Agenda Item No:**

**Report To: CABINET**

**Date of Meeting: 16 December 2021**

**Report Title: Vehicle Speeds and Vision Zero**

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Health of Community Safety and Wellbeing

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Peter Feacey  
**Portfolio Holder for:** Community Safety and Wellbeing



<b>Summary:</b>	A report presenting information on road safety and proposing a council policy on vehicle speed limits. It gives a commitment to support the introduction of lower speed limits where appropriate and takes the opportunity to give support to KCC's Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy. Reference is also made to the recent changes to the Highway Code and specifically the new Hierarchy of Road Users.
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**Key Decision:** NO

**Significantly Affected Wards:** Relevant to the whole Borough.

**Recommendations:** **The Cabinet recommends to Council adoption of a Vehicle Speed Policy to:**

- I. Support proposals from town, community and parish councils to introduce lower speed limits in urban areas and villages where there is an identified demand for safer travel for vulnerable road users.
- II. Support the introduction of 30mph speed limits through all our villages that meet the relevant Department for Transport and Kent Highways criteria.
- III. Support the introduction of lower 20mph speed limits on the approach to certain rural villages, wherever appropriate and where it meets the necessary road safety criteria.
- IV. Support the introduction of 20mph speed limits on the approaches to, or in the vicinity of schools wherever appropriate and where the circumstances meet the necessary road safety criteria.
- V. Support the introduction of 20mph speed limits in areas where people and motorists meet or are in close

proximity e.g. the Ashford "Shared Space" arrangement.

VI. Support the KCC Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy.

VII. Work with partner organisations to publicise the changes in the Highway Code and promote the new enhanced duty of care that road users owe to more vulnerable road users.

**Policy Overview:**

Road safety is relevant to the council's current corporate plan but features more unambiguously in the draft Corporate Plan 2022-24 i.e. the Caring Ashford priority theme. Objective CA1 specifically states that homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meet the needs of local people of all ages and incomes to live sustainably and safety.

The draft corporate plan makes a commitment to work with KCC to use the safe systems approach (including safer speeds and behaviours) to improve the safety of all road users particularly near schools and in rural areas. This Vehicle Speed Policy builds on that commitment.

The proposed policy is also relevant to the Green Pioneer priority theme. See further comment on sustainability below.

The report recommends a new policy hence the final decision being made by full Council.

**Financial Implications:**

No additional budgetary provision is requested. Any projects requiring council funds would be subject to the normal project and funding approval processes and considered against competing council priorities. The cost of introducing schemes would be a matter for KCC and it is recognised that there are no guarantees that KCC would be able to fund more schemes, but the Ashford Policy as presented fits KCC's Road Safety policy.

**Legal Implications:**

The 1988 Road Traffic Act (Section 39) places a statutory duty on relevant local authorities to undertake studies into road accidents, and to take steps both to reduce and prevent accidents. KCC as the highway authority is the relevant traffic authority for the setting and implementation of local speed limits and the introduction of speed limits which are lower than the national speed limit.

The borough council, in agreeing the proposed Vehicle Speed Policy, is seeking to support KCC and other relevant stakeholders in achieving their road safety statutory responsibilities and aspirations.

**Equalities Impact Assessment:**

Introducing a lower speed limit is generally considered to be non-specific to protected groups as it is based upon improving

safety for all road users by providing a safer environment. However, all schemes would be subject to equality impact assessment undertaken by KCC.

**Data Protection  
Impact  
Assessment:**

Not applicable to the setting of the proposed policy.

**Risk Assessment  
(Risk Appetite  
Statement):**

It is considered unlikely that there would be any significant risks associated with supporting lower vehicle speeds or the KCC Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy. Studies have shown that schemes to reduce vehicle speeds are generally popular with the public and it is noted that many schemes are being implemented across the county. That said, there can be local opposition when schemes are introduced and this has been witnessed recently within Kent i.e. the Tonbridge Town-wide 20mph Speed Limit Trial which did not gain the anticipated level of public support. This highlights the importance of early and extensive public engagement for any potential scheme. **Assisting KCC with any necessary public engagement is an example of how the Borough Council can provide support.**

**Sustainability  
Implications:**

There is no direct relationship between fuel economy and posted speed limits. The impact of schemes depends entirely on changing drivers' behaviour and speed. Research suggests that lower speeds can actually increase emissions and at best there is unlikely to be any effect. What is clear is that free-flowing traffic makes for the best conditions for lower emissions and maximum fuel efficiency. Schemes that encourage modal shift to walking and cycling and encourage slower, smoother, more considerate driving should result in a reduction in carbon emissions. Schemes that introduce physical traffic calming measures are likely to reduce fuel efficiency and increase emissions as they can encourage stop / start driving.

