

Management Committee

6th June 2017

Improved pedestrianisation of Weymouth town centre

For Decision

Portfolio Holder(s)/ Briefholder

Transport and Infrastructure

Senior Leadership Team Contact:

M Hamilton, Strategic Director

Report Author: Nick Thornley

Statutory Authority Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Purpose of Report

1. To seek support to implement improved pedestrianisation measures for St Thomas and St Mary Streets as the first stage of improving traffic management in Weymouth town centre.

Recommendations

2.
 - a) That Dorset County Council be asked to implement a close monitoring system to assess the detail of any breaches to the existing Traffic Regulation Order in St Thomas and St Mary Streets.
 - b) That local businesses, with support from the Weymouth BID and Weymouth Chamber of Commerce, be reminded of the current Traffic Regulation Order and that policing be improved by the Borough and County Councils.
 - c) That £15,000 capital and up to £5000 per annum revenue funding be set aside to implement a new posts/barriers scheme if required, detail to be agreed by the Strategic Director in liaison with the Leader and Briefholder.
 - d) That the traffic management plans agreed by the County Council as the Highways Authority, and implemented by event organisers working with the Safety Advisory Group and the Borough Council in relation to major events during 2017, be used to test new traffic arrangements in the town centre including the seafront and harbour areas.

Reason for Decision

3. To improve the look, feel and safety of Weymouth town centre and to encourage increased custom to town centre businesses.

Background and Reason Decision Needed

4. A significant number of retail and food and drink businesses are located in St Thomas and St Mary streets in Weymouth Town Centre. Concerns have been expressed by some businesses in recent years about the mix of vehicles and pedestrians in these streets.
5. There is an existing Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in place for St Mary and St Thomas Streets – no vehicles between 1030 and 1730, 7 days a week, with signs rather than bollards or barriers in place. The County Council is able to give a temporary exemption to some vehicles by issuing a permit to businesses wishing to carry out repairs for example. There used to be barriers restricting access to these streets, but these were removed in order to improve the street scene as part of the preparations for hosting the Olympic Games in 2012.
6. Initial discussions with the County Council recently have concluded that the workings of the current scheme should be closely evaluated before expenditure is incurred (approximately £15,000 to install new barriers or posts and up to £5000 per annum to open and close twice a day plus access arrangements for emergency vehicles).
7. The main issues at present seem to relate to occasional shop fitters or van deliveries and occasional taxis.
8. The County Council is able to introduce a monitoring system for a defined period to record times, vehicle numbers, frequency, purpose, etc. The County Council, working with support from the Borough Council, can also improve the policing of these streets using their Civil Enforcement Officers (eg shop maintenance vehicles in the area without a permit) and the licensing of Taxis. The Weymouth BID and the Chamber of Commerce can also help to improve the success of the current TRO by working with local businesses to reinforce the current access restrictions.
9. It is therefore proposed that monitoring and improved policing of these streets takes place as soon as possible and that the Borough Council agrees to put back the barriers or posts if this is considered to be the only way to improve pedestrianisation. It should be possible to find a person or business to assist with the opening and closing at no cost but if this cannot be arranged it is estimated that it would cost approximately £5000 per annum to pay someone to do this. A key system will need to be re-introduced in partnership with the emergency services.
10. The Dorset LEP- funded Transport and Movement Study for Weymouth town centre completed last year includes a number of other suggestions to improve the town centre. There are some key events in Weymouth through

2017 and, following some difficulties last year with traffic management for some large events (eg Waterfest and Ironman), the County Council has introduced improved control measures to manage traffic for this year. It is proposed that these serve as a test for any further potential new traffic arrangements in Weymouth. Discussions with the County Council suggest that the one hour free car parking on an area of the harbour side (Custom House Quay) is the cause of some of the traffic generated in Weymouth Town Centre. Members may wish this arrangement to be reviewed and are invited to comment on this suggestion before any changes are implemented in partnership with the County Council.

Implications

Corporate Plan

Building a stronger economy
Improving quality of life

Financial

The costs of intensively monitoring the current TRO for a defined period can be covered by the County Council but the Borough Council would be required to cover the set up and running costs of any revised scheme if required. If required, the running costs would need to be covered by another council budget.

Equalities

The management plan for any new scheme will be required to meet the needs of people with a disability.

Environmental

No specific implications from this report. The Town Centre is defined as a Conservation Area.

Economic Development

An improved scheme for managing pedestrians and vehicles in the town centre is predicted to have a positive impact on town centre businesses.

Risk Management (including Health & Safety)

A full risk assessment will be drawn up with the management plan for any new scheme.

Human Resources

No implications from this report.

Consultation and Engagement

Scheme prepared in partnership with Dorset County Council.
Consultation with town centre businesses will take place prior to any changes being implemented

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

Footnote

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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