

Cabinet – Thursday 10 March 2022

Written question from Cllr Stephen Hendry to the Leader, Isle of Wight Council

At the Decembers Cabinet meeting, the cabinet unanimously passed “The Isle of Wight Council (Various Streets, East Cowes) (Traffic Regulation) Order No 1 2021”. Three options were presented:

Option 1: To approve the restrictions that are subject to this report in relation to THE ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL (VARIOUS STREETS, EAST COWES) (TRAFFIC REGULATION) ORDER NO 1 2021 as proposed.

Option 2: To approve the proposed restrictions that are subject to this report in relation to THE ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL (VARIOUS STREETS, EAST COWES) (TRAFFIC REGULATION) ORDER NO 1 2021 with amendments – to abandon some of the restrictions, and to implement the rest of the restrictions as proposed.

Option 3: To not approve the proposed restrictions that are subject to this report in relation to THE ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL (VARIOUS STREETS, EAST COWES) (TRAFFIC REGULATION) ORDER NO 1 2021 and to abandon the proposal as a whole

Option 1 was selected, ignoring the views of East Cowes Town Council and the residents of East Cowes, with Island Roads Highways Safety Engineers deciding that the proposed measures were necessary, and the Cabinet accepting this view without challenge.

Would the Cabinet agree in the future to work more closely with Town/Parish Councils on future TRO changes, given that these local representatives are best placed to ensure that the views of their residents are heard, rather than just defaulting to what Island Roads wishes to put in place?

Response

Below is information which details the process the council undertook in relation to the recent Traffic Regulation Orders in District 1 of the Island (Cowes, Gurnard, East Cowes etc)

In January 2020, Island Roads as the Council’s Highways Service Provider started reviewing the Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) in District 1 as the first stage of wider Island wide District TRO Review.

This review focuses on improvement requests raised by local town and parish councils, residents, and businesses, as well as recommendations from Island Roads, for the period since the start of the PFI contract to Dec 2019. All of which had previously been assessed by the Island Road’s (IR) Road Safety Engineer and added to the Highways Safety and Improvement Register (HSIR) .

All proposals high scoring, those above 30, on the grounds of network integrity and safety, were designed for inclusion within the review. The detailed list of the proposals as well as assessment scores and information on the assessment methodology can be provided but will require time to collate.

All the proposals aim to ensure safety for all road users by increasing visibility at junctions and bends, by creating passing points at long stretches of the road, improving emergency access, preserving footways and grass verges. As well as a small number to resolve irregularities/anomalies with existing orders.

Although not a legal requirement, under normal circumstances, the council's Highways Contract Management Team (HCMT) alongside Island Roads, would conduct an Informal Consultation by holding an exhibition of the proposals in the Town Hall for the local council as well as Councillors to scrutinise. This process is accepted as best practice as adopted by other Local Authorities and takes place prior to any formal consultation.

Following this initial TRO process and the removal of Covid restrictions, we have now changed the way we consult informally as per the following:

- Improved the presentation of the proposals, they are all accompanied by a visual illustration of the proposed changes, showing the potential changes on street;
- Improved the model of consultation, we now offer a choice of an online presentation, a face-to-face presentation, and a written feedback as TC's support concerns.

This approach has already attracted a positive reaction when consulting on this basis with Local Councils and Councillors in District 3 and District 5 during Dec 2021 and Jan 2022.

The aspiration is to also improve the formal consultation as well, by developing an online consulting facility, with all proposals and visual illustration available on the Council's website.'

District 1 TROs

In the specific case of the District 1 proposals (e.g., Cowes and East Cowes), due to the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdowns, the consultation process was delayed.

As a mitigation, direct engagement was sought with the Town Council and Ward Cllr/s via emails, on site and online meetings, as soon as the social distancing restrictions allowed from August 2020 to January 2021.

The first draft of proposals was provided via email and an Informal Consultation was conducted via a Zoom meeting with East Cowes Full Town Council on 17 September 2020, again as per best practice as adopted by other Local Authorities under such circumstances. Island Roads and HCMT representatives explained each individual proposal by sharing the plans on screen and going through the rationales behind the proposals. All raised questions were answered.

From the online meeting it was identified that the proposal plans were not easy to understand, and we have worked with IR to amend/improve them subsequently. On 3 December 2020 improved plans were forwarded to the TC and Councillors.

The informal feedback received, mainly concerned the loss of parking spaces, and was reviewed by the IR and HCMT. The proposals were finalised taking it into account where possible consultation comments. Unfortunately, in some locations, safety and emergency access needed to take priority over preserving the on-street parking space.

Following the legal TRO making process and its requirement for a Formal Consultation, a public Notice, outlining the proposals and inviting public comments, was published in the Isle of Wight County Press on 14 May 2021. Notices and plans were also displayed on-street for a period of 35 days, two weeks longer than the legally required 21 days. The closing date for representations was 18 June 2021.

Subsequently all representations were reviewed and considered by the IR and HCMT, and a Cabinet report was prepared, recommending implementation on safety grounds and emergency access, and giving an option for voiding some of the proposals. Decision to implement all proposals on safety grounds and emergency access was reached by the Cabinet on 16 December 2022.