

Overview & Scrutiny Task Group

Meeting Notes



Review topic	Date of Meeting
Pedestrianisation Task Group	29 January 2024

Attendance	Venue
Members: S. Norman (Chair) H. Ashton R. Bragger K. Coe Absent: D. Cross Officers: Will Stevenson (Governance) Witnesses: Barbara Porter (Lichfield Disabled Parking) Debbie Litherland-Smith (Bore Street Dental) Stella Southwood	Committee Room

Areas Discussed

The Chair explained that this was the first meeting of the Pedestrianisation Task Group, and was arranged to hear from some of those affected by the reduction in access and parking for Disabled Badge holders.

Two of the witnesses are carers for their husbands whose disabilities meant they had to use wheelchairs to get around. The third witness is a Practice Manager for a dental practice which has been particularly affected by the pedestrianisation trial.

All attendees were asked to introduce themselves.

- Witnesses were asked when they first heard about the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). They replied that it was in December 2022, and it seemed to be implemented almost immediately.

The Chair explained it was introduced in March 2023 and a hybrid system introduced in July 2023.

1. The witnesses submitted their views to the task group.

They:

- a) Highlighted frustration that much of the communication had been conducted online: a lack of physical letters and posters created difficulty in informing certain demographics.
- b) Believed LDC has not fulfilled its commitments to engage in focus groups and dialogue with residents on this issue.
- c) Said they had received letters from disabled residents in the surrounding towns/villages, some of whom no longer visited Lichfield City centre due to the difficulties created by the pedestrianisation trial.
- d) Stated there had been a lack of responses when contacting officers.
- e) Explained instances of confusion on the enforcement of the pedestrianisation trial.

2. Members noted they have also identified issues with communication during the pedestrianisation trial.

- a) The witnesses highlighted the public sector equality duty, under the equalities act 2010, noting protected characteristics of age and disability. They believed LDC was breaching this requirement. Citizens Advice service advised that the trial period seemed quite lengthy.
- b) There were accounts of multiple patients who had been with Bore Street Dental Practice for many years, now having left the practice as they were unable to attend due to parking and pedestrianisation.

3. Members asked if the pedestrianisation or the lack of available parking was causing the most issues?

The witnesses said:

- a) They liked the idea of pedestrianisation, but the practicalities with parking made it unworkable. They agreed that the parking – particularly on Bore Street – needed to be addressed.
- b) That they were unable to access events at The Hub due to the lack of parking or drop-off points outside.
- c) Confirmed that between them they had attended the consultation meetings.
- d) Asked why the restrictions lasted until 9pm.

- e) Highlighted photos they had taken of outside seating in Bore Street that was not being used. They stated that this was taking up valuable space that may be required by disabled residents.
- f) Asked about the possibility of keeping Tamworth Street and Bore Street open as a throughway, leaving Market Square pedestrianised.
- g) Asked if any member on the decision panel had ever pushed a loaded wheelchair around the city centre.
4. **Members** recognised the economic arguments for pedestrianisation but also the economic argument of ensuring the city was as accessible for as many people as possible, and that nobody was discouraged from visiting the city centre.
5. **Members** believed the introduction of the trial may have impacted public confidence in the scheme.
6. **Members** also raised the lack of information provided on dropping off places.

Outcomes

- The witnesses were most concerned with what they perceived as discrimination against people with disabilities and particularly blue badge holders.
- The communication on what was/was not allowed as part of the pedestrianisation trial was highlighted as inadequate and seemed only to be available to those able to use digital means. The information on what would be introduced and the signage to confirm what is in place were both identified.
- The rationale behind the 9pm time limit was queried by witnesses and members.
- The idea of designated drop off spaces being identified and communicated to residents was supported by members for further investigation.

Further Work Required/Next Steps:

- It was agreed that the next meeting would be with the Cabinet member and relevant officers in order to get their views of the issues raised by the witnesses.