

**REPORT:** Environment & Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 25<sup>th</sup> June 2014

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Policy and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Transportation

**SUBJECT:** Petition Concerning Traffic Issues, Halton Station Road, Runcorn

**WARDS:** Beechwood and Heath

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To report receipt of a 27 name petition highlighting traffic issues, associated with renovation works to Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge, that are affecting Halton Station Road, Runcorn. This bridge is just outside of the Halton Borough Boundary and it is the responsibility of Cheshire West and Chester Council. The petition is reproduced in Appendix 'B'.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 **It is recommended that the Board:**

- 1) note that officers have contacted Cheshire West and Chester Council on behalf of Halton Station Road residents, setting out the problems its traffic diversions are causing;**
- 2) note that officers have also contacted Cheshire Police requesting that it provide enforcement of the existing vehicle weight restriction on Halton Station Road; and**
- 3) endorse the proposal to formally object to any proposal by Cheshire West and Chester Council to make permanent the present temporary traffic arrangements in the area of Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge/Clifton Road.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 In order to renovate and carry out essential repair work to the Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge (SWSB) which is over the Weaver Navigation Canal, Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC) last year installed a temporary bridge next to the existing crossing. Work on installing this temporary bridge commenced in May 2013. Towards the end of August 2013, it then closed the SWSB to traffic to allow its contractor unrestricted access to the bridge and use of the temporary bridge commenced.

3.2 In order to improve traffic flow through the temporary crossing, CWaC implemented restrictions at the junction of the A56 Chester Road with the A557 Clifton Road, immediately east of the swing bridge. The restrictions have prevented east-bound traffic from travelling directly along the A56 Chester Road through Sutton Weaver as it would have previously done. All traffic has instead been required to travel north along the A557 Clifton Road into Halton, around the south roundabout of M56 motorway Junction 12,

with east bound/Sutton Weaver village bound traffic then being required to travel back south along Clifton Road before re-joining the A56 Chester Road adjacent to the SWSB. These arrangements are shown on drawing shown in Appendix 'A'. CWaC indicated that this diversion would be necessary for the duration of the works which was anticipated to end in Autumn 2014.

- 3.3 Whilst this has simplified and accelerated traffic flows in the area of the bridge throughout the period of the renovation works, not all of the re-routed traffic has followed the signed diversion route. Some drivers have and indeed continue to choose to take what is effectively a short-cut by either turning right off Clifton Road into Halton Station Road (HSR) or follow the diversion to a point on Clifton Road where they can then turn left into HSR and then travel along that road and onwards to Beechwood or Sutton Weaver via Wood Lane. This has generated an unanticipated increase in traffic flows along HSR which is a narrow, one-way, traffic calmed road that is also subject to a weight restriction. One of the residents of HSR wrote to CWaC in May 2013 on hearing of the proposed bridge works to inform them that there was already felt to be problems with cars, HGVs and buses using HSR as a rat-run.
- 3.4 A petition has recently been received by HBC from residents of HSR highlighting a number of concerns about the diversion and its impacts, this is attached as Appendix 'B'. The primary issues raised are:
- [1] Lack of consultation and notification on the traffic diversions by both CWaC and Halton Borough Council.
  - [2] The extra volume of traffic using HSR, including heavy goods vehicles in contravention of the existing vehicle weight restriction on the route.
  - [3] The excessive speed of traffic, despite physical traffic calming in HSR.
  - [4] Vehicles being driven partly on the footways of HSR to avoid traffic calming features.
  - [5] Concerns that CWaC may wish to make the temporary traffic routing, permanent when the bridge works are complete.
- 3.5 CWaC has in place a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order which supports the diversion route that has been established, but it is not clear as to whether consultation was undertaken by CWaC with the residents of HSR. As it was not HBC's scheme, it did not undertake any consultation. However, it was anticipated by both authorities that drivers affected by the bridge closure would follow the signed diversion route, especially as HSR was traffic calmed, was a narrower road and had a weight restriction on it. To discourage any potential increase in use of HSR, the preferred diversion route signage was also reinforced near the junction of Clifton Road with HSR. Halton BC had discussions with CWaC during the design stage of the bridge works and it was emphasised that measures needed to be taken to avoid HSR being used as a rat-run. However, whilst it would have been possible to prevent the right turn manoeuvre from A557 Clifton Road into HSR, this would have unfortunately created an added inconvenience to HSR residents and made access to Ashville Industrial Estate difficult, as it would have required physical traffic management on Clifton Road to prevent it being ignored. As a consequence, this measure was not implemented.
- 3.6 Whilst officers from Halton Borough Council have been in regular contact with HSR residents since the problems associated with the bridge diversion were highlighted (a

meeting took place in September 2013), once the bridge works started and the traffic diversions were in place, there was little that could be done on a practical level to mitigate the problems subsequently experienced. The need for this diversion was felt to be reasonable by HBC officers on the grounds that it was meant to be for a 12 month period only and as it avoided a total closure of the route that would have, in turn, necessitated a diversion via either M56 or A49 Acton Bridge.

- 3.7 HBC officers have however, contacted Cheshire Police and requested that it provide enforcement of the vehicle weight restriction on HSR. To what degree this can occur will depend on the level of resources the Police can allocate to this matter in light of its competing priorities. Residents have also been encouraged by Halton BC to contact the Police over this and other observed traffic issues. HBC officers have also spoken to the On-Duty Manager at the Holiday Inn about the use of the road by HGVs and she agreed to email the delivery companies they use to remind them of the weight restrictions and speed limit on Halton Station Road. The manager was also told that we had informed the Police and requested that they enforce the weight restriction
- 3.8 HSR is fitted with physical traffic calming, and is subject to a 30mph speed limit. A traffic count/survey of speeds that was taken once the traffic diversions were underway, recorded few vehicles exceeding the speed limit. However, this does not necessarily mean that there traffic speeds cannot be perceived as a possible road safety issue bearing in mind the characteristics of the road.
- 3.9 Clarification was sought from residents about their request for temporary traffic cones and it was confirmed that it was actually bollards which were being sought to prevent vehicles being driven on the footways so as to partially avoid the traffic calming measures. Unfortunately, the footways of HSR are too narrow to permit the installation of bollards and this has been explained to residents who have contacted this Council.
- 3.10 The impact of the diversion route has also affected the bus operators who, it is believed, have had to accept the extra mileage and resultant delays as a compromise and in order to avoid a total closure of the route which is what happened when the other swing bridges on the canal were refurbished in previous years. HBC has, however, requested the bus companies not to use HSR.
- 3.11 Although the completion date for the works is not set, it is believed the SWSB repairs will be completed in the autumn of this year. Therefore, whilst the works should now be of a finite duration, it is likely that residents will continue to be inconvenienced. However, HBC will continue to ask the police to enforce the weight restriction and request the bus companies to avoid using HSR.
- 3.12 It is understood that the traffic diversions have, according to CWaC, worked very effectively in terms of improving traffic flows over the Weaver Navigation Canal and thereby removed the need for traffic signals at the east end of the bridge. Although no formal approach has yet been made by CWaC to Halton Borough Council, it is understood that CWaC is now considering making the temporary arrangements permanent. It would appear that CWaC have held local meetings recently to discuss a range of traffic issues in that area of CWaC including the possibility of making the bridge diversion permanent, but unfortunately neither Halton BC nor residents of HSR were aware of this possible opportunity to raise their concerns.
- 3.13 For the reasons referred to above It is, therefore, recommended that the Board support

the submission of a formal objection by HBC to CWaC in response to any proposal to make this temporary arrangement permanent.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no other direct social inclusion, sustainability, value for money, legal or crime and disorder implications resulting from this report.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES.**

##### **6.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'Children & Young People in Halton' priority.

##### **6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton' priority.

##### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Increased traffic flows on HSR could present a risk to residents through greater risk of collisions and higher pollution levels.

##### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

Increased traffic flows on HSR could present a risk to residents through greater risk of collisions.

##### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'Halton's Urban Renewal'.

#### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

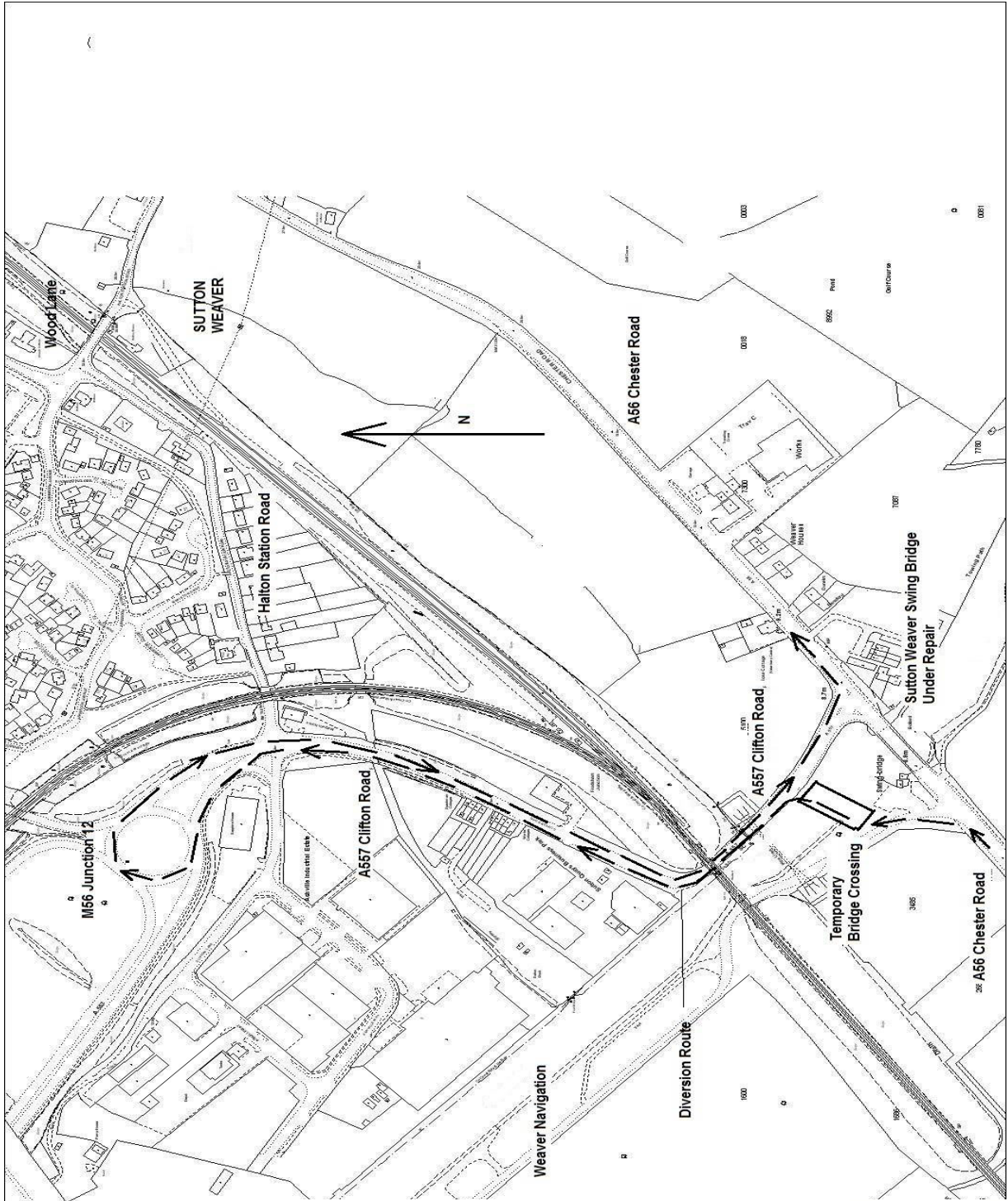
7.1 There are variable, and uncertain, road safety and environmental risks associated with increased traffic flows on Halton Station Road.

#### **8.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues associated with this report.

#### **9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 There are no background papers under section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.



