



London Borough of Merton

# **Report and recommendations arising from the scrutiny task group review of road safety around schools in Merton**

## **Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

**June 2018**

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### **Acknowledgements**

The task group would particularly like to thank the local residents, parents, headteachers, chairs of governors and council officers who shared their views and experiences with us.

All contributors are listed in Appendices 1 and 2 of this report.

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## **Chair's foreword**

Thousands of children make the journey to and from Merton's schools daily.

As a Council, Merton has existing road safety measures in place to facilitate those journeys.

This review aimed to scrutinise those measures and to look at information on best practice and alternative measures used elsewhere that could inform the Council's future approach to road safety around schools.

Road safety is one important aspect of the school journey. Our review also considered the impact of school journeys and road safety in the context of wider environmental and public health issues.

The Task Group heard from schools, parents and local residents as well as Council Officers and Members. Information from other authorities was considered together with background policy documents.

Thank you to all those who participated in our research and informed our recommendations. We are indebted to Julia Regan our Scrutiny Officer for all she has done.

I hope that our recommendations add to the existing move towards improving the school journey for the pupils of Merton.

**Helen Forbes**  
**Parent Governor Representative, Overview and Scrutiny Commission**

## **Executive Summary**

The task group was set up in order to review the safety of pupils crossing roads whilst walking to and from school. It has investigated the aspects of road design, personal behaviour and enforcement activities that are currently affecting road safety in the vicinity of schools.

The report is evidence based, drawing on and reflecting the wide range of written and oral evidence received. In particular, the task group has taken into account the experiences and views of more than 750 local parents and residents as well as headteachers and school governors. Task group members also visited two schools, spoke to council officers and received information from other councils.

The task group found that the council already undertakes a lot of activities to improve road safety, promote sustainable travel and enforce parking regulations. The consultation undertaken by the task group highlighted the necessity of a two-pronged approach to improving road safety around schools through encouraging a greater number of parents and children to walk or cycle rather than using the car, and to ensure there is effective traffic calming measures and enforcement of parking regulations. This has been reflected in the task group's recommendations.

In carrying out this task group review, the task group has been mindful of the wider policy context of public health concern about child and adult obesity and air quality, to which the recommendations of this task group will also contribute.

In making its recommendations, the task group has tried to strike a balance between individual choices and the wellbeing of the community as a whole. The task group has also made every effort to ensure that its recommendations will not lead to an increase in the number of car journeys on the school run. The task group has also made recommendations intended to support schools to develop and maintain STARS travel plans within existing resources and for the council to provide schools with an information sheet for parents rather than expecting each school to produce its own.

The task group's recommendations run throughout the report and are listed in full overleaf.

## List of task group's recommendations

	Responsible decision making body
<b>Recommendation 1</b> (paragraph 15 )	
We recommend that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel should receive progress updates on the Local Implementation Plan at key points so that members can champion this work.	Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel
<b>Recommendation 2</b> (paragraph 48)	
We recommend that Cabinet agree to continued work by the Traffic and Highways team to provide road safety training to pupils, support schools to join the Transport for London STARS accreditation programme and to develop STARS travel plans.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 3</b> (paragraph 49)	
We strongly recommend that all schools should have up-to-date STARS travel plans and that where possible, these should include the provision of space for the safe storage of pupils' bicycles and scooters.	Schools
<b>Recommendation 4</b> (paragraph 50)	
We recommend that Cabinet ask the Traffic and Highways team to: 1) investigate an initiative taken by a school in Hillingdon whereby the STARS accreditation data collection is led by pupils, which has made the process less onerous for school; 2) discuss with the Head of Parking Services the feasibility of using parking enforcement officers to assist with a light touch data collection method that would complement their role when they are working in the vicinity of a school.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 5</b> (paragraph 51)	
We recommend that Cabinet investigate the most effective way to enable one or two council officers to work directly with schools on setting up, implementing and monitoring the STARS accreditation scheme. This may be possible within existing resources or it may be through the use of some of the monies raised from the new parking charges scheme.	Cabinet

	Responsible decision making body
<b>Recommendation 6</b> (paragraph 54)	
<p>We recommend that that Cabinet should produce an information sheet for parents to encourage a reduction in the use of cars for the school run. This sheet should be no longer than two sides of A4 and should be sent to all schools in the borough. The information provided should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Context – admissions data shows that 80% of primary school pupils live within a 20 minute walk to school; research on the impact on air quality of leaving the engine idling; health benefits of walking and cycling</li> <li>• Safer walking and cycling routes – links to websites and Apps that help parents identify walking route away from main roads that is less busy and less polluted</li> <li>• Being visible – advice on high visibility clothing and other safety equipment for pedestrians and cyclists</li> <li>• Other options– links to websites on local public transport to and Apps such as “lift angel” to promote car sharing</li> </ul>	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 7</b> (paragraph 61)	
<p>We recommend that Cabinet should provide advice to schools on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) how to set up a walking bus, including information on the legal situation in the event of an accident</li> <li>b) what steps the school could take to “employ” a school crossing patrol (lollipop man/woman).</li> </ol>	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 8</b> (paragraph 73)	
<p>We recommend that Cabinet ask the Traffic and Highways Team to give careful consideration on a school by school basis of the feasibility and benefits of creating or enlarging a “drop and go“ area to decrease traffic congestion and enable pupils to dismount from cars safely. Drop and go areas should be viewed as a last resort when all other options for that school have been considered and this has been identified by the Traffic and Highways team to be the best solution to reduce traffic congestion and promote road safety for that school.</p>	Cabinet

