

## ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Town Infrastructure Committee
Meeting date	18 November 2021
Report author	Nigel Warner
Agenda item	9

### ABINGDON RESPONSE TO THE COUNTY WIDE 20MPH POLICY AND NEW APPROACH

1. **Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To update members on a policy change at Oxfordshire County Council which mean that the Town Council is now in a position to apply for a 20 mph zone in Abingdon, subject to the Town Council considering the extent of such a zone.

2. **Summary**

- 2.1 The Town Council has since September 2019 had a policy that 20mph zones should be introduced in Abingdon. The adoption of a [new policy](#) in October 2021 by Oxfordshire County Council as highway authority provides a mechanism for this, backed by funding. In order to progress this matter the Town Council now needs to consider which parts of Abingdon should be included in a 20 mph zone.

3. **Action required and recommendations**

- 3.1 Members are requested to establish a working group to consider the introduction of 20mph zones in Abingdon and report back to this committee at its meeting on 13 January 2022 with a recommendation regarding the extent of the 20 mph zone.

4. **Link to strategic plan and objectives**

- 4.1 Primary objective addressed:

KO1: To respond effectively and speedily to the climate emergency.

Agenda item 9

4.2 Other objectives addressed:

KO2: To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future.

5. **Background**

5.1 The Town Council has had a desire to introduce 20mph zones in Abingdon since September 2019 when a motion was approved by the Town Council (see appendix 1 below). At that stage the County Council were not actively promoting 20mph zones, passing the financial costs of this highway matter to parish councils. A previous approach to the County Council in June 2020, to establish a 20mph zone in the town centre as part of their temporary Covid-19 related measures was not successful.

2.2 On 19 October 2021 Oxfordshire County Council approved a new countywide 20mph speed restriction approach in areas that have traditionally mainly been 30mph limits. To accommodate this change there is a new 20mph speed policy and a new procedure to aid their implementation. This change of policy, backed by an £8,000,000 budget, means that town and parish councils are now in a position to put forward their proposals to the County Council with confidence that these will be seriously considered and that funding will be available.

6. **Key information and options**

6.1 According to the County Council report of 19 October 2021 the county has several roads that are 20mph prior to the policy change “progress is slow, ad-hoc, and can easily be costly or cost prohibitive for some communities.” The previous approach placed the burden of funding on parish councils and only 10% of the county’s previously 30mph have been converted to 20mph over the years. The report states that subject to funding and local opinion this could with the policy change increase to 85%. The approach of the County Council is to involve local communities, through their parish council, in taking the implementation of this policy forward.

6.2 A [criteria document](#) has been adopted by the County Council to help guide a decision on whether to work with a parish council regarding a 20mph zone. Requests for a zone must be supported by both the County Councillors for the area and the parish council who would also have to commit to undertake informal consultation along with a willingness to consider any valid objections prior to the formal consultation.

6.3 If funding prioritisation were to be required then the County Council has produced a [prioritisation criteria](#).

6.4 It is also noted that the County Council is in the process of developing an interactive colour-coded map to show an indicative interpretation of the criteria for 20mph; this is based on green - yes, amber - possibly and red – no.

Agenda item 9

- 6.5 The Abingdon Traffic Advisory Committee, comprising members of the three local authorities, the police and chamber of commerce, have also supported the principle of 20 mph zones (see appendix 2 for the relevant record from the meeting).
- 6.5 There is now a straightforward online mechanism for the Town Council to apply for 20mph zones. There are a number of options for us ranging from the whole town being 20mph, through to converting all 30mphs to 20mphs to limiting zones to the town centre and residential areas. With the funding and will available from the County Council this is a matter to progress as a priority.
- 6.6 Any application to the County Council must follow their criteria to be successful and this is a matter which requires a detailed approach by members. Therefore whilst it would be open for this committee to make a recommendation to the Town Council this evening, having discussed matters with the chair of this committee it is considered that the most effective way forward would be to establish a working group with the sole purpose of considering where a 20mph zone should be and reporting to the next meeting of this committee. This would give the group a strict but achievable timetable of eight weeks to report back.

