

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

11 December 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Report of the Tackling Excessive Speeds in Rural Areas Task and Finish Group

Final Decision-Maker	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Portfolio Holders	Councillor Lynne Weatherly, Communities and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder
Lead Director	Paul Taylor, Director of Change and Communities
Head of Service	Jane Clarke, Head of Policy and Governance
Lead Officer/Report Author	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All wards

Recommendation:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the updated findings of the Task and Finish Group and to agree the recommendations summarised in section 5 of the report

This report relates to the following Five Year Plan Key Objective:

A confident borough – the Council expects the borough to remain a safe place to live, work and visit where communities enjoy good health and resilient to deal with the challenges they may encounter.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Hawkhurst)	13 February 2017 (Interim report)
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Town Hall)	10 April 2017 (Verbal update)
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Town Hall)	12 June 2017 (Full report)
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Town Hall)	11 December 2017 (Revised report)

Report of the Tackling Excessive Speeds in Rural Areas Task and Finish Group

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the findings and final recommendations of a Task and Finish Group that was set up following complaints about the difficulty of getting a permanent roadside speed camera in Hawkhurst. However, because of the close association between traffic speed and other safety-related issues, it ranges more widely than was originally envisaged.
 - 1.2 While efforts to improve road safety are said to focus on “the 3 ‘E’s” of education, enforcement and engineering, there are others. Experiment and evaluation are key examples and are sometimes the only way to find a solution to long-standing problems. The report points to possible changes in policy and practice and hopes these will be carefully considered by key stakeholders both locally and nationally.
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2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 15 August 2016, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was presented with a report which highlighted the concerns of residents in Hawkhurst due to excessive speeding by motorists, in and around the village. The issue had been brought to the Committee’s attention by the Hawkhurst Speedwatch group and at the August 2016 meeting former and current representatives from both the Hawkhurst and Speldhurst Speedwatch groups spoke to Members and highlighted their experiences.
- 2.2 A number of Speedwatch groups in the borough were asked for their views and the responses can be seen at **Appendix A** to this report. Hawkhurst Speedwatch had campaigned for changes to the local and central government policies which determine the use of fixed speed cameras and mobile speed camera vans, but had met with strong resistance to change.
- 2.3 The Committee agreed to appoint a Task and Finish Group (TFG) - comprising Councillors Dawlings, Hills, Huggett and Palmer - to look at the issue further and to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with its findings and recommendations. Cllr Hills was appointed chairman at the TFG’s first meeting.
- 2.4 The Task and Finish Group (TFG) met on two occasions. Additionally, Councillors Hills and Huggett visited Hawkhurst to see the local Speedwatch group in action and to witness for themselves the high incidence of excessive traffic speed.

- 2.5 In addition, the TFG drew on their personal experience as drivers for many years and the changes they had seen in both driving conditions and in driver behaviour.
- 2.6 The main issue from Hawkhurst Speedwatch's point of view was that the Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership (KMSCP) adheres to strict criteria for the identification of fixed speed camera sites, which include a minimum level of road deaths or serious injuries over the previous three years.
- 2.7 Hawkhurst Speedwatch has been active in gaining support for its work and highlighting what it considers to be an important area of community safety. Hawkhurst Parish Council has the issue as a standing item on its Council agendas and shares those concerns. Its concerns have led to personal visits by the relevant KCC Cabinet member, Matthew Balfour, together with the Kent and Medway Police Commissioner, Matthew Scott and the local MP, Greg Clark.
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3. INFORMATION GATHERING

Local stakeholders

- i. **Kent County Council (KCC)**, as the local highway authority, is responsible for road safety. KCC's policies and priorities are set out in its publication 'Road Casualty Reduction Strategy for Kent 2014-2020'.
- ii. **Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership (KMSCP)** is comprised of representatives from Kent Highways, Highways England (which is responsible only for trunk roads, such as the A21) and Kent Police. They all seek to help reduce crash and casualty numbers through education, publicity and enforcement.
- iii. **Kent Police** are responsible for the operation of mobile safety cameras and the issuing of all speeding fines or offering the alternative of a speed awareness course (provided by KCC).
- iv. **Kent Community Speedwatch (KCS)** has a county coordinator, employed by Kent Police, who supports local communities that operate their own Speedwatch schemes. It does not provide any financial help with the cost of equipment. It does however collate the data collected by groups across the county which can lead to follow-up action by the police. There are currently 12 Speedwatch groups covering 173 sites in the TWBC area - and there are around 1700 Speedwatch sites in Kent as a whole. Hawkhurst has the largest and most active Speedwatch group, which partly explains why it accounts for a very high proportion of excessive speed reports.