	Responsible decision making body
<b>Recommendation 9</b> (paragraph 77)	
We recommend that Cabinet ensure that the effectiveness of the “remote officer observed camera enforcement” project is closely evaluated to identify the locations at which it is most beneficial; the safety, environmental and financial outcomes at each location and whether there is a sound business case for the purchase of additional cameras.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 10</b> (paragraph 78)	
We recommend that Cabinet provide a report to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the “remote officer observed camera enforcement” project outcomes. (recommendation 10)	Cabinet  Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel
<b>Recommendation 11</b> (paragraph 81)	
We recommend that Cabinet undertake publicity to draw local residents’ attention to the steps they can take to request enforcement action when a car is parked across their dropped kerb.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 12</b> (paragraph 84)	
We recommend that Cabinet should ensure that the existing arrangements for the temporary suspension of resident parking permit bays within the vicinity of the school to facilitate drop off and pick up should be publicised to councillors.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 13</b> (paragraph 94)	
We recommend that the report on the evaluation of school super zone pilot should be received by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in due course.	Overview and Scrutiny Commission
<b>Recommendation 14</b> (paragraph 105)	
We recommend that Cabinet should ensure that any temporary road restrictions around schools should be piloted in the first instance and should then be carefully evaluated. Consideration should be given to the likely impact on nearby roads and other local schools. If a decision is then taken to extend to other schools, we recommend that a borough wide strategic approach should be developed.	Cabinet

	Responsible decision making body
<b>Recommendation 15</b> (paragraph 106)	
We recommend that Cabinet should give consideration to alternative approaches to temporary road restrictions, such as designated one way streets at peak times.	Cabinet
<b>Recommendation 16</b> (paragraph 107)	
We recommend that, where there are a number of schools in close proximity, they should give consideration to staggering the school start and finish times in order to improve road safety in the vicinity of their schools	Schools

## **Report of the Scrutiny Task Group Review of Road Safety Around Schools in Merton**

### **Introduction**

#### *Purpose*

1. During the scrutiny topic suggestion process in spring 2018, two school governors and a resident asked scrutiny to review the safety of pupils crossing roads whilst walking to and from school. Specific concerns were raised in relation to individual schools and a 20mph borough wide scheme was suggested as a means of addressing this issue.
2. The Commission, at its meeting on 17 July 2018, agreed to set up a task group to consider the aspects of road design, personal behaviour and enforcement activities that were currently affecting road safety in the vicinity of schools and to make recommendations that would help to create a safer walking environment during school run periods and a change in behaviour.
3. The task group's terms of reference were:
  - To scrutinise the road safety measures that are already in place in the vicinity of local schools and receive information about the alternatives that are available;
  - To identify existing best practice in Merton and elsewhere that could inform the council's future approach to road safety around schools;
  - To consider how road safety measures impact on wider environmental and public health issues, including air quality and childhood obesity;
  - To make recommendations that will help create a safer walking environment in the vicinity of Merton schools during school run periods.
4. The task group agreed to expand its terms of reference to include consideration of recommendations that would help to create a safer cycling environment in the vicinity of Merton's schools. This was in response to points made by parents and headteachers during the course of consultation by the task group. Cycling has therefore been taken into consideration as a more sustainable mode of transport than driving and the task group has examined suggested measures to encourage the take-up of cycling.

#### *What the task group did*

5. The task group has had five formal meetings, including discussion of emerging results and recommendations with the Director and Cabinet Member. Task group members also sent a questionnaire to headteachers, attended a meeting of primary headteachers and visited one primary and one secondary school to see the issues from the schools' perspective.

6. The task group sought the views of local residents and parents through an online questionnaire that was publicised through the council's website, social media and via schools. 754 responses were received. Those who indicated interest in attending a meeting with the task group to discuss their views were invited to a consultation event which 14 people attended. This enabled the task group to better understand the complexity and range of views expressed and to discuss what the school, council and parents could do to improve road safety around local schools. Task group members were clear that this meeting would not discuss specific locations.
7. The task group has received information from other boroughs plus a number of background policy documents.
8. Appendix 1 lists the written evidence received by the task group and Appendix 2 contains a list of witnesses at each meeting.
9. This report sets out the task group's findings, conclusions and recommendations. The task group's recommendations run throughout the report and are set out in full in the executive summary at the front of this document.

## The national and London policy context

10. In carrying out this review, we have been very aware of the wider policy context of public health concern about child and adult obesity and air quality. Nationally, in London and locally there are numerous policy initiatives designed to improve air quality and to encourage increased use of sustainable transport methods such as cycling and walking. All of these will contribute in some way to improving road safety around schools. This task group review is therefore particularly timely and in many ways we have found ourselves pushing at an open door in terms of policy direction.
11. Healthy Streets for London, part of the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy, sets out how the Mayor and TfL will help Londoners to use their cars less and walk, cycle and use public transport more. It outlines some practical steps to achieve this, including:
  - improving local environments by providing more space for walking and cycling, and better public spaces where people can interact;
  - prioritising better and more affordable public transport and safer and more appealing routes for walking and cycling;
  - planning new developments so people can walk or cycle to local shops, schools and workplaces, and have good public transport links for longer journeys.
12. Furthermore, Transport for London's Liveable Neighbourhoods programme gives boroughs the opportunity to bid for funding for long-term schemes that encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The programme supports the aims of the Mayor's Transport Strategy by funding local schemes to reduce car trips and improve neighbourhoods for walking, cycling and public transport. Grants of between £1m and £10m will be provided for a wide range of community-supported projects. These could include creating green spaces and cycling infrastructure and redesigning junctions. The programme can also fund the widening of walking routes to improve access to local shops, businesses and public transport.
13. The Liveable Neighbourhoods programme will continue until 2021/22 and boroughs can submit bids at any time. The winning bids for 2018/19 were announced in February 2019. The closing date for bids in the 2019/20 funding round will be announced later in 2019.
14. We were pleased to hear that the council's Traffic and Highways team are planning to meet with TfL to discuss the bidding process. The team will seek views and commitment to the programme from councillors and residents. This work will be aligned to the Merton Local Implementation Plan and will require a commitment for change that will support more sustainable methods of travel, for example by reducing the number of

parking spaces in order to design in more space for cyclists and pedestrians.