7. **Climate change/green implications**

- 7.1 The adoption of 20mph zones in Abingdon would have a significant positive impact on climate change and improve local environmental conditions.

8. **Financial/budget implications**

- 8.1 Funding to support 20mph zones is being considered as part of the County Council's budget setting process. It is anticipated that this will be agreed upon by the County Council in February 2022. Until a decision on funding is made, parish council funding will be required to progress any schemes.
- 8.2 Parish councils are encouraged to establish community speedwatch schemes, supporting voluntary schemes within the community. This year we set aside a sum of £xxxx for such schemes in Abingdon and we may wish to put forward a similar sum for 2022/23 to enable us to establish more schemes.

9. **HR implications**

- 9.1 None.

10. **Supporting papers and appendices**

- 10.1 See embedded links above.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Motion agreed by Abingdon Town Council, 25 September 2021**

“This Council expands its climate emergency strategy for reducing carbon footprint by creating a cross-functional working group (District & Town), with the specific aim of investigating a 20mph speed limit zone for Abingdon. In alignment with the Council's declared climate emergency strategy, the envisaged benefits of a 20mph speed limit directly contribute towards:

- increased road safety
- reduced carbon footprint
- create a healthier environment through improved air quality and reduced noise pollution
- encourage more physical activity such as walking and cycling.

It is recommended that as part of this consultation with local communities and other stakeholders that the results be included as part of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.”

**APPENDIX 2**

Extract from Action List of Traffic Advisory Committee, 3 November 2021

**Actions continued from 26 November 2020**

	T16/20	<u>Items submitted to the Town Clerk by members or residents ahead of the meeting</u>
		<p><b><u>Requests for 20mph speed limits in Abingdon</u></b></p> <p><u>3.3.21:</u> funding identified by the County Council to scope streets to introduce limits across Oxfordshire. The committee should look at Abingdon town centre to decide what it would like and to consult with local groups to see what funding might be available. A budget of £200,000 had been made available to cover initial surveys and consultations. After this, funding may be sought from third parties.</p> <p><u>16.6.21:</u> Lee Turner commented that Oxfordshire County Council is doing some county-wide roll-out on 20mph limits this year. This is very high up the list of priorities for the County Council and communication with towns and parishes is expected soon.</p> <p><u>3.11.21:</u> LT – 20mph across Oxfordshire approved at County Council Cabinet 19.10.21 and will be offered to all towns and parishes – an application form is available on the County Council website for parishes to express an interest. Budget of £8m over three years to commence in April 2022. Funding is for consultations and signage only, with the proviso that it would be prudent to select roads where it would be realistic to expect people to reduce their speeds. If speeds do not fall, further action would need to be funded by towns and parishes.</p> <p>The previous presumption was against 20mph limits and unless traffic on a road was already slow it would not be introduced. The presumption now is that 20mph should become the default in urban areas, with the support of town and parish councils. One option is to introduce this for the whole of Abingdon, which would be cheaper and easier to understand. However, residents will feel that there are some roads which don't feel like 20mph roads and which would require enforcement. There is a list of criteria to consider to justify a 20mph limit, e.g. frontages onto road, shops, history of accidents. If there is strong support for a whole town 20mph zone, there would be strong incentive on the County Council to do this.</p> <p>Chris Hulme commented that the police stance is that 20mph zones should be self-enforcing. If Abingdon went for a town-wide scheme, where there are fixed speed cameras, these will become redundant. This also applies to speed indicator signs, which would need to be physically changed from 30mph to 20mph signs, requiring the purchase of new signs.</p> <p>ATC has an agreed motion on 20mph limits (Town Council 25.9.19). Officers will find the relevant motion and share this with Town Councillors and members of the committee. This might give a steer on further action. To go to Town Infrastructure Committee this month.</p>