3.1 Speed Camera Governance

- 3.1.1 Under the National Safety Camera Programme, launched in 2002, police forces were able to form partnerships with local highway authorities. In 2005 the Programme came to an end and in 2007 the Department for Transport produced guidance ([Use of Speed and Red light Cameras for Traffic Enforcement: Guidance on Deployment, Visibility and Signing](#))¹, which stated that camera funding, activities and partnerships were to be integrated into a wider road safety delivery process. As a result of the 2007 changes in funding criteria, the partnerships broadened their scope to include other forms of road safety risks, such as the use of mobile phones.
- 3.1.2 In 2010 the Coalition Government said it would end government funding for new fixed safety cameras and move towards more effective means of ensuring safe roads.

3.2 Criteria for speed camera deployment

- 3.2.1 As already mentioned, Hawkhurst Speedwatch's main concern is to get a fixed speed camera (or possibly several) to help slow traffic as it approaches the village centre.

- 3.2.2 Current government policy, as laid down in Department for Transport (DfT) guidance is that:

"The primary objective for camera deployment is to reduce deaths and injuries on roads by reducing the level and severity of speeding and red light running";
and

"For selecting potential camera sites, it is recommended that analysis of collision data should be undertaken over a minimum period (e.g. most recent 3 years, or preferably 5 years) to determine whether a camera is an appropriate solution to reduce speeds and/or collisions at that site".

- 3.2.3 Each highway authority will have identified 'core' sites which meet the criteria for a fixed speed camera – often through an operational plan or protocol. Additionally, they may have also identified, or been made aware of, "community concern sites", where there is not a history of killed or seriously injured, but where there is a significant enough problem with speeding to justify enforcement action, in order to reduce the risk of accidents. In these circumstances mobile camera vans, operated by the local police force, can be used for enforcement. However, the resources available to provide this type of enforcement are limited and are often subject to competing operational requirements.

1. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/465165/dft-circular-0107.pdf - DfT USE OF SPEED AND REDLIGHT CAMERAS FOR TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT: GUIDANCE ON DEPLOYMENT, VISIBILITY AND SIGNING

4. TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMENDATIONS

In making its recommendations, the Task and Finish Group considered the following:

- i. The level of public support for 20mph zones in urban areas, suggests there has been a change in public attitudes in recent years. The DfT needs to assess this before a new review of existing national guidance, even in the face of continued vociferous opposition from certain motorist groups.
- ii. While a record of past road casualties provides a convincing case for action, the absence of one is of limited comfort to local people who live with the self-evident risks of excessive traffic speeds in their neighbourhood. The level of local public concern must carry greater weight in decision-making.

4.1 Policing the speeders

- 4.1.1 As is widely known and generally accepted, police forces do not normally take action against drivers unless a vehicle is travelling at more than 10% plus 2mph above the limit (that is, 35mph in a 30 zone (30+3+2), 46 in a 40 (40+4+2), etc).
- 4.1.2 Speedwatch groups are told not to record any information about vehicles travelling slower than this – and they must also discard details of any vehicle on which the various observers are not in full agreement as to make/model, colour and registration number.
- 4.1.3 Kent Community Speedwatch collates the data supplied by all its groups within the county. Advisory letters are sent to the registered keepers of speeding vehicles if they are repeat offenders. In the worst cases, the letters are hand-delivered by a policeman to underline the seriousness of the matter.
- 4.1.4 Over the 12 months from January to December 2016, 7949 vehicles travelling at excessive speed were recorded by Speedwatch groups in the TWBC area. This gave rise to 1319 advisory letters, 19 of which were hand-delivered. In a further six cases, the relevant drivers were subject to “active enforcement” because, for example, they had been travelling at more than 50% above the speed limit as multiple observations are not required in such circumstances.
- 4.1.5 The information gathered by Speedwatch groups is a valuable asset – and the collation of data across the county increases its usefulness. It follows that sharing the data collected with neighbouring police forces will enhance the deterrent value of the Speedwatch programme – and not just in areas close to county borders.