15. **We recommend that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel should receive progress updates on the Local Implementation Plan at key points so that members can champion this work. (recommendation 1)**
16. In March 2019 Public Health England (PHE) published a report calling for cars to be banned around schools and for congestion charges to be introduced in cities across the country as well as tough measures to get polluting vehicles off the road to improve child health. Other measures proposed by PHE to tackle air pollution include car pool lanes, more deliveries at night, lorry bans in city centres and priority parking for electric cars. The PHE report says public transport should be more heavily subsidised and commuters should be encouraged to work from home, alongside national and local road pricing.

#### **Views of parents and local residents**

17. 754 responses to the questionnaire were received from residents and parents of nursery, primary and secondary aged children. The results are summarised below and are provided in full in Appendix 3.
18. 95% of respondents were parents of primary school aged children. 80% of respondents live within a 20 minute walk to school. 75% of respondents have children who walk to school, 20% travel by car, 3% take a bus and 2% cycle.
19. The finding that 80% live within a 20 minute walk to school is in line with data provided to us by the council's school admissions team on the distances from home to school for pupils allocated to start Reception and Year 7 in September 2018. The data showed that 79% of Reception pupils lived within 1km of their primary school. For secondary schools, the data showed that 21% of Year 7 pupils lived within 1km of their secondary school, a further 28% lived between 1 and 2km and 19% lived between 2 and 3km from the school.
20. Respondents indicated the following order of traffic problems affecting drivers, cyclists and pedestrians in the school drop off and pick up area:

• Inconsiderate Parking	19%
• Congestion	16%
• Illegal Parking	16%
• Children crossing road to cars on opposite side	15%
• Lack of parking in areas around the school	13%
• Other issues*	12%

(\* these included speeding cars, lack of regulation or enforcement, cars mounting the pavement and lack of safe crossing areas. 9% of respondents identified U-turns in front of the school as a problem)

21. Additional measures that respondents said they would like to see put in place are;

- Enforcement 36%
- Zebra crossing, speed cameras, traffic wardens 30%
- More parking spaces available 10%
- Lollipop ladies 8%
- One way system 7%
- 20 mph zone 5%
- Speed bumps 4%

22. Further comments and suggestions to help create a safer walking environment for pupils during school run periods were made by 101 of the respondents:

- Parents attitudes are a problem 39%
- Idling cars need to be addressed 19%
- Road closures around the school would help 17%
- More safety signage is needed 14%
- Supervised drop off point 12%

23. These views were discussed more fully at the public consultation event and the views and suggestions provided have informed the recommendations that we have made in later sections of this report.

### **Views of headteachers and chairs of governors**

24. Headteachers were consulted through a questionnaire sent to all maintained primary, secondary and special schools and through a subsequent discussion with primary headteachers. One private school requested and completed the questionnaire and attended a meeting of the task group.
25. The Head of Democracy Services attended a meeting with the chairs of governors on behalf of the task group. The chairs of governors were interested in and supportive of the work of the task group and expressed concern regarding the impact of traffic pollution on health. They also expressed concern about the knock on effect of road closures around schools and said that a borough wide strategy would be needed rather than looking at each school separately.
26. Questionnaire responses were received from 9 primary, 2 secondary and 1 special school. The level of concern about road safety around their

school was reported to be medium for primary heads, low for secondary heads and high for the special school (all ages).

27. Headteachers reported that a variety of traffic calming measures were already in place and they made a number of specific requests for further traffic calming measures which will be passed on to the council's traffic and highways team.
28. Headteachers cited traffic, parking and parental behaviour as the main challenges to improving road safety around schools. 7 of the 12 schools had school travel plans in place and the headteachers said that these had had some impact on road safety. Headteachers also agreed that the road safety programmes provided by the council were useful.
29. We attended a meeting of primary headteachers to discuss the questionnaire results with a larger number of headteachers. They agreed that the questionnaire findings accurately reflected their concerns but that the extent of the impact would depend on the location of the school.
30. In particular they were concerned about inconsiderate parking and the impact this has on road safety and the inconvenience caused to local residents (which occasionally leads to confrontation). One headteacher said that residents had leafleted parked cars – headteachers agreed that it would be difficult for the school or pupils to do this.
31. Headteachers stressed the importance of educating parents (as well as pupils) on safe parking and on crossing the road safely. One suggested that they could produce a poster and/or flyers to give out at parents evening. Another suggested that the school could show children how to cross the road safely so they could influence their parents.
32. We heard that finance was an issue of concern for headteachers – one said that the school would like to be able to afford a “green screen” to filter some of the pollutants. Another headteacher said they used to have a walking bus but can no longer afford to staff it. Another said they'd like to be able to afford a school crossing patrol (lollipop man/lady). They asked whether volunteers could assist with this.
33. There was a consensus that enforcement through fining and use of the CCTV car has made a difference. There were concerns that temporary road closures at the start and end of the school day might displace the problem and wouldn't be suitable for all locations, particularly for schools on main roads. A borough wide strategy would be required. Headteachers also suggested that a boroughwide project to co-ordinate walking buses would be helpful.
34. We visited two schools - Raynes Park High and Joseph Hood Primary – at the request of the Chair of Governors. Although we could not take action in relation to an individual school's circumstances, these visits

were helpful in bringing the issues to life and illustrating the problems faced.