**Other Material  
Implications:**

There are no significant staffing implications. A lead will be provided by the Community Safety & Wellbeing Service, however other services will be involved particularly that the Communications & Marketing Team in terms of promoting the Vehicle Speed Policy and consequential activity.

**Exempt from  
Publication:**

NO

**Background  
Papers:**

None

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## **Report Title: Ashford Vehicle Speeds and Vision Zero**

### **Introduction and Background**

- 1. Ashford is a caring council, where the needs of residents come first, and this is a key pillar of our corporate plan. Road safety, and ensuring effective speed management, is an important part of creating a safe environment for us all. The relationship between speed and likelihood of collision as well as severity of injury is complex, but there is clearly a strong correlation.**
2. The setting of speed limits is primarily a government responsibility and in the case of residential streets in both urban and rural areas the national 30mph speed limit is normally applied. This national limit is not, however, appropriate for all roads. Traffic authorities, in our case Kent County Council (KCC), are able to set local speed limits in situations where local needs and conditions suggest a speed limit which is different from the national speed limit. It is believed, however, that the Borough Council has a part to play in supporting the application of lower speed limits and generally promoting road safety. The Policy proposed in this report will achieve this.
3. Lower speed limits are supported by many bodies including the World Health Organisation. The UN General Assembly recently mandated 20mph as the right speed limit where people and motor vehicles mix. By travelling at 20mph, instead of 30mph, pedestrians and cyclists are five times more likely to survive being hit by a motorised vehicle. Further reductions of just 1mph can each reduce casualties further by an average of 6%.
4. Studies have shown that 20mph schemes help to encourage active travel by increasing walking and cycling levels. What is more, 20mph schemes are popular with the general public and we see schemes being implemented in many towns and villages across the country.
5. It is our belief that the national limit of 30mph in our residential streets in urban and rural areas is not always appropriate, and that in many situations a lower limit of 20mph would be beneficial. We note in particular the frequently raised concerns over speed limits within the vicinity of schools and when approaching our rural villages, where limits may be even higher.
6. We take this opportunity to note and applaud KCC who have been successful in introducing many 20mph speed limits across Kent and note that there are more than 1500 roads in Kent with a 20mph zone or limit. Recently Kennington Community Council has been working with KCC to develop a 20mph scheme across the whole Bockhanger and Bybrook area, bounded by the A28, Canterbury Road, Faversham Road and Lower Vicarage Road.
- 7. It is hoped that further schemes will be introduced across the Borough and that the Ashford Vehicle Speed Policy will encourage this to happen.**

## Ashford's road safety data

8. The table below shows the latest data for killed or serious injured (KSI) collisions in Kent districts. A rank of 1 indicates the area with most KSI, the highest KSI rate, or the least reductions/most increase in KSI rate.

Police Area	Local Authority District/Unitary	Population	Rolling 12 months				Last 3 months				Change in KSI rate	
			KSI		KSI per 10k people		KSI		KSI per 10k people		%	Rank
			Number	Rank	Value	Rank	Number	Rank	Value	Rank		
East	Ashford	127,527	52	8.5	0.3	7	15	4.5	0.4	3	15%	2
	Canterbury	164,100	76	2	0.4	6	16	3	0.3	8	-16%	9
	Dover	115,803	55	7	0.4	2	11	11	0.3	9	-20%	11
	Shepway	111,427	52	8.5	0.4	5	12	9.5	0.4	6	-8%	6
	Thanet	141,337	67	4	0.4	3	14	6.5	0.3	7	-16%	10
<b>East TOTAL</b>		<b>660,194</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-10%</b>	<b>2</b>
North	Dartford	107,516	42	12.5	0.3	9	5	13	0.2	13	-52%	13
	Gravesham	106,121	42	12.5	0.3	8	12	9.5	0.4	5	14%	3
	Medway	277,616	78	1	0.2	13	14	6.5	0.2	12	-28%	12
	Swale	146,694	69	3	0.4	4	17	1.5	0.4	4	-1%	4
	<b>North TOTAL</b>	<b>637,947</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>-17%</b>	<b>3</b>
West	Maldstone	167,730	61	6	0.3	11	13	8	0.3	11	-15%	8
	Sevenoaks	119,429	63	5	0.4	1	15	4.5	0.4	2	-5%	5
	Tonbridge & Malling	128,891	45	11	0.3	12	10	12	0.3	10	-11%	7
	Tunbridge Wells	118,061	46	10	0.3	10	17	1.5	0.5	1	48%	1
	<b>West TOTAL</b>	<b>534,111</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1</b>