Mick Noone, BA(Hons), M.Sc., C.Eng.,  
 MICE, MCIHT, CMILT  
 Operational Director - Policy, Planning &  
 Transportation Department  
 Municipal Building, Kingsway,  
 Widnes, WA8 7OF. Tel. 0303 333 4300

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**Traffic Diversion  
 Route, Sutton Weaver  
 Swing Bridge Repairs**  
**Scale: NTS Date: May 2014**  
**Drawn: SJ Drg. No. 9053**



## Appendix 'B'

Residents of:  
Halton Station Road  
Sutton Weaver  
Runcorn  
Cheshire  
WA7 3EL

May 2014

To whom it may concern,

We the residents of Halton Station Road, Sutton Weaver are writing to you, to bitterly complain about the way we have been treated and the effects we have to endure daily due to the ongoing work to the Sutton Weaver/Frodsham swing bridge.

Firstly we are disgusted in the fact that we were not informed at all about the changes and how this work would affect us. It was only by accident that we found out that residents in the village itself had been notified, (perhaps because they are now under Cheshire West and Cheshire.) We had to contact Halton ourselves to find out what was going on. Jo Brussels has been a great source of information for us and a good help. Why were we not notified by Halton? as they had liaised with Cheshire West and had agreed to a temporary change of route, i.e. no right turn off the swing bridge making traffic head towards the roundabout and then double back on itself. We voiced our Concerns about the increase in traffic to our road, but were told that there would not be an increase in traffic up our road as they were to follow the diversion signs. We stated that this would not happen, and low and behold it has with vengeance. A traffic survey has been undertaken which has shown the huge increase in traffic of all types all day, everyday. Up until this time our road was a quiet road, and signage at the bottom of the road restricted any heavy traffic to access for our houses only. We now have all weights of heavy articulated lorry/truck coming up the road, including buses which we have been told repeatedly have been contacted and told not to use this route, but still do up to date. We have to wait sometimes for up to ten minutes to reverse into our own drive ways. We constantly have speeding traffic trying to avoid passing over the speed bumps on the road in the middle as they should, and instead either swerving from side to side so only one wheel is on the hump itself. Which brings them dangerously close to our driveway openings or travel over the hatched lines on the opposite side of the road which are meant to allow safe exit from the foot paths leading onto our road from the weaverside estate. Even more dangerously they often mount the pavement and there have been many near misses as we try to leave and enter our properties. We asked for temporary traffic cones to be placed either side of the humps to stop this action, but were told this would not work and could cause more problems. Obviously our problems do not count. It was left to Jo to tell us the bad news, and we thank her for trying to help, but the decisions do not fall with her. Unfortunately we been refused the chance to speak directly to those in charge.

We have had dealings with the railway companies as we have tracks to the rear of our properties, whenever any work is to be undertaken which may cause problems, we are notified promptly and apologies given and steps taken to alleviate any problems. Not once have the councils seen fit to do anything like this.

We are aware that the work on the bridge is due to finish in Autumn 2014, and we strongly request that the traffic situation in our road ends at that point as we were told it would.

That the traffic is allowed to go back to using Chester road as before, (no right turn restrictions.) We have been made aware ( again not directly) that residents in the Village itself have been approached via the Parish Council, via Cheshire West and Chester. To give their opinions and vote on what should happen to traffic once the bridge is completed. We contacted Halton again and Jo found out that Halton did know about this and that those concerned from the council had contacted Cheshire West and said they had only temporarily given permission for the change in traffic restrictions which resulted in our road being used by all and sundry. Again we feel aggrieved that we were not informed of these issues, that as we are surely the main road that has been directly affected by any decision that have been/or may be made we should be kept up to date and our concerns dealt with. We feel we are in no man land. Halton plainly doesn't not want to help or involve us and we are not looked at by Cheshire West and Chester even though part of our road comes under their jurisdiction.

Thank you for your time in reading this and would appreciate your notification of any further decisions as soon as they are made.

Yours faithfully

On behalf of:

The residents of Halton Station Road, Sutton Weaver, Runcorn, Cheshire, '