



Norfolk County Council

Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 31 October 2023
at 10 am at County Hall Norwich

Present:

Cllr Steve Morphew (Chair)
Cllr Daniel Elmer (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Carl Annison
Cllr Lesley Bambridge
Cllr Phillip Duigan
Cllr John Fisher
Cllr Tom FitzPatrick
Cllr Keith Kiddie
Cllr Brian Long
Cllr Brian Watkins

Substitute Members Present:

Cllr Paul Neale for Cllr Jamie Osborn
Cllr Will Richmond for Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris

Also Present:

Hollie Adams	Committee Officer
David Allfrey	Interim Director of Highways, Transport and Waste
Grahame Bygrave	Interim Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services
Joanne Deverick	Transforming Cities Manager
Kat Hulatt	Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Cllr Graham Plant	Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport
Cllr Ben Price	Local Member for Thorpe Hamlet
Peter Randall	Democratic Support and Scrutiny Manager
Cllr Catherine Rowett	Local Member for West Depwade
Cllr Chrissie Rumsby	Local Member for Mile Cross
Cllr Mike Sands	Local Member for Bowthorpe
Laine Tisdall	Committee Officer
Cllr Maxine Webb	Local Member for Wensum
Jeremy Wiggin	Head of Sustainable Transport

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Ed Maxfield, Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris (Cllr Will Richmond substituted) and Cllr Jamie Osborn (Cllr Paul Neale substituted).

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. Public Question Time

3.1 There were no public questions.

4. Local Member Issues/Questions

4.1 There were no local member questions.

5 Call In: Norwich City Centre Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs)

5.1 The Scrutiny Committee received the annexed report (5) setting out the reasons for call-in of Norwich City Centre Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and the original delegated decision.

5.1.1 The Chair explained the way in which he would handle this item to best ensure a fair and balanced scrutiny process and to decide what (if any) issues the Committee would refer to the Cabinet. The options that were available to the Committee were set out in the report. The Chair stated that two separate call-ins had been received for the same delegated decision, and therefore there would be a slight change to procedure. Both call-ins would be heard one after the other, with the Scrutiny Committee considering both at the end of the meeting.

5.1.2 The Chair welcomed Cllr Paul Neale, Cllr Ben Price, and Cllr Catherine Rowett and asked them to outline the reasons for their call-in to the Committee.

5.2 The Councillors who had called in the item asked the Committee to consider their concerns which centred around the evidence used to justify the decision to reopen Exchange Street.

- Cllr Neale felt the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport had made the decision based on insufficient evidence, stating that the decision seemed to go against the views of pedestrians and businesses in Norwich city centre.
- Cllr Neale stated that the removal of traffic from city centre streets improved air quality and benefited the environment.
- Concern was expressed that the Cabinet Member had taken a unilateral decision with stakeholders not being consulted beforehand. Cllr Neale mentioned that one of the reasons given for the decision was a lack of enforcement of the restrictions in Exchange Street, which in his view seemed to be an unusual basis to rescind the traffic order. In addition, Cllr Neale stated that the Council had announced they had received funding from the government to introduce vehicle infringement cameras, along with powers to identify those who had flouted the restrictions. On this basis it would appear to make sense to install a camera at the beginning of the restricted area to enforce the closure of Exchange Street.
- Cllr Neale mentioned that London Street was the first street in the UK to be pedestrianised and that it had helped usher in a new way of how city centres could be improved, via the provision of safe and pleasant environments for shoppers to go about their business unhindered by traffic. Several other city centre streets had been pedestrianised following London Street, and Cllr Neale stated that the addition of Exchange Street to this list had enhanced the environment and quality of the city centre.
- Cllr Rowett stated the Council had recently prepared and approved several documents relating to its Climate Strategy, which highlighted targets related

to the reduction of emissions across Norfolk, including the Council's own activities. Cllr Rowett shared the view that the Council's timeline was admirably ambitious, and that the Council had scored highly in a recent climate emergency scorecard. Cllr Rowett stated that a strategy to deliver a safe environment for pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users had recently been approved by the Council, with a target to ensure 50% of urban journeys were conducted on foot by 2030. Cllr Rowett gave the view that the decision to reopen Exchange Street to traffic did not appear to make sense considering these strategies.