9. The above shows that Ashford's rate per 10k people ranks mid-table for KSIs. It also shows that the percentage change in KSI rate has increased over the last 12 months by 15%, an increase that represents the second highest increase in the county.

## KCC's Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy

10. There are on average just over 45 deaths on Kent's roads each year. KCC has set a target of zero (or as close as possible) fatalities and life changing injuries by 2050 with a 50% reduction by 2030 and a target of no more than 39 traffic fatalities by 2026. Vision Zero is not just about focussing on the date we achieve zero, but the recognition that deaths on the road are not an acceptable price to pay for mobility.
11. KCC are following the Safe System Approach which understands that people make mistakes and aims to ensure that these mistakes do not cause death or life-changing injury. The Safe System Approach includes:
- safe roads and streets
  - safe speed
  - safe behaviour
  - safe vehicles
  - post collision response
12. Community engagement is at the heart of this strategy; if Vision Zero is to succeed it will depend on the Kent public sharing KCC's ambition. Community CIRCLE is their approach to help achieve Vision Zero in Kent and it includes:
- community concern
  - injury reduction
  - research and pilot
  - common responsibility

- localised campaigns
  - engagement
13. The strategy was developed through internal and external workshops with county council members, key stakeholders, interest groups, road safety and transportation professionals. The strategy was subjected to a full consultation and further workshops with relevant stakeholders.
  14. Members' attention is drawn to Chapter Four of KCC's strategy on safe speed which addresses the subject of 20mph limits and rural road limits. They highlight the trials which have recently taken place in Faversham town and Tonbridge town and their intention, once the outcome of the trials are known, to consider proposals from other towns, districts and parish councils to introduce lower speed limits. Their strategy highlights that almost 70% of residents in Kent support a 20mph limit where they live. However, the same survey shows that a similar percentage of residents think the limit is ineffective because of non-compliance. Effective compliance with speed limits will require community support as well as enforcement. With regard to rural road limits the 60mph rural road network has 45% of all fatal collisions in Kent. This is greatly disproportionate compared to the volume of traffic. Again research indicates that residents in Kent support slower rural speed limits. However, impacts on business and travel times must be considered. KCC have proposed to research the impacts of lowering rural speed limits on safety, journey times and economic impact. If their research show a net benefit they will present the findings to central government, calling for a national change to the default national speed limit.
  15. In terms of all limits, it's not just the limit but the compliance that counts and community support seems to help this as well. KCC undertook a survey in 2020 which showed in Ashford 62% support and 30% against, for 20mph where people live. It is also relevant to consider where the transition points between 20mph, 30mph and higher speeds fall and in some places e.g. arterial roads, existing speeds would clearly need to be retained.
  16. It is noted that traffic authorities are asked by government to keep their speed limits under review with changing circumstances, and to consider the introduction of more 20mph limits and zones, over time, in urban areas and built-up village streets that are primarily residential, to ensure greater safety for pedestrians and cyclists.
  17. **A key element of the proposed Ashford Vehicle Speed Policy is to support KCC actions towards its Vision Zero.**
  18. KCC's Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy can be found at [Vision Zero – the Road Safety Strategy for Kent](#).