35. The visit to Joseph Hood Primary School demonstrated the extent to which a narrow residential street becomes over-crowded with cars during school drop off and pick up times. We observed extensive pavement parking and parking on both sides of the road so that there was space for just one car to get through. Alarming, children were seen getting out of two cars directly into the road rather than on to the pavement. Some of the cars were parked for a lengthy period and other parked cars were clearly not associated with the school – the area does not have a CPZ and is in walking distance of Wimbledon Chase Station.
36. Raynes Park High School has two entrances. The main entrance is on Bushey Road which is a busy and noisy dual carriageway with a 40mph speed limit and complicated pedestrian crossing arrangements that do not lend themselves to road safety. The other entrance is on West Barnes Lane which was quieter but with a steady flow of traffic when the task group visited mid-afternoon. The bus stop is at some distance on the other side of the road and there were no pedestrian barriers between the narrow pavement and the road. We were told that staff are on duty at both entrances before and after school to assist with road safety.
37. The task group's discussion with the Bursar at Willington School highlighted the congestion that arises around private schools due to the larger catchment area which results in a higher proportion of pupils being driven to school. The school communicates regularly with parents to encourage them to walk, cycle or scoot instead of driving, and also promotes car sharing and public transport. The school timetable is currently being reviewed to see if the end of the school day could be staggered for different year groups to ease congestion
38. Willington School is not on a main road and although it is not a through road, lots of drivers think the road is a potential "rat run" and then have to turn around when they can't get through at the end. Clear signage at the start of the road would be helpful. It would also be helpful to identify a safe drop-off point for pupils.

## **Merton council's role in relation to road safety**

39. The 1988 Road Traffic Act, Section 39 states that: "each local authority must prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety including the dissemination of information and advice relating to the use of the roads, the giving of practical training to road users.....and consider other measures taken in the exercise of their powers for controlling, protecting or assisting the movement of traffic on roads."
40. Case law provides that all road users have a responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others by acting safely and complying with the restrictions - the law and road users must use the road as they find it.
41. The council already provides a number of services that contribute to road safety around schools – road safety training, school travel plans, physical design, adaptation to roads and signage, enforcement of parking, plans to gradually roll out a borough wide 20mph speed limit.

### Sustainable travel

42. Merton council is committed to road safety and the promotion of sustainable travel, which includes walking, cycling and the use of public transport on the school journey. This is being done through the development of STARS school travel plans, highway improvements for pedestrians and cyclists and in the school curriculum through pedestrian training and cycle training as well as walking buses and participation in "walk to school" promotions.
43. At the public consultation event we discussed the respective roles of the council, parents and schools in relation to travelling to school sustainably and safely. Participants made a number of helpful suggestions that we have captured in our recommendations.
44. There was general agreement amongst participants at the consultation event on the desirability of children walking, cycling or scooting to school rather than travelling by car whenever possible. However, it was also recognised that there are circumstances in which driving is the best option for an individual family, for example when a parent is pressed for time and has to continue to work, when the walk is greater than 20 minutes or when a parent or child has mobility or other difficulties, and there was concern to respect individual decisions and not to demonise people for choosing to travel by car. We noted that parents are more likely to drive to private schools as they tend to be further away.
45. The council encourages schools to develop STARS school travel plans for pupils and staff. The STARS accreditation scheme was developed by Transport for London. The aim is to inspire young Londoners to travel to school sustainably, actively, responsibly and safely by championing walking, scooting and cycling. In Merton, STARS participation is a pre-

condition for the issue of teacher parking permits and parents' use of a 10 minute dispensation to park in a CPZ bay.

46. We were informed that the council's Traffic and Highways team approach each school every year to encourage them to join the STARS accreditation scheme. We were disappointed to learn that 43 of our schools have chosen not to participate in the scheme.
47. We heard that the main reason given by schools for not participating is an overall lack of resources and the many other competing demands on the schools' budget. We also understand that participation in the STARS scheme can be time consuming for schools, particularly in relation to collecting the required evidential data about modes of transport, and that this is a factor in schools choosing not to participate or having to withdraw from the scheme.
48. **We recommend that Cabinet agree to continued work by the Traffic and Highways team to provide road safety training to pupils, support schools to join the Transport for London STARS accreditation programme and to develop STARS travel plans. (recommendation 2)**
49. **We strongly recommend that all schools should have up-to-date STARS travel plans and that where possible, these should include the provision of space for the safe storage of pupils' bicycles and scooters. (recommendation 3)**
50. **We further recommend that Cabinet ask the Traffic and Highways team to: 1) investigate an initiative taken by a school in Hillingdon whereby the STARS accreditation data collection is led by pupils, which has made the process less onerous for school; 2) discuss with the Head of Parking Services the feasibility of using parking enforcement officers to assist with a light touch data collection method that would complement their role when they are working in the vicinity of a school. (recommendation 4)**
51. **We also recommend that Cabinet investigate the most effective way to enable one or two council officers to work directly with schools on setting up, implementing and monitoring the STARS accreditation scheme. This may be possible within existing resources or it may be through the use of some of the monies raised from the new parking charges scheme. (recommendation 5)**
52. It is clear that many schools are working very hard to improve road safety in the vicinity of their school and have used a wide range of approaches to promote road safety. The head teachers who replied to our questionnaire cited examples including holding road safety and public transport safety sessions, travel surveys, encouraging children to walk, newsletters to parents and the appointment of junior travel ambassadors. Many schools deploy teachers outside the school at the

start and finish of the school day in order to assist pupils to enter and exit safely.

