



MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

IMC(20)39

PROPOSALS FOR NETWORK MANAGEMENT IN MELTON IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Background and summary

This report examines the resources available and the decision-making processes to facilitate “significant changes to...road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians” to “support recovery from the COVID-19 emergency and provide a lasting legacy of greener, safer transport” (Statutory Guidance to the Traffic Management Act 2004: network management in response to Covid-19. *Published 9 May 2020*).

Report

In publishing this guidance, notwithstanding the grand political rhetoric, the intention is to introduce *temporary* changes to reallocate the use of public space to both encourage walking and cycling, whilst enabling people to stay 2 metres apart.

The sort of measures envisaged are (examples taken from the guidance):

- Converting existing traffic lanes into temporary cycle lanes (suspending parking bays where necessary and introducing physical separation measures)
- Using cones and barriers to widen footways along lengths of road
- Restricting motor traffic around schools at pick-up and drop-off times
- Reducing speed limits to 20mph
- Introducing pedestrian and cycle zones; restricting access for motor vehicles either at all times or certain times
- Closing roads to motor traffic
- Changing junction design to accommodate more cyclists – e.g. extending depth of Advanced Stop Lines

In terms of progressing such ideas, Suffolk County Council (SCC) has issued guidance to communities. It is grouping proposals into 3 categories:

Small-scale changes - It envisages that local councils will be empowered to make these in conjunction with the business community to enable safe social distancing without SCC involvement. The sort of measures envisaged here are markings on pavements that outline queuing areas, social distancing reminders or simple painted markings on pavement surfaces for pedestrians.

Medium-scale changes – These include anything happening off the pavement or which requires delivery by SCC Highways of items like barriers, cones etc. This category also includes simple traffic regulation notices or orders, and licences for seating, planters and other semi-permanent obstructions.

Large-scale changes – These include changes that will require communities to contact SCC for support. This includes road closures or extensive traffic management initiatives and semi-permanent work like painting lines on roads.

There is a contact email address for enquiries to be made to SCC – transport.schemes@suffolk.gov.uk

However the issue as always is one of funding.

Where local councils are “empowered” to undertake small-scale changes I think the assumption is that these will be at more or less zero cost other than time and labour. Where SCC needs to be involved the position, at least as far as East Suffolk is concerned, is as yet unclear.

The government funding for these changes comes from the EU and it has not been given to SCC but to district councils. East Suffolk Council’s share is only £222,198 spread across the entire district. I have been advised by the SCC officer dealing with these transport schemes that all applications have to be filtered by district because they hold the budgets and hence allocate funding to schemes. Babergh / Mid Suffolk District Councils for example have produced detailed guidance for their town and parish councils setting out guidance for social distancing in locations at local level and a detailed application form on which communities can apply to SCC for support / funding which will be filtered at district and, if supported, passed to SCC. So far however no guidance has been issued by East Suffolk and it is not clear yet what their arrangements are for processing applications.

Given that the emphasis is on temporary changes, and given as well the size of the budget for an area of 200 square miles and the high cost of Highways interventions, it would be realistic to assume that the focus needs to be on:

- Self-help low cost measures that Melton Council can undertake with the co-operation of the community using its own resources and initiative
- Medium-scale changes that require SCC to deliver barriers or other equipment to set up temporary additional space for pedestrians etc.
- Any key temporary changes in respect of traffic management arrangements for which Melton would need to apply for SCC funding.

Recommendations

IMC is requested to consider how best to come up with a range of realistic options that may be of benefit to the community of Melton and which can be progressed as mechanisms are established by the District Council for that purpose.

William Grosvenor

Clerk and Executive Officer to the Council

16 June 2020