

EXECUTIVE

DATE: 25 APRIL 2005

SUBJECT: PETITION – OBJECTION TO LUTON TOWN CENTRE
TRAFFIC STAGE 2

REPORT BY: HEAD OF ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORTATION

CONTACT OFFICER: J MAPLE 01582 546508

IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL STAFFING

EQUALITIES COMMUNITY SAFETY

FINANCIAL RISKS

OTHER

CONSULTATIONS:

COUNCILLORS CONSULTED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
CONSULTED

STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED OTHER

WARDS AFFECTED: SOUTH

LEAD EXECUTIVE MEMBER(S): COUNCILLOR ANDREW STRANGE

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. Executive is recommended to:
 - (i) Note receipt of the petition
 - (ii) Instruct the Head of Engineering and Transport to continue to monitor the situation and to report back to Executive at the appropriate time with recommendations on the permanent implementation or otherwise of the experimental traffic order.

BACKGROUND

2. The Town Centre Traffic Stage 2 scheme is an enabling scheme to allow for the regeneration of St Georges Square.

3. It has significantly altered the traffic circulation, and in particular the bus routes around the town centre.
4. The traffic orders necessary to initially implement the scheme are experimental and are statutorily limited to a maximum duration of 18 months from implementation. There is a period of 6 months from implementation of the order, or of any variation by further order, for objections to be made after which the Council can consider whether the provisions of the Orders should be made permanent.
5. The scheme will be monitored for its effects for a minimum of 6 months and a further report will be made to Executive with a recommendation for the permanent implementation or otherwise at the appropriate time.

REPORT

6. The petition consists of 66 letters of objection to the scheme. The letters are all a pro forma and have been signed by drivers working for Arriva the Shires. The text of the letter indicates that they were signed by the drivers before the scheme was implemented on 20 March.
7. The objections are: -
 - People will have further to walk in order to get closer to the shops.
 - The run down environment of Silver Street is far from ideal in terms of waiting conditions for both passengers and drivers.
 - The plans have been rushed through with little consultation with bus users.
 - The introduction of service changes at such short notice will lead to confusion amongst passengers.
 - The scheme will do nothing to increase the use of public transport in the Luton area.
8. Dealing with the objections in turn, since the majority of buses now stop in Church Street, Silver Street and Library Road, most people have a shorter walk to the shops. A few services do only stop in New Bedford Road but the walk is not significantly longer.
9. It is accepted that Silver Street is not an ideal environment, but this was promoted by the bus companies themselves. It did not form part of the original proposals for the scheme.
10. It is accepted that the consultation period was short but this was necessary given that the bus companies did not reach a final decision on preferred routes until January and the scheme had to be implemented in March for financial reasons.
11. A great deal of attention was given to informing passengers on the ground with extensive press coverage, leaflets, promobike and marshals on the ground before and after implementation. Clearly, since the letters were formulated before the scheme was implemented, they cannot take into account the relatively smooth changeover.

12. It is too early to assess the impact on use of public transport, but early indications are that there has been little impact on bus passenger levels.
13. The experimental traffic orders can be amended before permanent implementation to allow for any adjustments that may be necessary as a result

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

14. There are no legal implications directly associated with the petition. However, Executive will be required to approve or otherwise the permanent implementation of the experimental traffic orders at the appropriate time. Agreed by the Head of Legal Services on 11th April 2005.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. Although no financial implications are directly related to the petition, failure to make the experimental traffic orders permanent will require significant engineering works to return the road layout to its previous state. Agreed by the departmental Finance Manager on 11th April 2005.

OPTIONS

16. The petition be noted and that the Head of Engineering and Transport be instruct to monitor the situation and to report back to Executive at the appropriate time with recommendations on the permanent implementation or otherwise of the experimental traffic order. **This is the recommended option.**
17. The petition be noted and that the Luton Town Centre Traffic Stage 2 scheme be abandoned and the road network be returned to its previous stage. Since the scheme has only just been implemented and has not yet had time to display benefits or otherwise, this option is not recommended.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

18. There are no background papers relating to this report other than documents which disclose confidential information within the meaning of Section 100D (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972