## Highway Code

19. Also relevant to this subject is the new Hierarchy of Road Users which has been introduced to the Highway Code to ensure that those road users who can do the greatest harm have the greatest responsibility to reduce the danger or threat they may pose to other road users. This new hierarchy would be in the order

of which road users are most likely to be harmed in the event of a collision as follows:-

- Pedestrians (including children, older adults and disabled people)
  - Cyclists
  - Horse riders
  - Motorcyclists
  - Cars/taxis
  - Vans/minibuses
  - Large passenger vehicles/heavy goods vehicles
20. The Hierarchy does not remove the requirement for all road users to behave responsibly. The new Highway Code will say that it is important that ALL road users are aware of The Highway Code, are considerate to other road users and understand their responsibility for the safety of others, however in the context of this report the amendments shift the narrative away from focusing on speed to focusing on reducing harm. This is an acceptance by government that the issue of road safety is more complex than speed alone.
21. As part of the Vehicle Speed Policy it is proposed that **the borough council will work with partner organisations to publicise the changes in the Highway Code and promote the new enhanced duty of care that road users have to more vulnerable road users.**

## Proposal

22. The proposal is for the council to adopt a policy which provides support to the community in introducing lower speed limits in urban areas and in villages where there is an identified demand for safer travel for vulnerable road users. The Policy as presented aims to see the introduction of lower speed limits where there is not only an identified demand but importantly where the schemes meet the relevant Department for Transport and KCC Highways criteria. Furthermore the Policy identifies areas where lower speeds limits may be particularly beneficial e.g. near schools.
23. The proposed **Ashford Vehicle Speed Policy is to:**

- I. **Support proposals from town, community and parish councils to introduce lower speed limits in urban areas and villages where there is an identified demand for safer travel for vulnerable road users.**
- II. **Support the introduction of 30mph speed limits through all our villages that meet the relevant Department for Transport and Kent Highways road safety criteria.**
- III. **Support the introduction of 20mph speed limits on the approaches to certain rural villages, where appropriate and meeting road safety criteria.**
- IV. **Support the introduction of 20mph speed limits on the approaches to, or in the vicinity of, schools where appropriate and where the circumstances meet road safety criteria.**



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>V. <b>Support 20mph speed limits in areas where people and motorists meet or are in close proximity e.g. Ashford "Shared Space" arrangement.</b></li><li>VI. <b>Support the KCC Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy.</b></li><li>VII. <b>Work with partner organisations to publicise the changes in the Highway Code and promote the new enhanced duty of care that road users have to more vulnerable road users.</b></li></ul> |
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## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 24. Introducing a lower speed limit is generally considered to be non-specific to protected groups as it is based upon improving safety for all road users by providing a safer environment. Individual schemes would be subject to equality impact assessments undertaken by KCC.

## **Consultation Planned or Undertaken**

- 25. Not applicable at this point in time. However, the draft corporate plan which has been consulted upon includes reference to working with KCC to use the safe systems approach (including safer speeds and behaviours) to improve the safety of all road users particularly near schools and in rural areas. Any site-specific schemes for speed reduction would be consulted upon with relevant communities and **the borough council would support KCC in doing this.**

## **Other Options Considered**

- 26. There is no statutory requirement for the borough council to promote this issue and therefore an option would be to do nothing.

## **Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended**

- 27. Road safety is an important issue for our residents and protecting them is a key objective of the council.

## **Next Steps in Process**

- 28. The council will work with KCC, through the Ashford Community Safety Partnership and other groups such as the Joint Transportation Board, to pursue the Vehicle Speed Policy. Members will also work with their constituents to promote the policy as applied locally and actively engage with KCC in support of schemes that meet relevant criteria.

## **Conclusion**

- 29. The policy presented is in line with the council's corporate plan. It has been prepared in order to support community calls for lower speed limits where there is local demand and where schemes meet relevant criteria. It acknowledges



the constraints involved and highlights the need for collaborative action. The recommendations are contained on the summary page.

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

30. At the heart of this report, and the policy being proposed, is the fact that slower speeds save lives. Speed is a key risk factor in road traffic injuries, influencing not only the likelihood of a road crash but the seriousness of injuries sustained. I believe that the Borough Council has a part to play in supporting those calling for lower speed limits in their neighbourhoods and can assist the County Council to achieve its road safety goals. Ashford Borough Council is a caring council and, by agreeing this policy, we will help to create an environment where people not only feel safer but are safer.

**Peter Feacey, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing**

## **Contact and Email**

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