TFG recommendation:

- 1) All police forces should share Community Speedwatch data and take appropriate follow-up action in respect of vehicles whose registered keeper’s address is in their area.**

- 4.1.6 Currently only police officers (including special constables, but not PCSOs) are allowed to stop a vehicle and issue a speeding ticket. Given other policing priorities, officers find it hard to allocate time to help with traffic speed management, although there is a team of special constables that occasionally go out to enable Speedwatch groups to carry out “restorative justice” sessions. During such sessions, speeding vehicles are directed off the road to a safe place and then spoken to by local councillors or residents (including schoolchildren), who explain why it is important to their community that people do not break the speed limit when travelling in their town or village.
- 4.1.7 Kent Police has recently announced that it plans to recruit an extra 300 PCSOs (some paid, some voluntary) and to give all PCSOs extra training to enable them to deal more effectively with a wider range of situations. This is great opportunity to respond to community concerns about road safety.

TFG recommendation:

2) PCSOs should be given wider powers, including the ability to stop vehicles and issue penalty notices for speeding.

- 4.1.8 When a speeding ticket is issued (sometimes based on an officer’s personal judgement rather than a speed gun reading), it is for the Central Ticket Office to determine what action is taken. Many drivers will be fined and have points added to their licence – with the income from fines largely going to the Government through the justice system. But drivers with no recent history of speeding and other traffic offences are offered the alternative of attending a speed awareness course. The charge for these courses is not very different to that of a speeding fine, but the drivers who opt to attend one avoid having points on their licence. KCC provide the courses at various locations throughout the county. Any profit made from doing so is fed back in to support the work of KMSCP.
- 4.1.9 The TFG recognised that effective deterrent action against speeding will always be a victim of its own success in the sense that the more that people are encouraged to drive within the limit, the less income from fines there will be from offenders to help justify the effort - not that the income from fines always goes to the authorities that carry out the enforcement action.

4.2 Making the best use of resources through evidence-led activity

- 4.2.1 Camera enforcement is not cheap. Three types of speed cameras are currently in use: fixed cameras, mobile cameras, and average-speed cameras. The cost of installing and maintaining a fixed speed camera varies depending on the location and the type of system. In a rural location, the costs can be very high as the installation of a separate power supply is often required. Department for Transport guidance ‘[Roads: speed cameras](#)’². issued in 2013 stated the estimated cost of replacing a wet-film camera with a digital camera as approximately £20,000.
- 4.2.2 The installation of an average-speed camera system (involving at least two cameras) and the statutory levels of lighting required could exceed £100,000.

- 4.2.3 Maintenance of digital cameras is easier and less expensive than the previous wet-film types and the data can be downloaded remotely.
- 4.2.4 Speedwatch groups use a variety of devices. Some have a camera-like device above a screen that shows the speed of approaching vehicles, while others have the 'radar device' built within the screen itself.
- 4.2.5 The Sussex Police allow local Speedwatch groups to use 'speed guns' but in Kent their use is restricted to police officers because it is considered to be too confrontational and likely to lead to an aggressive response from some drivers.

TFG recommendation:

- 3) Speedwatch teams should be allowed to decide for themselves what sort of equipment they want to use – especially if they have raised the money to pay for it.**

- 4.2.6 The Kent Community Speedwatch coordinator has a Radar Recorder monitoring unit which records traffic and generates a speed survey by measuring the speed of each passing vehicle (but not its type or registration number). KCC lay two rubber strips across a road to carry out similar surveys but Community Speedwatch data is likely to be a reliable indicator for most speed management purposes and also a useful tool in evaluating any experimental measures.

