

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Friday 2 February 2024

Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Scrutinise the operation of Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership having regard to their agreed Strategic Objectives and key performance metrics.
- b. Consider what further scrutiny might be required having regard to findings under recommendation (a) above.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of Councillor David Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to recognise the governance structure and operating model of the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership.
2. The committee members are invited to consider the wide range of initiatives used to promote road safety across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent with reference to the 4 Es: education, engagement, engineering and enforcement.
3. It is also requested that the Select Committee recognises and supports the need for ongoing review and development of road safety measures to continue to reduce road casualties.

Report


Background

4. The Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership (SSRP) was setup in 2001 with the aim of bringing partner organisations together to reduce road casualties in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Current key partners are:
 - a. Staffordshire County Council
 - b. Stoke-on-Trent City Council
 - c. Staffordshire Commissioner's Office
 - d. Staffordshire Police
 - e. Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service
 - f. National Highways
5. The Partnership's vision is: "Working together to improve road safety in partnership with our communities".
6. The joint Governance group for the SSRP agreed in January 2016 to strengthen the governance of the Partnership. This prompted a redesign of the governance arrangements, delivery model and staffing structure to ensure the future work of the Partnership would receive appropriate direction and scrutiny.
7. A key element to note is that the SSRP does not exist as an autonomous entity. It is an informal collaboration designed to improve road safety through the alignment of resources, knowledge and skills across all partner organisations.
8. The SSRP plans to use a range of measures including Education, Engagement, Enforcement and Engineering to support a wider culture change that will see excessive speed and inconsiderate behaviour on our roads as socially unacceptable.
9. The Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership has previously been considered by this Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2017, January 2019, January 2021 and March 2023.

Governance and Structure

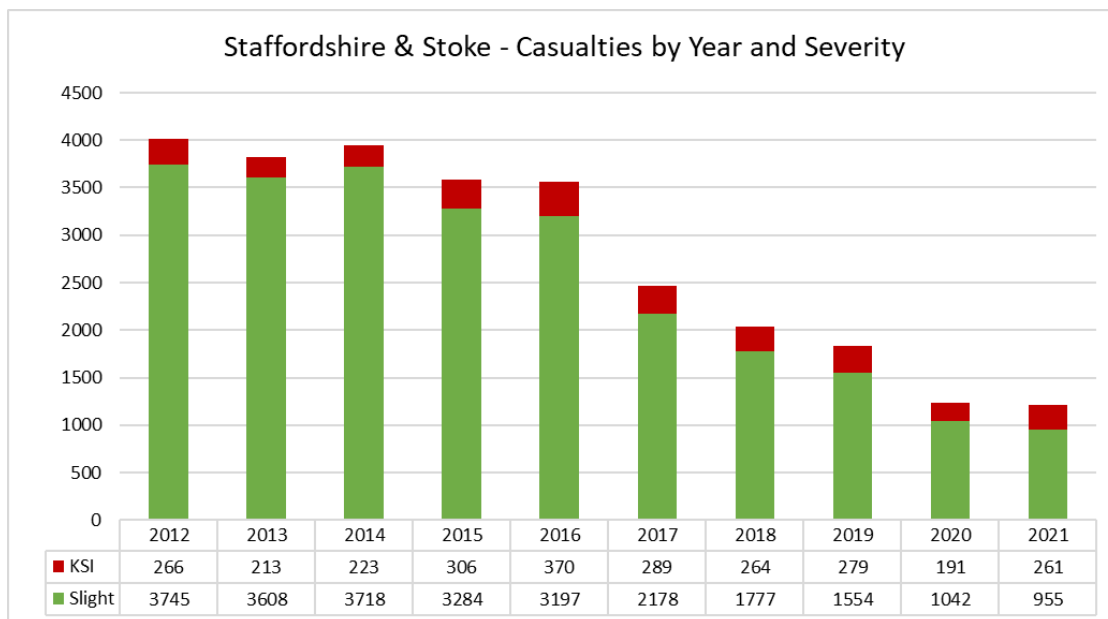
10. The SSRP is jointly chaired by Ben Adams, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, and Helen Fisher, Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. Current governance arrangements include a Governance Board which meets 3 times a year. Offline updates and decisions are used in between meetings as required.

11. The Governance Board sets the strategic direction of the Partnership and takes ultimate responsibility for key financial decisions and scrutiny. Membership includes senior political representatives from the main Partner organisations.
12. Current board membership is shown in Appendix 1.
13. Working Groups, either permanent or time-limited, provide opportunities for partners to work together to develop activities and delivery. The working groups provide updates and decision requests to the Governance Board.
14. The following key strategic objectives have been identified, with a brief update on progress include as a sub point:
 - a. To achieve a long term sustained reduction in road traffic collisions across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
 - i. Information in paragraph 19 highlights the good progress against this objective.
 - b. To ensure education and training initiatives are used effectively to reduce the risk of being involved in a road traffic collision.
 - i. Paragraph 23 outlines the provision of road safety education in schools.
 - ii. A wide range of other education and training initiatives are also used to address other road user groups or behaviours.
 - iii. The information used to support this work area is described in Paragraph 21.
 - c. To agree a considered approach to engineering and enforcement based on evidence and making best use of sustainable but limited resources.
 - i. Responsibility for the delivery of engineering schemes rests with the relevant highway authority who all have well established processes to identify and prioritise this work.
 - ii. Staffordshire Police lead on enforcement, however the SSRP supports decision making around site selection and enforcement strategy.
 - d. To engage and support our communities to take local responsibility for improving road safety.

- i. Key initiatives to support this objective include Community Speed Watch (see Paragraph 24) which is very popular with our communities.
 - e. To improve public confidence in the safety of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent's roads.
 - i. The greater focus on communications and media activity related to road safety are outlined in Paragraph 25.
15. The strengthening of governance arrangements enabled a change in delivery model, with responsibility resting with the partner organisation responsible for each element of delivery.
16. As the new governance and delivery arrangements became more established it was decided that a semi-formal agreement between partners would be beneficial. A new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has recently been developed and aims to set out the responsibilities of both the SSRP and individual partners. A particular focus is on the financial arrangements and assurances in relation to employment and the cost recovery mechanisms for services delivered on behalf of the SSRP.
17. A desire to raise awareness with communities and wider stakeholders about the work of the SSRP was identified. As a result, the Partnership's first public facing strategic document the 'Road Safety Plan' was developed. As a next step, a new SSRP website (www.staffsaferroads.co.uk) was produced to ensure information about the Partnership was easily accessible. The site is currently awaiting review under the new communications arrangements.
18. The SSRP governance arrangements have recently been subject to an audit by Staffordshire County Council. The outcome found most areas reviewed were adequately controlled, with some recommendations made to improve internal documentation and processes. The resulting actions have either been completed or are currently being progressed.
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Road Traffic Casualties

19. Recorded road traffic casualties in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent have seen a significant decline as the following chart demonstrates. However, some of the variation may be attributed to changes in collision reporting and recording processes over recent years. This included a change in the classification of casualty severity which was implemented in 2015 and resulted in an increase in KSI (fatal and serious injury) casualties recorded. A summary of KSI collisions and casualties in 2021 is provided in Appendix 2.



20. The Partnership has adopted a 'Vision Zero' approach which reflects the view that it can never be ethically acceptable that people are killed or seriously injured on our roads. However, in real terms the partnership is seeking to achieve a long term sustained reduction in collisions, both in number and severity. Success against this target will be quantified in terms of the number of collisions resulting in injury.

21. Work is ongoing to ensure resources are directed appropriately based on detailed analysis of casualty numbers and trends. This has confirmed a need to continue the focus on children, young drivers and motorcyclists, and has also provided evidence to support the development of initiatives in relation to cyclists, mature drivers and commercial vehicles (HGVs, vans etc).

22. It is worth noting that, although responding to known casualty issues remains a key focus, the SSRP are also keen to support communities where collisions may not have occurred, but residents are concerned about the speed or behaviour of traffic. However, this must be

proportionate to the issue and considered in light of the resources available.

Key Initiatives

23. Of particular note is the agreement, from April 2018, for the SSRP to adopt the funding of Road Safety Education in priority schools across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. This has taken on the service previously funded by Staffordshire County Council, and also enabled formal road safety education to be reinstated in Stoke-on-Trent schools. Funding for this work area is reviewed periodically, and the current agreement is for delivery to continue to July 2025, with further funding likely to be agreed.
24. The Community Speed Watch scheme is currently undergoing development to further support communities concerned about the speed of traffic. This includes a review of processes and technology, and integration with the new Police Operating Model to increase 'on the ground' support by officers.
25. Recognising the potential for road safety information and education to be promoted through communication and media channels, the SSRP has previously commissioned Staffordshire County Council to provide support to develop this area of work. Campaigns have included a focus on pedal cycle safety and mature drivers. Plans are now being progressed for a dedicated resource to continue increasing the SSRPs delivery in this work area. This will include identifying opportunities to promote road safety and Partnership initiatives, improving coordination between partner communication teams, and developing specific campaigns to address identified requirements. The Staffordshire Commissioner's Office has recently agreed to provide this resource as a commissioned service on behalf of the SSRP.
26. A project is currently underway to upgrade some of the older fixed camera sites through a phased approach. As part of this, consideration will be given to newer camera technologies which were not available when the current cameras were installed. The initial phase, focussing on the highest priority sites, was implemented Autumn/Winter 2023. This included 20 camera housings across 4 routes. Staffordshire Police and the Staffordshire Commissioner led on the procurement on behalf of the SSRP. A further phase is planned for 2024 with longer terms plans under review.
27. The Camera Van fleet is currently undergoing modernisation, including the purchase of new vehicles to replace the ageing fleet, and the

implementation of newer mobile camera equipment which will bring technical and operational benefits.

28. The delivery of National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme courses, such as the Speed Awareness Course, is undertaken by Staffordshire County Council on behalf of the Partnership and Staffordshire Police. These courses are offered in lieu of prosecution where certain criteria are met. As this is a national scheme, course providers must adhere to strict requirements and engage with regular audits. Planned developments for 2024 include the local implementation of two further national courses including the National Rider Risk Awareness Course aimed at motorcycling offenders.
29. A new councillor-led scheme, Neighbourhood Speed Check, was launched in October 2023 providing fast tracked access to speeding concern assessments for all local members in the County and City. So far over 60 roads have been assessed with 9 meeting criteria for new or additional enforcement coverage to be setup.

Finance

30. There is no direct financial contribution to the SSRP by any partner organisation.
31. Road safety activity undertaken by partners may use their existing resources or may be funded through the SSRP centralised budget. The majority of partnership funding is as a result of educational diversion course referrals which include a nationally agreed cost recovery element returned to the enforcement authority (SSRP in this case). A centralised Partnership budget is held by Staffordshire County Council who act as Treasurer.
32. Several opportunities to deliver external projects also provide an income stream including enforcement on behalf of National Highways (enforcement support for strategic road network roadworks and Smart motorway cameras within Staffordshire) and Network Rail (national project using cameras to improve safety at level crossings).
33. As at the end of 2022/23, the Partnership held reserves of £1.8m. This includes £0.4m ring fenced to cover any potential redundancy liability for partner staff employed to provide services on behalf of the SSRP. A further £0.6m of the reserves has been identified to meet the Phase 1 cost of digital camera upgrades, with funding for further phases to be considered soon.

34. It is worth noting that the cost to society of road traffic collisions is significant. The Department for Transport estimates the average value of prevention per fatal casualty at over £2m¹.

Link to Strategic Plan

35. The Partnership's work has the potential to contribute to all three of the County Council's Strategic Plan outcomes:

- a. *Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth* – through improving the safety and reliability of the road network, making Staffordshire more attractive for businesses and their employees
- b. *Live in thriving and sustainable communities* – by engaging with our communities and addressing their road safety concerns
- c. *Be healthier and independent for longer* – by making communities feel safer when walking and cycling

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

N/A

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – SSRP Governance Membership November 2023
Appendix 2 – Staffordshire and Stoke 2021 KSI Summary

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¹ DfT RAS4001: Cost of prevention of road collisions and casualties - 2022