

Queen Camel Community Road Safety Meeting

2nd October 2024

Meeting started 1810 hours.

Persons in attendance 26 with 5 apologies received.

1. Introduction

Phil Jones (PJ) welcomed everyone and explained this meeting had been called to facilitate villagers raising and discussing their concerns on road safety related matters, identifying remedial options and identifying a community-based way ahead.

Attendees were asked to complete an attendance form and to indicate their willingness to be volunteers and/or coordinators for either Community Speed Watch (CSW) Scheme and HGV watch scheme.

It was explained that Police and other authorities use the National Decision-Making model to resolve problems, first identifying the problem, through an evidence-based approach, identifying resolution options and deciding on which options to take followed by reviewing the progress of those actions taken.

2. Speed

Many people had concerns about excessive speed through the village. It was highlighted that it was often difficult or unsafe for vehicles turning out of Church Path due to vehicles coming from the right round the bend. It was noted that consideration had been made to try to install a mirror there to improve visibility. Other areas raised for concern were the road down from Sparkford, past the Church and along the High Street.

PJ outlined that the speed limit by the Old School remains at 20mph and 30mph throughout the rest of the village. He explained the 20mph by Countess Gytha School, along West Camel Road was advisory only.

It was explained that the Parish Council (PC) had engaged with Somerset Highways and the Police about assistance in identifying the level of the speed issue. They have stated that any action they take is based on evidence of the issue and not anecdote. It was explained that all efforts point back to the community obtaining evidence through a speed watch scheme. Enquiries had been made with Podimore Speed watch as to what the requirements are:

- a. A coordinator to manage the scheme and liaise with the Police.
- b. A minimum of 5/6 volunteers with 3 people conducting surveys. One holding the speed gun to measure speeds, one to write down the registration number of vehicles in excess of 36mph and a third to count the number of vehicles.

- c. Details passed to the police of vehicles recorded and they then send a letter to the registered keeper advising them of their excess speed. There appears to be no limit to the number of letters any driver can receive.
- d. Establishing a CSW can be a lengthy process but appears necessary to obtain data required for any action.

PJ outlined speed reduction factors as being enforcement camera deployment (regularly at the bottom of the hill near to Camel Bridge), pinch points, road narrowing, parked vehicles and acute bends. All of which feature in Queen Camel.

It was explained that a previous attempt to start a CSW in the village, around 2019, did not get off the ground due to lack of volunteers and the Police equipment had to be handed back. A coordinator is required to get a scheme off the ground. The police had previously identified two safe locations for CSW to operate, West Camel Road, between the Medical Centre and South View and outside the Memorial Hall. It was questioned the relevance of siting a CSW at the Memorial Hall, where there is a pinch point, as vehicles do not speed there due to the pinch point. Police identify what they consider to be safe location, and these are the only locations that can be used to be covered by their Public Liability Insurance.

The meeting then quickly moved on to suggest that CSW was too slow to implement, and ineffective, and the way forward is to have a 20mph limit throughout the village and for Speed Indicator Devices to be installed.

20mph- The meeting was notified that previous correspondence from Somerset Council was that they support requests for 20mph speed limits, but local communities would need to pay. The cost being suggested at being £15000+. Some support the idea of having a 20mph throughout the village.

SIDS- The meeting was advised that there is funding for SIDS from a Police fund, based on there being evidence of a speed problem (CSW) and that permissions were required from Somerset Highways for them to be installed. This was questioned from the floor suggesting that other villages didn't have to go through such steps (Sparkford/Marston Magna). Previous quotes for SIDS were believed to be £2500 (*post meeting it was established a previous quote had been £3986 each*). It was also suggested that the PC should purchase a couple, one for each end of the village and that they could be purchased online for ~£600 and asked if someone could put one in their garden. People can do what they want in their garden, but it was outlined that there were conditions set as to where and what can be placed on the highway.

Enforcement- It was raised whether Speed Enforcement camera could be sited on private land, permission. If so it could potentially be sited in a safe location to enforce speed limits on High Street near to the Church Path junction.

Conclusion/Actions-

- a. The meeting expressed an interested in a CSW but felt other options would be quicker and more appropriate. *(post meeting 7 indicated they would be willing to volunteer but no persons offering to coordinate)*. Unable to progress further.
- b. 20mph- PJ stated he would liaise with Somerset Council as to how this can be progressed so that the PC can make a decision on whether this would be effective/cost effective.
- c. SID- PJ stated he would revisit the potential with Somerset Council so options can be put before the PC on whether this would be effective/cost effective.
- d. Speed enforcement- PJ to enquire whether Police Speed Enforcement camera could be used from private land to capture speeds.

3. HGVs

PJ explained there is a weight restriction of 7.5T ULW from Sparkford through to Chilton Cantelo. A request had been made for data from the ANPR camera at Sparkford to identify the problem, but it had been declined. The area Chief Inspector had been in contact about prosecuting offending vehicles, but he had stated that it was not a Policing priority so would not be progressed.

A previous survey (run by Peter Farror) was discussed which outlined HGVs through the village, although a number were with legitimate reason. *(Post meeting report located, states 100 HGVs through village on 12/5/17, 1.5% of total vehicles. At least 18 believed to have legitimate access)*.

The meeting focused on Hopkins lorries and the volume of them through the village. It was outlined that the lorries were using the Queen Camel for access, but the issue was the purpose they are using the village, which is subject to a 4 x Parish Council working group. The meeting was updated by Cllr Bryan Norman of the situation.

PJ explained that some areas are looking at an HGV watch (Ilchester named) which works like a CSW where vehicles are identified, and letters are sent to registered keepers. It was also highlighted that the use of the road in breach of the weight restriction, unlike speeding, is an absolute offence and could be reported to the Police for investigation.

Conclusion/Actions-

- a. HGV watch- 9 persons present indicated an interest into being a volunteer on an HGV watch scheme, but no expressions to assume the coordinator role. Unable to progress further.
- b. PJ to liaise with A+S Police to ask for guidance on how to collect data and tackle the issue.

4. Road Crossing

An update was given on recent chatter about a zebra crossing on the High Street. It was highlighted that consideration needs to be given about where to locate a crossing. Placing a crossing needs to meet everyone's needs, so one at one end of the village would not help those at the other and vice versa, and one in the middle of the High Street would result in the loss of valuable parking spaces. That said, the infrastructure team at Somerset Council have stated there is currently no funding for crossing projects and if there were, they would prioritise other areas because of the traffic calming measures that already exist in the village. The matter sits on the pending PC Actions to be revisited next financial year.

5. Dropped Kerbs

A request had been made for additional dropped kerbs as only one end of the village has them. The infrastructure team provided the same response that there was no current funding to progress this. The matter sits on the pending PC Actions to be revisited next financial year.

6. Parking

The significant parking issues around the village was outlined with no potential solution forthcoming. It was raised earlier in the meeting that vehicles parked on the road as you leave the village towards Sparkford cause traffic hold-up. Others in the meeting suggested this acts as a speed reduction measure. The situation of parking for those in Hill View was outlined, with some houses having parking at the rear but others not and there is insufficient capacity for all vehicles to park and keep the road clear.

7. AOB

Some non-road safety matters were raised.

Some of the issues raised involved the spending of significant amounts of money. It was asked how the PC would ensure that the community has its say in how it is spent. One suggested a referendum. The meeting was informed that the PC is elected by the community to represent it, however it would consider how this concern could be satisfied.

Actions from the meeting were summarised.

All thanked for their attendance which clearly showed that the road safety issues were a public concern.

Meeting ended 1915 hours.