53. We believe that the council could take further steps to support schools to improve road safety and to encourage walking and cycling to school. One way to do this would be to produce a template that schools can easily use to communicate with parents on these issues rather than relying on each school to develop its own.
54. **We recommend that that Cabinet should produce an information sheet for parents to encourage a reduction in the use of cars for the school run. This sheet should be no longer than two sides of A4 and should be sent to all schools in the borough. The information provided should include:**
- **Context – admissions data shows that 80% of primary school pupils live within a 20 minute walk to school; research on the impact on air quality of leaving the engine idling; health benefits of walking and cycling**
  - **Safer walking and cycling routes – links to websites and Apps that help parents identify walking route away from main roads that is less busy and less polluted**
  - **Being visible – advice on high visibility clothing and other safety equipment for pedestrians and cyclists**
  - **Other options– links to websites on local public transport to and Apps such as “lift angel” to promote car sharing (recommendation 6)**

#### School Crossing Patrols

55. School Crossing Patrols, or Lollipop Men/Ladies as they are affectionately called, have designated power to cross children and adults safely across roads. Merton Council took over this service from the Met Police in 2000, at which time 22 Patrols were employed. Over the years, due to natural wastage and controlled crossings installed, the number has dropped to just 6 Patrols (currently 4 in post and 2 vacancies which it is hoped to fill in September. We were informed that Merton and other London boroughs have found it difficult to successfully recruit new Patrols, reasons may be that the few hours of employment do not generate a high income.
56. Patrols operate outside one or more school premises. Merton has Patrols at The Priory, Hatfeild, Malmesbury and Dundonald Schools, crossing pedestrians from these and other nearby schools. The council occasionally receives requests from schools for a Patrol to operate at their site, but employing a Patrol has to meet criteria such as traffic and pedestrian numbers. The council also has to ensure the site is safe for the Patrol to operate effectively.
57. Patrol sites are formally risk assessed twice yearly but regular contact between Patrols and the Road Safety Officer means any traffic or

parking issues or concerns about aggressive drivers can be promptly dealt with. Patrols have the opportunity to attend training courses and are included in the council's appraisal process.

58. London Boroughs such as Brent and Lambeth no longer employ Patrols as part of their structure. Instead school clusters share one Patrol, paying their wage and that of the Road Safety Officer who manages this service. Patrol rates of pay vary slightly between boroughs but it is around £4,000 per annum to employ a Patrol. It seems to work well as Councils can continue to provide a duty of care to children and ensure safe working conditions for the Patrol.
59. Volunteers are not designated Patrols or traffic officers, so they do not have the power to stop traffic. There is a duty of care to ensure they are operating safely and that they receive the appropriate training. A volunteer injured on site could bring manslaughter charges against an organisation culpable of neglect. Training and risk assessments are the most basic steps to take if a volunteer is used.
60. If a school wished to employ its own Patrol they would need to work with the Traffic and Highways team to seek advice. The council would continue to manage, train and monitor the Patrol, with the school paying associated costs such as uniforms, training courses etc. The council would need to be remunerated for supplying this service to the school.
61. **We further recommend that Cabinet should provide advice to schools on:**
  - a) **how to set up a walking bus, including information on the legal situation in the event of an accident**
  - b) **what steps the school could take to “employ” a school crossing patrol (lollipop man/woman).  
(recommendation 7)**

#### Highway improvements

62. The council's Future Merton (Traffic and Highways) Team, in partnership with Transport for London and schools work to improve road safety in the vicinity of schools. The management of road safety is in line with the Mayor of London's strategy for healthy streets. The team has a rolling programme of works with individual schools that includes engineering measures as well as localised 20mph speed limits to make the area outside the school safer; support the school with their travel plans; and to provide soft measures such as cycles and scooter training.
63. Some of the landscaping and design measures outside / on route to schools are:
  - Localised 20mph speed limits with associated traffic calming such as speed tables
  - School Keep Clear Zig Zag Markings

- Other parking restrictions
  - Flashing signs to show speed of car
  - Street furniture such as bollards and guard railings
  - Planting trees
  - Footway widening / build outs
  - Formal and informal crossings
64. The council has a number of other initiatives that facilitate walking and cycling as well as the use of public transport. These include provision of cycle lanes, cycle parking facilities, better footways, improved public realm; decluttered footways; safe pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities; cycle training; improved street lighting, crossing facilities, localised 20mph speed limits and overall environmental improvements.
65. The council receives a small amount of funding through the Local Implementation Plan which is fully committed for 2018/19. Work must be in line with the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy and, given the limited available funding, is prioritised according to the number and severity of personal injury accidents, areas outside schools, areas where the highway may not be fully accessible to people with disabilities, and in areas with high footfall.
66. We were told that accident information is analysed to identify contributory factors when someone has been injured and physical changes are made to the location when appropriate. We have requested sight of the accident data but this has not been provided to date.
67. Schools, parents and residents have urged us to consider increased use of road markings and physical traffic calming measures in the vicinity of schools to make crossing the road easier and safer for pupils.
68. We saw evidence of the improvements that have already been made outside some schools but it was clear from our discussion with headteachers and parents that there are several schools that would benefit from a review from the Traffic and Highways Team. We will pass on all the site-specific information that we have received from schools and the public so that the team can follow these up in a timely manner, bearing in mind the financial and workload constraints.
69. Drop and Go
70. A "drop and go" area is a safe space that has been designated so that cars can stop briefly to let school children get out. A responsible adult (teacher or volunteer parent) will then walk the children into the school. Depending on the location of the drop and go area and the level of usage, several adults will be required to ensure that there is always someone in place to receive the children.
71. We recognise the policy tension inherent in creating drop and go areas. On the one hand they promote road safety through reducing traffic

congestion and dangerous parking outside schools thus enabling parents and children to cross the road safely. On the other hand they may also provide an incentive for parents to continue to drive their children to school!