- Cllr Rowett stated that private motorists being allowed to use Exchange Street would undermine plans to reduce car journeys in the city centre. Exchange Street was considered the main walking route from St. Andrews car park to Norwich Market, and those with limited mobility would now face a cramped uphill walk to the market.
- Cllr Rowett expressed concern that the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport had undermined the Council's strategies towards emissions reduction in the transport section, the promotion of an active and healthy lifestyle in Norfolk, and the promotion of Norwich as a tourist destination.
- Cllr Price stated that the decision had been taken based on limited evidence. A 12-month consultation had taken place with only 42 respondents, which was a very low number. Cllr Price stated that the credibility of such a decision was undermined by this consultation.
- Cllr Price mentioned the top response to the consultation highlighted a lack of enforcement of the Exchange Street restrictions. The report made mention of an unsuccessful bid for government funding towards a redesigned road layout in this area to resolve safety concerns between vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists. Cllr Price stated that enforcement was a valid issue, however it did not support the conclusion that the closure was failing to deliver on Council policy.
- Cllr Price remarked that the report suggested compliance could be enforced through the introduction of better signage and cameras.
- Cllr Price expressed concern that Norfolk Constabulary had not been consulted on the decision, as enforcement was a responsibility for the police.
- Cllr Price stated that there was strong evidence the Exchange Street Experimental TRO had delivered against objectives listed in the Local Transport Plan. The closure was in line with the objective to deliver a sustainable Norfolk and worked towards reducing the dominance of motor vehicles in this part of the city centre. The closure had improved quality of life by enabling local businesses to provide outdoor seating in this area. Three pavement licences had been granted. Accessibility of historical streets in the city centre had also been improved, as both St. Benedict's Street and Exchange Street were not designed wide enough to take modern levels of pedestrians and motor vehicles at the same time.
- Cllr Price summed up that the closure of Exchange Street supported Council policy. The decision to rescind restrictions would make the street unsafe for pedestrians, wheelchairs, and buggies. Cllr Price remarked that the report stated the arrangements on St. Benedict's Street had been assessed and deemed to be meeting the aims of the Local Transport Plan. The report suggested that Exchange Street was not meeting these aims due to low levels of compliance; however, it suggested that the closure did have the

potential to meet the Local Transport Plan aims if appropriate measures to enforce compliance were introduced. Cllr Price expressed concern that no options to enforce compliance were explored within the report, nor any alternative proposals.

- Cllr Price stated that the report was unclear on the impacts on local businesses in this area.

5.2.1 The Chair requested clarification from Cllr Neale regarding the nature of the call-in and the desired outcome, as it appeared the entire decision including the St. Benedict's scheme had been called in. Cllr Price confirmed this would be made clear to the Scrutiny Committee later in the meeting.

5.3 The Chair welcomed Cllr Mike Sands, Cllr Chrissie Rumsby and Cllr Maxine Webb, and asked them to outline the reasoning for their call-in to the Scrutiny Committee.

5.3.1 The Councillors who had called in the item asked the Committee to consider their concerns which centred around the timetable of the Experimental TRO and what other options were available to the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport.

- Cllr Sands remarked that the decision to use an Experimental TRO in the Exchange Street area had proven controversial in some respects. The expiry date of the measures had always been known. The evidence used to make the decision dated back to the start of 2023, which meant there was plenty of time for the Cabinet Member to investigate other options and seek a consensus with stakeholders.
- Cllr Sands stated that the restrictions could have been enforced using cameras, and that there had been media reports that cameras were to be installed in other city centre areas.
- Cllr Sands acknowledged that congestion problems in the area had diminished over the last few months, but that enforcement was still an option that was open to the Cabinet Member.
- Cllr Sands asked who the Cabinet Member had consulted. The Local Member Protocol required the Cabinet Member to consult with the Local Member for the affected area, along with Norwich City Council. This appeared not to have happened. There had been media reports that local businesses affected by the reopening of Exchange Street had not been consulted. In addition, cycling and walking groups had protested the decision. Cllr Sands remarked the decision had seemingly not gone through the Transport for Norwich Steering Group. A petition from taxi drivers was not referenced in the report either.
- Cllr Sands expressed concern that the Experimental TRO expired in the next three weeks and that the decision had been taken so late in the lifetime of the Experimental TRO.
- Cllr Sands outlined a compromise to the Scrutiny Committee, which would see Exchange Street reopened for taxis only and cameras installed to enforce restrictions on private motorists. This would contribute to a reduction in congestion and pressure on Bethel Street and would enable local businesses who have installed outside seating on Exchange Street to continue to prosper.

5.4 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport to respond.

- The Cabinet Member stated that the original Emergency TROs were introduced to ensure social distancing measures could be implemented during COVID. Funding was secured from the Department for Transport towards implementing this on St. Benedict's and Exchange Street. A consultation was held in 2021 about the future of the scheme, which also encompassed Duke Street and St. Andrews. It was decided to continue with emergency measures, with an 18-month Experimental TRO introduced while traffic levels recovered.
- The Experimental TRO was coming to the end of its 18-month lifespan and a decision on its future had to be taken, all views and issues were considered. The Cabinet Member confirmed the restrictions on St. Benedict's would become permanent. However, issues that had been identified with Exchange Street could not be resolved satisfactorily in time, which meant the restrictions in this area had to be withdrawn.
- The Cabinet Member explained that safety and compliance issues had been identified in this area. Exchange Street was closed between 1000 and 1600 each day with limited exceptions. There was a taxi rank located in Gaol Hill, and access to loading and disabled bays here required a reversing manoeuvre, which was considered unsafe. Funding was not available to redesign the road layout. There was a requirement to provide a safe environment for everyone in this area. The Cabinet Member remarked that residents had advised a U-turn was required for drivers to return away from Exchange Street, which was unsafe in a pedestrianised area.
- Several efforts had been made to improve compliance with traffic restrictions in the area, including more signage and the provision of traffic marshals. The only remaining option was to introduce enforcement cameras, but this could not happen in the necessary timescales. In addition, the road layout would need to be redesigned to eliminate reversing manoeuvres in this area.
- The Cabinet Member remarked the scheme was considered successful in 2021 due to lower levels of traffic during the pandemic. However, traffic had returned to pre-pandemic levels, increasing the potential for conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. Reopening Exchange Street would reduce pressure in this area in the run-up to Christmas and the New Year.
- The Cabinet Member stated that the Experimental TRO allowed for feedback to be received constantly during the 18-month lifespan. The decision was based on the feedback received.

5.5 Councillors calling-in the decision questioned the Cabinet Member and officers:

- Cllr Neale asked why all stakeholders had not been consulted before the decision had been taken. The Cabinet Member stated that 18 months of consultation had taken place, and the safety aspects of the scheme took priority in this case.
- Cllr Rowett stated the report mentioned the main reason for the decision was non-compliance with restrictions, but that the Cabinet Member was stating safety concerns to the Committee. Cllr Rowett asked what options for turning vehicles had been considered, and whether it was feasible for cars to turn at the bottom of Gaol Hill to return in forward gear. The Cabinet Member stated

that Norwich City Council had made a £3.5m application for a scheme to pedestrianise this area, resulting in taxis being moved to City Hall and the complete pedestrianisation of Gaol Hill. However, the costs were considered prohibitive for the Council to proceed and funding from the government and wider traffic studies would be required for the scheme to be revisited.

- Cllr Rowett stated there was only a small number of motorists making three-point turns in this area, and mostly for drop offs for disabled passengers. It appeared that motorists were confused by the signage currently in use. Cllr Rowett asked if improved signage in the city centre would help improve clarity for motorists regarding the Exchange Street restrictions. The Cabinet Member stated signs were in place at the top of Gaol Hill and the start of Exchange Street, which were frequently ignored. More signs could be installed but it was the responsibility of drivers to comply with restrictions. An officer confirmed signage in this area was reviewed and improved partway through the scheme. The signs in use were prescribed by the Department for Transport. Signs are installed as far away as the approach to Grapes Hill roundabout to provide advance warning for motorists.
- Cllr Rowett mentioned there was no dead-end sign at Gaol Hill. Surveys had been conducted in the area which suggested that many citizens did not understand the restrictions. The Cabinet Member stated that Gaol Hill was not a dead end as it was open to taxis, delivery vehicles and disabled users. Private vehicles were restricted from the area.
- Cllr Rowett stated that Exchange Street was a key cycling route in Norwich and asked if the numbers of cyclists had changed during the lifetime of the scheme. An officer stated the scheme was introduced as an emergency due to COVID, and as such data for the number of cyclists and pedestrians was not available prior to 2020. Data relating to air quality was also unavailable prior to 2020.
- Cllr Price stated it appeared the TRO was rushed due to COVID, which created a problem which was not previously present. Cllr Price noted the Transport for Norwich strategy highlighted the Exchange Street scheme as an achievement, and whether the Cabinet Member could explain why this view had changed. The Cabinet Member remarked that the TRO was introduced during COVID as an emergency measure to ensure social distancing could be achieved. It was initially an emergency measure which was then extended to ensure compliance. The Cabinet Member stated that cars making reversing manoeuvres around Exchange Street and Gaol Hill was dangerous, which was why the scheme could not continue. Traffic in the city centre had now increased to pre-pandemic levels.
- Cllr Rowett stated that an increase in traffic within the city centre to pre-pandemic levels would represent a failure of Transport for Norwich objectives. Cllr Rowett asked if the Cabinet Member believed increased traffic levels represented a success or a failure. The Cabinet Member stated there were several car parks in the area, and therefore a need for cars to access this part of the city centre was required. Any further pedestrianisation would close two car parks, and result in further dangerous reversing manoeuvres around pedestrian areas. If funding became available in the future for a wider scheme, the whole wider area could be reviewed and redesigned.
- Cllr Price stated that city centre car parks could be accessed from other directions, which would mean there was no need to use Exchange Street. A camera in this location would enforce compliance. Cllr Price asked if

pedestrian numbers had been monitored while the scheme was in effect. The Cabinet Member stressed that highway safety concerns were paramount.

- Cllr Neale asked why the installation of a camera at the start of Exchange Street had not been considered, as Gentleman's Walk was planned to receive one. An officer stated powers to install cameras had only recently been granted to the Council by the Department of Transport. However, a consultation exercise had to take place following Department for Transport requirements, with Norfolk Constabulary involved. Enforcement cameras could only be installed in locations where consultations had been held. It would not be possible to install an enforcement camera at Exchange Street at the current time for this reason.
- Cllr Neale asked if an enforcement camera on Exchange Street could be reviewed in the future. An officer confirmed proposals could be looked at as part of the 2025/26 budget process if it was deemed a priority site.
- Cllr Sands asked what other options the Cabinet Member had available other than making the scheme permanent or withdrawal. The Cabinet Member confirmed there were no other options available.
- Cllr Rumsby asked if the Transport for Norwich Steering Group was consulted regarding the decision. The Cabinet Member stated this had not happened. Cllr Rumsby expressed surprise and remarked that it seemed extraordinary that the Steering Group had not met, given that the end date for the Experimental TRO was known in advance. Cllr Rumsby asked why the Steering Group had not met. The Cabinet Member confirmed this was due to time constraints. An officer stated arrangements for the Transport for Norwich Steering Group were being made; however, confirmation of appointees from other districts were still awaited.
- Cllr Webb mentioned that the expiry date for the Experimental TRO was known in advance and asked why a decision or alternative options had not been investigated sooner. The Cabinet Member stated the Experimental TRO was due to elapse, and it was necessary to decide to make it permanent or withdraw the measures. Advice from officers and consultation responses were considered. The Cabinet Member stated safety and compliance issues meant that the withdrawal of the scheme was the only valid option he could take at this time, but if circumstances changed in the future, he would be open to revisit the measures. The Experimental TRO had a finite lifespan which was due to end and a judgement call had to be taken. The Chair intervened at this point and requested clarification between an Emergency TRO and an Experimental TRO. The Cabinet Member confirmed the scheme had begun as an Emergency TRO which had evolved into an Experimental TRO which was now due to expire.
- Cllr Webb asked if this decision was taken due to time constraints or whether there was anything in writing which stated the only options after the 18 months were to abandon the scheme or make it permanent. An officer stated modifications to an Experimental TRO could be made in the first six months of operation, but after the 18-month period elapses it would either become permanent or rescinded.
- Cllr Sands asked what aspects of the decision were consulted with Norwich City Council and local businesses. An officer stated the consultation process was continuous, with regular discussions taking place between officers. Meetings with those who were reluctant to see Exchange Street pedestrianised had also taken place. Officers were reliant on feedback being

received. Cllr Sands asked how local businesses and Norwich City Council were consulted. An officer stated the Council was reliant on affected parties giving feedback during the 18-month long consultation process.

- Cllr Webb asked if there was any regret that some stakeholders were not actively consulted regarding the decision, and whether cycling and walking groups were contacted. An officer stated there had been regular dialogue with stakeholders across the city centre representing many different groups. Local businesses were concerned about access for deliveries at the start of the scheme, which meant a specific routing for delivery vehicles was implemented within the measures. This was welcomed by local businesses. The officer commented that there had been a consistent stream of feedback at the beginning of the scheme, but this had reduced as time went on. A point had been reached where a decision about the future of the scheme had to be taken, which is now. Cllr Webb asked if cycling or walking groups were consulted regarding the decision. The officer confirmed consultations from those groups had been ongoing, with regular meetings with representatives over the last 18 months.
- Cllr Rumsby stated that the Cabinet Member had mentioned the Local Member Protocol was not followed when making this decision and asked for clarification regarding this. The Cabinet Member stated that all views were considered when making the decision. It was considered an issue for the Highways department, and a decision had to be taken as the Experimental TRO was due to expire on 18 November. There was a consistent level of non-compliance with the restrictions, with only 3% of vehicles using Exchange Street legitimately. Significant efforts had been made to enforce the restrictions, but it had not worked. The Cabinet Member stated he was happy to discuss this with Cllrs and stakeholders outside the meeting, but the decision had to be taken based on advice from officers and feedback from consultations. If circumstances change in the future, the scheme would be revisited.
- Cllr Rumsby asked why cameras were not installed to enforce compliance. An officer stated that the Council had to follow requirements and guidance issued by the Department for Transport, which was why an enforcement camera could not be installed on Exchange Street at the current time.
- Cllr Sands asked what enforcement measures were to be taken against businesses who had installed outside seating on Exchange Street, and what precedents would this set. An officer stated that pavement licences were issued by Norwich City Council, and that Norfolk County Council would work closely with them. Discussions with affected business were due to take place. Officers confirmed appropriate enforcement or legal action would be taken if highway space was still being used for outside seating once pavement licences had been removed. Cllr Sands responded that this appeared to create conflict between the Highways Department of Norfolk County Council and the Licencing Department of Norwich City Council. An officer stated that safety was the main concern in this area.

5.6 Members and substitute Members of the Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and officers:

- A Committee Member remarked that he had experienced the current Exchange Street layout as he was a Blue Badge holder and that not all disabilities were visible or required the use of a wheelchair. The Committee

Member stated that the signage in this area was not clear for those who were unfamiliar with Norwich city centre, and asked the Cabinet Member if he agreed that the restrictions had to be withdrawn due to the potential of conflict between cyclists, pedestrians, and vehicles. The Cabinet Member confirmed this was the case.

- A Committee Member stated the decision did not appear to be based on fully informed data. Over £30m had been spent on Transport for Norwich initiatives, however funding to keep pedestrians safe did not seem forthcoming. The Committee Member expressed concern about the increased risk of conflict between pedestrians crossing road and increased numbers of vehicles using Exchange Street, and asked if there was any data pertaining to numbers of pedestrians in the area. An officer stated that specific pedestrian data was not available, but that an Equality Impact Assessment had taken place.
- A Committee Member asked if there was a greater perceived risk to pedestrians and shoppers by reverting to previous arrangements. The Cabinet Member stated the current arrangements were considered more dangerous due to the reversing manoeuvres required by drivers. Decisions were taken quickly to ensure a safe environment as the Experimental TRO was due to end on the 18 November.
- Committee Members asked about the effects on the local environment by reopening Exchange Street. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste had previously stated the Council was committed to reaching Net Zero targets by 2030, and ambitious plans were included in this strategy. However, the withdrawal of this scheme appeared to go against cycling and walking ambitions, along with air quality targets. A Committee Member asked what leadership was being shown by the Highways Department to do its bit for the local environment. The Cabinet Member stated that Norfolk had been recognised as a leader in low carbon policies by the government. 70 electric buses were being introduced in Norwich over the next few months, with more bus lanes being introduced. The Cabinet Member stated these initiatives illustrated the Council's low carbon agenda and delivery against this. Most cars by 2030 would be electric, resulting in little or no emissions in certain areas. Further areas were to be identified and worked out between Norfolk County Council and Norwich City Council
- A Committee Member stated that most responses to consultations tended to be from those who were unhappy with the planned works, and that there was usually passive acceptance from the majority. A balance was required between what the Council wished to implement in town and city centres and the needs of businesses in the current economic climate, with disadvantages minimised as best possible. The Committee Member remarked that cameras would not stop people driving down Exchange Street, and asked if the Cabinet Member agreed a decision had to be made with the evidence available. The Cabinet Member agreed this was the case.
- The Vice-Chair asked about potential camera installations on Exchange Street, and whether a consultation would need to be held. The Vice-Chair asked what a realistic timescale for such a project would be. An officer stated that the locations to go live later in 2023, were consulted on in 2022. New locations would be consulted on next calendar year after a countywide review across Norfolk to determine priority locations. These could then potentially be implemented from 2025 onwards. The Council had to follow Department for Transport requirements for these moving traffic offences. In addition, following the recent publication of the government's Plan for Drivers, further guidance

was now awaited from the Department for Transport about camera enforcement. The Vice-Chair requested clarification regarding the minimum timeline for installation. The officer confirmed this would be at least a year including the consultation period.

- The Vice-Chair asked the Cabinet Member whether a year was too long given the public safety risks identified in this area. The Cabinet Member stressed that the Experimental TRO expired on the 18 November, so a decision had to be taken. Norfolk County Council would work closely with Norwich City Council on any future road schemes.
- The Vice-Chair requested clarification regarding the Transport for Norwich policy document. The Vice-Chair stated that point 9.6 mentioned support for growth areas regeneration areas, which highlighted several zones beyond the Norwich urban area where public transport was limited. Point 10.1 emphasised the different transport needs between urban and rural areas and point 10.3 referenced that car ownership around Norwich and surrounding areas differed greatly. The Vice-Chair asked the Cabinet Member if he agreed with these interpretations. The Cabinet Member stated that Norfolk comprised of large rural areas which were all linked to a market town or Norwich itself. The Council are attempting to implement different transport options to enable people to access urban areas, and the Transport for Norwich strategy was one of those options. The Cabinet Member remarked that Norfolk had received £50m from the government's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which had been used to improve bus services across Norfolk. The Council is working closely with bus operators in Norfolk to best invest the BSIP funding.
- A Committee Member expressed their disappointment that the Transport for Norwich Steering Group had been delayed. The Committee Member remarked that he had supported Exchange Street closure as a pedestrian and cyclist, but that he also supported the Cabinet Member's decision to withdraw the scheme. The Committee Member asked for assurance that the proposal would remain on the books for consideration if funding was available to increase pedestrianisation in the city centre. The Cabinet Member stated the scheme would have to be reviewed on its own merits should the circumstances change.
- A Committee Member welcomed Cllr Sands' proposed compromise to reopen Exchange Street for taxis only, but expressed concern about the mix of taxis, pedestrians, and cyclists in this part of the city centre. The Committee Member asked officers what work was required to ensure a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists. An officer responded stating that it would be unsafe to mix taxis with pedestrians and cyclists, as private motorists seeing the saloon type taxis or private hire vehicles using Exchange Street would increase non-compliance in this area.
- The Chair requested clarification regarding the differences between an Emergency TRO and Experimental TRO. An officer stated Emergency TROs were brought in by the government to enable immediate changes to road layouts to aid social distancing in the wake of the first COVID lockdown. Feedback from local businesses highlighted that deliveries were being hindered, resulting in a revised layout being devised, which formed the basis of the Experimental TRO. Officers wished to see how the revised layout worked in practice and whether it required tweaks to be implemented. A further change was that local businesses had requested a review of hours of operation. Initially the restrictions lasted until 5pm, which resulted in increased pressure on staff being asked to stay late to help with deliveries. This was changed to 4pm based on feedback from consultations. Those changes were

brought in as part of the Experimental TRO, with feedback received over the past 18 months.

- The Chair stated that it appeared a specific review after 6 months had not happened to see if further changes could be made. An officer stated the Council wanted to see the arrangement succeed, and that the Experimental TRO period would enable the road network to settle down following COVID. Traffic levels in city were changing. Most of the feedback relating to the scheme was received within the first 6 months of operation, no fundamental changes were made in this period. Officers were aware the Experimental TRO expired after 18 months, leaving 12 months to monitor its operation.
- The Chair stated the minutes for the January 2022 meeting of the Transport for Norwich Joint Committee made no mention of the Exchange Street scheme being an Experimental TRO. The minutes instead confirmed the continuation of the Emergency TRO order. The Chair requested clarification as to why the Exchange Street scheme had become an Experimental TRO as this appeared not to be the decision taken by the Joint Committee. The decision taken at that meeting was that the scheme should become permanent, with no mention of turning problems or safety issues. Officers confirmed the scheme was currently operated under an Experimental TRO and that they would look back at reports.
- The Chair asked officers if local businesses had been consulted regarding the extension of the St. Benedict's scheme. An officer stated there had been no specific consultation other than the ongoing Experimental TRO, but that general feedback from businesses and residents regarding St. Benedict's was largely positive over the past 18 months. The Chair asked where this feedback could be found. Officers stated the data could be made available if requested.
- The Chair asked the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport for their opinion on Cllr Sands' compromise proposal. The Cabinet Member replied that he felt the proposal was unacceptable on highway safety grounds due to the continued need for reversing manoeuvres at the bottom of Gaol Hill

5.7 The Chair invited Cllr Neale and Cllr Sands to sum up their call-ins.

5.7.1 Cllr Neale summed up his call-in, clarifying that it related to Pt. 4 and 5 of his recommendation in his decision.

- The decision suggested that motorists who currently attempted to enter Exchange Street would make a U-turn in a pedestrian area, however if better compliance measures were introduced at Gaol Hill this would prevent motorists from accessing the area entirely.
- Cllr Neale expressed surprise that no data had been collected during the 18-month operation of the scheme.
- If the Experimental TRO was due to finish at a fixed date, plans could have been made to implement a new Experimental TRO which remedied any issues which had arisen, rather than withdrawing the scheme entirely.
- Concern was expressed that the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport had not engaged with stakeholders, and that the decision contradicted the Council's policies towards Net Zero with limited evidence to support it.

5.7.2 Cllr Sands summed up the reasons for the call-in

- Cllr Sands extended an invitation to the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport to use the opportunity for a compromise. There was a recognised need to make change to the Exchange Street scheme, but to abandon the measures entirely would be a missed opportunity.
- The compromise would address many of the issues highlighted. Restricting traffic flows would reduce danger to pedestrians and other highway users.
- Small and medium businesses represented a large employment sector in Norwich city centre and withdrawing the scheme would threaten their future.
- Although the timescale for changing the measures was limited, Cllr Sands stated that enough groundwork was in place for a viable compromise to be reached. A turnaround spot for drivers who drove down Gaol Hill in error could be implemented at a low cost, as space was available in this area. A drop off for people with disabilities could also be installed, following the precedent of the drop-off zone outside the Assembly House.

5.7.3 Cllr Neale recommended that the decision be referred back to full council as it went against objectives in the Local Transport Plan. The Monitoring Officer stated this would not be appropriate in the circumstances, as this was an Executive decision that did not appear to go against objectives in the Local Transport Plan.

5.8 The Chair asked Committee Members to consider both call-ins.

5.8.1 The Scrutiny Committee took a vote on Cllr Neale's proposal to refer the decision back to the Cabinet Member. With three votes for and nine against, the proposal was **lost**.

5.8.2 The Scrutiny Committee took a vote on Cllr Sands' proposal to refer the decision back to the Cabinet Member. With three votes for and nine against, the proposal was **lost**.

5.8.3 The Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to **note** both call-ins but take no further action.

The meeting concluded at 12:06 pm

Cllr Steve Morphew, Chair



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