

Cabinet – 9 September 2021

Written questions from Cllr Garratt to the Leader, Isle of Wight Council

Question 1 - What assessment has been made of the effectiveness of the new St Mary's junction for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles; and what impact the junction has had on traffic flow on the dual carriageway, in particular southbound in conjunction with the lane-change experiment on the southbound carriageway?

Response

The new facilities have improved the connectivity for cyclists and pedestrians between Newport and the hospital and are compliant with the current guidance. No specific monitoring of cyclist / pedestrian use has been completed but also no issues have been raised by users or through accident records nor did the safety audit flag any issues with those facilities. The college only started back on Monday 6 September so issues with movement to / from there may not yet be fully apparent. We will monitor any correspondence to see if people are finding difficulties.

No specific quantitative assessment has been undertaken to establish the relative performance of the traffic signal controls provided at the St Mary's / Forest Road junction in comparison with the previous arrangement post construction as this comparative performance was established through traffic modelling prior to the implementation of the scheme.

However, the scheme has been largely well received and feedback we have had to date is that the new junction arrangement operates effectively with significantly reduced queue lengths on both the south bound approach from Cowes, north bound approach from Hunnyhill and exit from Dodnor Lane especially during peak periods.

We have as yet not had equivalent traffic conditions against which the performance of the current and previous arrangements can reasonably be compared quantitatively. Subsequent traffic conditions have been influenced initially by Covid 19 movement restrictions and subsequently increased flows arising during the summer holiday period and greater propensity for people to choose 'staycations'. We have not had comparative traffic flows on the network although the improvement at St Mary's is not modelled to have any particular effect on traffic conditions on the southbound dual carriageway.

The change in lane destination markings on the south bound approach to Coppins Bridge has largely resolved the difficulties which drivers faced when emerging from the Riverway slip road and consequent queuing and obstruction of the mini roundabouts in Riverway. This has also largely resolved queuing issues experienced when accessing the link road / Fairlee Road or Staplers Road from the dual carriageway and conflicts between vehicles weaving between lanes when circulating Coppins Bridge. However, as was anticipated, this change has extended the queue length on the offside lane. On balance the benefits realised for the change is lane destination significantly outweigh the disbenefits of the extended queue length in the offside lane and no further revision to the current arrangement is planned.

Question 2 –

What assessment has been of the capacity for the council to reverse cuts in the local council tax support scheme and what priority the administration will give to doing this?

Response

I thank Cllr Andrew Garratt for his question regarding the Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

The Alliance and I share his appreciation of the obligation and burden that Council Tax places on Islanders, of the implications of continuing central government cuts to local funding and of the duty to balance these with the wider financial obligations of the council to meet the needs of residents.

As the portfolio holder for Resources along with my Alliance cabinet members, we are taking a close look at the council's financial position in readiness for the budget setting process which will commence soon.

Since the Local Council Tax Support Scheme has been approved for the current financial year (having been through its statutory consultation process), the earliest point for any change is for the next financial year.

The Alliance is mindful of the need to deliver £9m of savings over the next 3 years and the Local Council Tax Scheme will be taken into account as part of those Budget considerations, hence it is too early for us to set out any clear position at this point in time.

However, I can confirm that the annual review of the council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme in accordance with the requirements of Schedule 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 is underway and the subsequent report later in the year will see an assessment of the options open to the council and the financial implications associated with any proposed changes.