72. We therefore would only wish to see drop and go areas created or enlarged as a last resort when all other options for that school have been considered and this has been identified by the Traffic and Highways team as the best solution to reduce traffic congestion and promote road safety for that school.
73. **We recommend that Cabinet ask the Traffic and Highways Team to give careful consideration on a school by school basis of the feasibility and benefits of creating or enlarging a “drop and go “ area to decrease traffic congestion and enable pupils to dismount from cars safely. Drop and go areas should be viewed as a last resort when all other options for that school have been considered and this has been identified by the Traffic and Highways team to be the best solution to reduce traffic congestion and promote road safety for that school. (recommendation 8)**
74. Enforcement
75. The Head of Parking Services provided us with an update on the automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) project that is aimed to increase the council’s ability to enforce “keep clear” markings outside schools at the start and end of the school day. A rolling programme of foot patrols and ANPR camera vehicles has commenced that will provide coverage for each school for at least two weeks during the school year.
76. During the first school year the cameras will be deployed to every primary school in the borough following the planned rotation schedule. This will help the council to determine which schools have the lowest compliance and then to focus enforcement of those areas during the second year of the scheme.
77. **We welcome the “remote officer observed camera enforcement” project and recommend that Cabinet ensure that its effectiveness is closely evaluated to identify the locations at which it is most beneficial; the safety, environmental and financial outcomes at each location and whether there is a sound business case for the purchase of additional cameras. (recommendation 9)**
78. **We further recommend that Cabinet provide a report to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the project outcomes. (recommendation 10)**
79. Participants at the public consultation event were in favour of enforcement to deter illegal and inconsiderate parking. We also considered the viability of school staff, parents or pupils leafleting badly

parked cars. We have not made a recommendation on this as there is potential for such action to create or inflame conflict between parents or between parents and local residents.

80. We heard from the Head of Parking Services that there are two ways in which residents can get enforcement assistance when a car is parked across their dropped kerb. The first is to phone the Parking Services team to report the parking incident. The second is to register the dropped kerb with the council so that there will be an automatic enforcement action taken if a Civil Enforcement Officer is in the area. We had previously been unaware of these provisions and believe that this would be useful information to share with councillors and local residents.
81. **We recommend that Cabinet undertake publicity to draw local residents' attention to the steps they can take to request enforcement action when a car is parked across their dropped kerb. (recommendation 11)**
82. We were informed that there is a dispensation to park in a parking bay in 19 of the borough's CPZ zones for 10 minutes for the purposes of dropping children off at school. This affects a total of 22 schools and is only provided if the school has a STARS travel plan. Parents must apply to the school for a "permission to park" letter that can be displayed in their car.
83. We discussed whether this provision should be more widely advertised because, as with the drop and go bays, this would be counterproductive in terms of discouraging parents from driving their children to school. We were however mindful that during our discussions with parents, they asked us to be aware that there are circumstances in which some parents have no choice but to use their car for the school run.
84. **We therefore recommend that Cabinet should ensure that the existing arrangements in some controlled parking zones for the temporary suspension of resident parking permit bays within the vicinity of the school to facilitate drop off and pick up should be publicised to councillors. (recommendation 12)**

Borough wide 20mph speed limit

85. To improve the general road safety environment and in line with the Mayor of London's transport priorities which has been adopted within the Borough's Local Implementation Programme, it is proposed to introduce a borough wide 20mph speed limit. It is hoped this will impact not only on road safety but also on air quality and pollution. This is currently being implemented gradually and there are already a number of areas subject to a 20mph speed limit across the borough.
86. The objective is to change behaviour – that is to say to encourage drivers to travel at a consistent lower speed not just throughout the borough but from borough to borough as the borough limit will work

alongside neighbouring boroughs' 20mph speed limits. This is expected to bring about a culture change so that it will become socially unacceptable to drive over 20mph in London.

87. The council has started its programme for rolling out a borough wide 20mph speed limit and has provisionally secured funding through its Local Implementation Programme for next financial year which will be utilised to continue the roll out of the borough wide 20mph speed limit.
88. Given the limited available funding this financial year, the council has started the introduction of 20mph limits from the borough boundaries where neighbouring boroughs have already introduced this. Also, due to the extremely limited funding, we were informed that the council currently does not intend to introduce any physical measures such as traffic calming.
89. A research study by Atkins, AECOM and University College London in 2018 evaluated the impact that the introduction of 20mph zones had on traffic speed, public perception and accidents. The study found that median speed decreased by 0.7mph in residential areas and 0.9mph in city centre areas and that the overall decrease was greatest in areas where speeds were faster before the introduction of the 20mph limit. Overall, 20mph limits were perceived to be beneficial for cyclists and pedestrians and there was a small increase in walking and cycling. There was insufficient evidence to draw conclusions about collision and casualty rates, except in Brighton where there were significant reductions.

School super zones (school neighbourhood approach pilot)

90. The "school super zones pilot" is the name used for the London-wide pilot being co-ordinated by Public Health England. This project is working with local authorities to test out new approaches to improving the urban environment around schools. Merton is one of 13 pilot boroughs. Locally, Merton has renamed its pilot project the "School Neighbourhood Approach Pilot".
91. The programme will be piloted at Merton Abbey Primary School. The school was chosen because it topped the list of schools on an index of indicators including air pollution, child obesity and level of deprivation in the local area.
92. The pilot phase will run from March to June 2019 and will be evaluated in June and July. It will be evidence based and the data captured will help to identify outcomes over the short, medium and long term. It is hoped that the pilot will also identify barriers faced that could not be addressed at a local level.
93. There will be 5 workstreams - the food around us; places and spaces; moving around; feeling safe; communications and enablers. This pilot work will not include any road restrictions but these may be considered

in future as part of the development of an action plan to improve the environment around the school.

- 94. We were very interested to hear about the school neighbourhood approach pilot and recommend that the review report is received by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in due course. (recommendation 13)**

### **Temporary road restrictions outside schools**

95. We received information from other London boroughs who have started to introduce temporary road restrictions outside schools during the peak pre and post school periods. During the restricted period non-resident motorists are prohibited from entering the affected roads. Residents are provided with a special permit that will enable them to enter and exit. Enforcement is usually carried out by a camera.
96. The temporary restriction operates during school days only and the hours are generally no more than one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon. The aim is to improve air quality and the environment whilst improving safety, prevent illegal and obstructive parking and encourage more active transport.
97. Croydon's School Streets Programme started with a three school pilot. Subsequently the council contacted all of the 93 primary schools in Croydon and from this they received 31 requests for road restriction schemes.
98. Croydon council then applied selection criteria to rank these schools. Key criteria included risk to children and public order; no impact on public transport routes; local catchment area; air quality and obesity. Twelve schools were selected for the first phase of road restrictions.
99. Consultation with local residents in Croydon found that objections were primarily received from residents immediately outside the zone, who feared the displacement. Several objectors from outside the proposed zone stated they would support the scheme if the zone was extended to also include their address. Residents want less traffic/pollution and wish the best for the children, as long it doesn't affect access to their own driveway. Concerns of those inside the proposed zones are associated with receiving visitors and home deliveries – although many acknowledge this is also practically impossible under present conditions, with the road being inaccessible due to the school run traffic.
100. Hackney Council has taken a leading role in sharing their learning with other London boroughs through the production of a soon-to-be-released toolkit. They have also organised workshops for officers from other boroughs to exchange knowledge as they start to implement their own School Streets Schemes.

101. Islington Council now has eight schools with road restrictions and have estimated that costs for a scheme would be in the region of £60,000 – for two cameras, installation costs, signage, TMO costs, consultation costs and other stakeholder engagement. Bollards cost £10-20k.
102. Camden Council has three 3 'school street closures' – two managed by ANPR and one with retractable bollards. Schools were selected through suggestions from councillors, previous concerns raised regarding road safety and STARS status. Participating schools have to already have STARS accreditation or agree to sign up that academic year.
103. We understand that Merton council is considering trialling a temporary road restriction scheme around three or four schools from September 2019.
104. We discussed temporary road restrictions with participants at the public consultation event and with the primary school headteachers. The idea was cautiously welcomed in principle but there were concerns that traffic and parking problems might just be displaced to neighbouring streets and that there may be other unintended adverse consequences. It was felt that solutions should be identified on a school by school basis but with impact on the wider area taken into account, particularly if restrictions were to include a number of schools. We have also suggested that restriction schemes should be trialled before permanent decisions are made.
- 105. We recommend that Cabinet should ensure that any temporary road restrictions around schools should be piloted in the first instance and should then be carefully evaluated. Consideration should be given to the likely impact on nearby roads and other local schools. If a decision is then taken to extend to other schools, we recommend that a borough wide strategic approach should be developed. (recommendation 14)**
- 106. We also recommend that Cabinet should give consideration to alternative approaches to temporary road restrictions, such as designated one way streets at peak times. (recommendation 15)**
- 107. We further recommend that, where there are a number of schools in close proximity, they should give consideration to staggering the school start and finish times in order to improve road safety in the vicinity of their schools. (recommendation 16)**

## Concluding remarks

108. In the absence of road accident data we have been unable to uncover factual evidence on whether there is a road safety issue in Merton. Instead we have taken evidence from parents, local residents and headteachers to hear their views on factors such as poor driver behaviour and inconsiderate parking that impacts on road safety. We have also listened carefully to suggestions for action that would improve road safety around schools.
109. We heard that the perception of parents and schools is that there is inconsiderate parking by a minority of drivers and this needs to be addressed through nudges to change behaviour plus enforcement.
110. We know that parents have good intentions and want to keep their own and other children safe. However fears for road safety and stranger danger coupled with pressures on time and the practicalities of taking children to school and continuing to their workplace can combine to make the car the easiest option. Our key challenge is therefore to help to make other transport options equally desirable.
111. Each school is unique so it would not be appropriate for us to make generalised recommendations on cameras, crossing patrol officers and so on. Instead, we have drafted recommendations that will provide a framework but will also assist the council and its partners to determine the right approach for each school.
112. The Merton Health and Wellbeing Strategy, led and owned by Merton Health and Wellbeing Board, seeks to create a healthy place that enables people to start well, live well and age well. Whilst health and care services are a partner in this strategy, it focuses on making significant improvements to those things that create good health and wellbeing such as the built environment, green spaces, and supporting healthy lifestyles. This over-arching strategy is mirrored and complemented by many other Council, Merton Partnership and NHS strategies.
113. In carrying out this task group review, we have been mindful that the measures that we have considered to improve road safety around schools will also impact positively on work being carried out to address wider public health issues, in particular air quality and child obesity.
114. Improving road safety around schools will hopefully encourage more parents and children to walk, cycle or scoot to and from school rather than travelling by car. Given that Transport for London found that 25% of traffic in the morning peak in London is the school run, this should ease traffic congestion which in turn will improve road safety and air quality.

115. We wish to ensure that the council has a clear vision for where it wishes to be in 10 years' time in relation to these issues. A number of policy developments that are already planned will have a positive effect on road safety – for example, we expect that 20mph limits will become the norm and engines idling in stationary cars will become unacceptable across London before long. We also expect that enforcement is likely to have the biggest impact in the same way as the smoking ban did in reducing the number of smokers.
116. Finally, it is crucial that different parts of the council work together on these issues – in particular that traffic and highways, parking and public health will work holistically with schools. We were pleased that the Director of Environment and Regeneration has confirmed that he will be the Corporate Management Team's lead to facilitate this work.

### **What happens next?**

117. This task group was established by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commission and so this report will be presented to its meeting on 4 July 2019 for the Commission's approval.
118. The Commission will then send the report to the Council's Cabinet on 15 July 2019 for initial discussion.
119. Once Cabinet has received the task group report, it will be asked to provide a formal response to the Commission within two months.
120. The Cabinet will be asked to respond to each of the task group's recommendations, setting out whether the recommendation is accepted and how and when it will be implemented. If the Cabinet is unable to support and implement some of the recommendations, then it is expected that clearly stated reasons will be provided for each.
121. The lead Cabinet Member (or officer to whom this work is delegated) should ensure that other organisations to whom recommendations have been directed are contacted and that their response to those recommendations is included in the report.
122. A further report will be sought by the Commission six months after the Cabinet response has been received, giving an update on progress with implementation of the recommendations.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: written evidence**

20mph Research Study, November 2018, Atkins, AECOM and Professor Mike Maher (UCL)

Road safety and schools – a briefing note from Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, 20 November 2018

Merton School Neighbourhood Approach Pilot, presentation from Philip Williams and Natalie Lovell, Merton Public Health

Emails from local residents October – March 2019.

Questionnaires received from headteachers of 10 primary, 1 special school, 2 secondary and 1 private schools in Merton

Questionnaires received from 754 local residents and parents.

Information received from Islington, Camden, Croydon and Hackney councils

Catchment area data provided by Merton School Admissions team, November 2018

Presentations to the London Road Safety Council – Croydon, Hounslow, Islington, Hillingdon, Junior Roadwatch

Desktop research – BRAKE, Public Health England, Healthy Streets for London, Liveable Neighbourhoods

### **Appendix 2: list of oral evidence**

Public consultation event, 11 March 2019

Visit to Joseph Hood School, 15 March 2019

Discussion with primary headteachers, 19 March 2019

Visit to Raynes Park High School, 20 March 2019

Ben Stephens, Head of Parking Services, 20 November 2018, 11 March, 9 April and 4 June 2019

Mitra Dubet, Commissioning Manager, Future Merton, 20 November 2018 and 9 April 2019

Natalie Lovell and Phil Williams, Public Health Merton, 5 February 2019

Peter Luard, Bursar, Willington School, 9 April 2019

Chris Lee, Director of Environment and Regeneration, 4 June 2019

Councillor Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Housing, 4 June 2019

Carol Douet, Healthy Places Officer, 4 June 2019

## Appendix 3: analysis of public consultation responses

1. School				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Primary		94.8%	640
2	Secondary		5.2%	35
			100.0%	675

2. Are you a parent of a child/children at that school?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		85.3%	616
2	No		14.7%	106
			100.0%	722

Q3. Age/s of children				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Primary (5 to 11)		92.7%	772
2	Nursery (2 to 4)		5.9%	49
3	Secondary (12 to 16)		1.4%	12
			100.0%	833

3a. How do they travel?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Walk		75.0%	462
2	Car		19.8%	122
3	Bus		3.4%	21
4	Cycle		1.8%	11
			100.0%	616

4. Do you live in the same street as the school?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	No		13.7%	623
2	Yes		86.3%	99
			100.0%	722

**5. If you answered no, how long would it take you to walk to the school?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	5-9 minutes		22.1%	179
2	Less than 5 minutes		27.9%	142
3	10-14 minutes		21.2%	136
4	30+ minutes		8.6%	69
5	20-29 minutes		9.5%	61
6	15-19 minutes		10.8%	55
			100.0%	642

**6. Are there any traffic problems affecting drivers, cyclists and pedestrians in the school drop off/pick up area? (tick as many as apply)**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Inconsiderate parking		19.1%	523
2	Congestion		16.3%	447
3	Illegal parking		15.9%	436
4	Children crossing road to cars parked on opposite side of road		14.9%	407
5	Lack of parking in the area around the school		13.0%	356
6	Other (please specify): Speeding cars. No regulation or enforcement, Cars mounting the pavement, Lack of safe crossing areas		11.9%	325
7	U turns in front of the school		8.9%	243
			100.0%	2737

**7. What traffic calming or other measures are currently in place in the vicinity of the school?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	None		54.0%	299
2	Speed bumps		18.4%	102
3	Zig zags		16.6%	92

4	20mph zone		11.0%	61
			100.0%	554

**8. Have you previously raised any road safety concerns with the school or with the council?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	No		66.8%	340
2	Yes		33.2%	169
			100.0%	509

**9. What additional measures would you like to see put in place?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Enforcement		36.1%	137
2	Zebra crossing	(Speed Cameras/Traffic Wardens etc)	30.5%	116
3	More parking spaces available		9.7%	37
4	Lollipop Lady		7.6%	29
5	One way system		6.8%	26
6	20mph zone		5.5%	21
7	Speed bumps		3.7%	14
			100.0%	380

**10. Please use the space below for any other comments you wish to make or any suggestions that will help create a safer walking environment for pupils during school run periods?**

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Parent attitudes are a problem		38.6%	39
2	Idling cars needs to be addressed		18.8%	19
3	Road closures around the school would help		16.8%	17
4	More safety signage is needed		13.9%	14
5	Supervised drop off point		11.9%	12
			100.0%	101



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