TFG recommendation:

- 4) Greater use should be made of Radar Recorder machines to provide area profiles of speeding activity which will help the Police to direct their resources more effectively.**

4.3 Speed Camera Technology

- 4.3.1 The majority of mobile speed cameras currently in use operate through lasers or radar – allowing the cameras to record over a greater range. Laser cameras bounce a beam of light off the target vehicle and radar cameras reflect back radio waves to the camera. There are a number of models of hand-held devices and the police and safety camera partnerships also operate camera vans. In 2016, North Yorkshire deployed six 'agile' safety camera vans using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology, to tackle excessive speeding in rural areas. The vans are smaller than previous versions allowing them to be parked in larger number of sites and are better suited to rural locations.
- 4.3.2 In 2015 there were nine deployments of a speed camera van to the A268 High Street in Hawkhurst with 66 offences resulting from speeding or lack of speed awareness. However Hawkhurst has recently been dropped from the list of mobile camera sites as very few vehicles were found to be speeding – which is hardly surprising given that the layby where it sat was at the end of a long straight stretch of road giving drivers the chance to slow down before they got to it.

4.3.3 Fixed cameras use radar technology and although the majority check the speed of vehicles from just past the camera, newer designs of cameras can also record speeding vehicles approaching the camera, allowing a picture of the driver to be taken at the time of the offence. Photos are recorded digitally and then either downloaded from the camera to a laptop or via the internet. The digitalisation of speed cameras allows them to be used more frequently and lowers the cost of processing images. New technology has addressed the issue of capturing images over long, medium and short distances as well as recognising drivers and number plates. Radar Recorders or Traffic Classifier, although not speed camera devices, allow non-intrusive monitoring of traffic speeds in both directions. The data collected can be monitored online and retrieved using a palm pilot or wireless connection. Software is available that can analyse the data and produce reports.

TFG recommendation:

- 5) Recognising that “a carrot is often better than a stick”, local communities that are concerned about speeding at particular locations should, in the first instance, consider solar-powered speed indication devices that will alert drivers if they are exceeding the speed limit. (Funding for such devices can come from their county councillor’s share of the Members’ Fund or from their local town or parish council, or they could try to raise the money for themselves.)**

4.4 Other options for reducing excessive speeding

4.4.1 Effective speed management through villages and rural areas requires a combination of methods. A thorough survey of the traffic flow on roads is necessary to ensure appropriate speed limits are in place. Road engineering in the form of traffic calming measures such as speed humps are often used to reduce vehicle speeds but can give rise to increased air pollution as drivers slow down and speed up again. In its June 2017 report on air pollution, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) called for 20mph speed limits without physical measures to reduce traffic speed where the average was already below 24mph.

4.4.2 In April 2016 new legislation for traffic signs was introduced which allows local authorities to decide on the number and frequency of speed limits signs. Many villages now have large, visible gateways when entering and leaving, to clearly show where the village starts and ends and highlight that residential speed limits will be in place.

TFG recommendation:

- 6) One or two small towns and villages that are concerned about speeding traffic should be invited to become an experimental 20mph area for at least a year, with no expensive road engineering measures but relying just on traffic signs for ‘enforcement’ and on the local Speedwatch to monitor compliance.**

4.5 Enabling the general public to provide information about bad drivers

4.5.1 Dashboard cameras ('dashcams') were originally introduced to protect drivers from false insurance claims by helping to determine who was really responsible for an accident. However, in October 2016, the North Wales Police sought to widen their usefulness by launching "Operation Snap" which encouraged drivers (and cyclists with helmet cameras) to upload clips if they had recorded evidence of bad/unlawful driving. Experienced police officers review all the clips and issue penalty notices in cases where they think they are fully justified. The offenders either accept the notices or can take matters further in the usual way if they contest them. Following the success of the scheme, it is being replicated across the rest of Wales. Although Kent Police sometimes put out radio appeals for dashcam recordings of a road crash scene where it is difficult to establish the cause, there does not seem to be any good reason why they should not follow the Welsh lead.

TFG recommendation:

- 7) Kent Police should set up a weblink so that drivers and cyclists can upload dashcam clips that are believed to show evidence of driving offences.**

4.6 Reinforcing national road safety messages

4.6.1 DfT and KCC produce a range of posters and other publicity materials to highlight road safety risks. It would help get their important messages across if they were displayed more frequently in pubs and clubs and indeed in premises of all kinds where a large number of people might see them. To help with this the Licensing and Food Safety teams of TWBC have agreed to carry a small supply of posters when they are out and about on inspection or enforcement visits, and other organisation could usefully follow their lead.

