



Belfast City Council

Report to: Development Committee

Subject: Transportation Issues

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Relevant Background Information

The Development Committee on the 11 February 2009 agreed to receive a presentation from the Consultants in respect of the review of the Council Transport Policy. The Council recently received consultation information in respect of related transportation issues around City Centre Traffic Management proposals and the Setting Local Speed Limits in Northern Ireland.

Key Issues

The details in respect of the consultation on City Centre Traffic Management proposals are attached as **Appendix 1**. The proposed traffic management arrangements are part of the enabling measures to facilitate the removal of northbound traffic from Donegall Place as part of the Streets Ahead project. The proposals are currently at an early stage of development and Arup, the consultants appointed by the Department for Social Development, are seeking views in respect of the potential changes to Queen Street, Upper Queen Street and Castle Street although there may be implications for other city centre routes.

Whilst the proposals will require Traffic Regulation Orders and formal consultation prior to final scheme implementation the Consultants have indicated that they would welcome early engagement from the Council and other interested parties. It may therefore be beneficial for the Committee to receive a presentation from the Consultants in respect of their emerging proposals.

The consultation received from the Department for Regional Development in respect of Setting Local Speed Limits in Northern Ireland provides an element of procedural clarification and seeks views on the proposed approaches to speed limit designations across Northern Ireland. For information, a copy of the consultation document is appended to this report as **Appendix 2**.

Whilst there are no direct implications arising from the proposals, it is considered that the indirect implication and potential for the Council to contribute to the proposed processes should be reflected in any new policy. A draft response to the proposed policy for consideration by Committee is attached as **Appendix 3**.

In summary the draft response seeks to highlight the lack of clarity in the Department's Policy document in respect of how additional considerations should be treated in establishing a speed limit and what significance additional criteria will have in the overall process. Moreover, given the local authority statutory obligations regarding air quality management, etc. it is unclear what weight the Department will give to local authority views prior to establishing speed limits, particularly in urban locations where air quality management areas may already have been or are about to be declared.

The draft response also highlights the importance of roads and their operation for the local environment in terms of potential for their modification or management to make a positive contribution to local communities beyond the purely road safety benefits. Therefore, in developing a new policy for setting local speed limits, the Department for Regional Development Roads Service are encouraged to undertake early formal engagement in the consideration of changes to speed limits and road geometry in order to afford the Council adequate time to reflect its interests from an operational, environmental and community perspective. This approach would maximise the potential for proposals to make a positive contribution to broader regeneration agendas and enhance community well being.

The Committee is requested to consider both the appended draft response and the suggestion that the consultants for the City Centre Traffic Management proposals are provided the opportunity to address a future meeting.

Resource Implications

There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

Recommendations

Members are requested to:

- accede to the request for the opportunity for the City Centre Traffic Management consultants to address a future meeting of the Committee; and
- consider the content of the proposed draft response to the Speed Limit consultation, as set out in **Appendix 3**, and if appropriate endorse this as the formal response to the Department for Regional development.

Appendices

Appendix 1- City Centre Traffic Management proposals consultation.
Appendix 2- Setting Local Speed Limits in Northern Ireland consultation paper.
Appendix 3- draft response to Setting Local Speed Limits in Northern Ireland.