

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 22 JULY 2021

**Question to Cllr David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

By Cllr Winnington

Question

While I totally support projects that are designed to counter Climate Change, I am becoming increasingly concerned about the misuse of Electric Scooters across the County. I have had many communications from residents who have seen younger people riding these scooters in an unsafe way. Could I ask the Cabinet Member what controls are in place to register those scooters that are under the County supported scheme? I would also like to know if driving licences are being checked?

Reply

As the Member will be aware the Council is one of several Local Transport Authorities taking part in the national pilot study on the use of E-scooters on the public highway. The Department for Transport believe that E-scooters may be a potential low emission solution to replace short distance car journeys. It is important to remember that national travel data shows that 2/3 of all car journeys are less than 5 miles in length.

The pilot E-scooter schemes in the Stafford and Newcastle have generally had a positive response from users and take up is increasing. As you would expect there are several controls to encourage safe usage and we are working closely with the operators and the police on this issue. The controls include:

- Fixed Bay Parking Model - Across both trials areas we operate a fixed parking bay model, this means E-scooters can only (without incurring a fine and potential account suspension) be parked and left in designated bays that is agreed by the operators and the council.
- Speed Cap - Each E-scooter on the trial is capped at 12mph, the legal limit set by the DfT is 15mph.

- Age Restrictions - E-scooters cannot be rented by anyone under the age of 16, they must upload a picture of their driving license and a “selfie”.
- Area of operation - In conjunction with the operator we determine the operational area. Outside of this area, E-scooters stop.
- No-Go Zones - There are some areas in the operational area, such as pedestrianised areas, where using a E-scooter is not appropriate, E-scooters come to a stop in these areas.
- Slow Zones - Areas where it’s appropriate to use a E-scooter – but there are high number of pedestrian and vehicle movements scooters slow to 6.5mph in these areas.
- Curfew - The E-scooters in both trials areas have a curfew of 10pm, this means no new rides can start after this time.
- Banning Users - A small number of users have been banned for unsafe riding or antisocial behaviour, this is done by the operators when incidents are reported to them. Using the built in GPS tracking system, a rider will usually receive a warning and then, if appropriate a ban. We are working with all stakeholders including the police to improve rider education and reduce misuse.

In Staffordshire, you must be 18 years or older to use the rental E-scooters and as mentioned above, driving licences are checked prior to rental although it is recognised that like any system this is open to potential abuse. The operators are constantly working on ways to improve rider education in this area to minimise this happening.

The Council is in close contact with the Department of Transport which is collecting data from all the E-scooter pilot areas prior to deciding on whether to legalize E-scooters for use across England on the public highway. The control of private E-scooters, operating outside the control of rental schemes such as the two in Staffordshire, will clearly be a matter for full debate and careful consideration.