TFG recommendation:

- 8) Both public bodies and private companies should make greater efforts to raise the profile of road safety issues by displaying DfT and KCC posters and those produced by other special groups such as RoSPA and Brake.**

4.7 Local campaigning

4.7.1 Hawkhurst Speedwatch is an excellent example of a large, committed, community action group, addressing a local issue. The group has received support from Greg Clark MP, who visited the village with Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Scott, in its efforts to change speed camera policy and encourage more enforcement. At Mr Clark's request, Mr Scott agreed to review the current criteria for approving fixed speed camera sites but KMSCP see no reason to question the current national criteria.

4.7.2 A little to the north of Hawkhurst, a two-year campaign, led by county and borough councillor Sean Holden, along with Helen Grant MP (and TFG member Councillor Dawlings), aims to bring enforcement back to local roads and to increase the level of practical support provided by Kent Police to

Speedwatch groups. This work has been successful in engaging the relevant stakeholders. Councillor Holden advised the Task and Finish Group that speeding was the most prominent issue raised by residents in his area and that, through the efforts of the campaign working group, the work of Speedwatch groups now has a higher profile. The Working Group is hopeful that new hand-held portable technology for speed cameras will provide a solution to some of the issues faced by the Speedwatch community.

5. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) All police forces should share Community Speedwatch data and take appropriate follow-up action in respect of vehicles whose registered keeper's address is in their area.**
 - 2) PCSOs should be given wider powers, including the ability to stop vehicles and issue penalty notices for speeding.**
 - 3) Speedwatch teams should be allowed to decide for themselves what sort of equipment they want to use – especially if they have raised the money to pay for it.**
 - 4) Greater use should be made of Radar Recorder machines to provide area profiles of speeding activity which will help the Police to direct their resources more effectively.**
 - 5) Recognising that “a carrot is often better than a stick”, local communities that are concerned about speeding at particular locations should, in the first instance, consider solar-powered speed indication devices that will alert drivers if they are exceeding the speed limit. (Funding for such devices can come from their county councillor's share of the Members' Fund or from their local town or parish council, or they could try to raise the money for themselves.)**
 - 6) One or two small towns and villages that are concerned about speeding traffic should be invited to become an experimental 20mph area for at least a year, with no expensive road engineering measures but relying just on traffic signs for 'enforcement' and on the local Speedwatch to monitor compliance.**
 - 7) Kent Police should set up a weblink so that drivers and cyclists can upload dashcam clips that are believed to show evidence of driving offences.**
 - 8) Public bodies and private companies should make greater efforts to raise the profile of road safety issues by displaying DfT and KCC posters and those produced by other special groups such as RoSPA and Brake.**
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6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The Task and Finish Group applauds the work that Hawkhurst Speedwatch and other such groups are doing to help make local roads safer for pedestrians and motorists. The efforts being made by the Hawkhurst to change the policies and criteria for the identification of core speed camera sites is also recognised. The Task and Finish Group strongly supports Hawkhurst Speedwatch in all its endeavours.
- 6.2 The TFG's review and this report has ranged more widely than initially expected but the TFG commends all of its speed and safety-related recommendations to the Overview and Steering Committee and seeks its endorsement.

7. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the findings of the Task and Finish Group and endorse the recommendations.

8. NEXT STEPS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's response to the report will be reflected in the published minutes of the meeting, which will be available on the Council's website.

9. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off (name of officer and date)
Legal including Human Rights Act	There are no direct legal or human rights implications as a result of the recommendations in the report.	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer 29/11/12
Finance and other resources	There are no direct financial implications as a result of the recommendations in the report	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer 29/11/12
Staffing establishment	There are no direct staffing implications as a result of the recommendations in the report.	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer 29/11/12
Equalities	There is no apparent equality impact on end users as a result of the recommendations in the report.	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer 29/11/12

10. REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix A – Responses from Tunbridge Wells Speedwatch groups

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS - None