

Briefing Note to Members for Full Council 23rd February 2022.

That Maidstone Borough Council:

- * Supports the default speed limit of 20mph on residential streets.***
- * Calls on Kent County Council to implement 20mph in residential streets across the borough's town and villages; and***
- * Writes to Kent County Council to request 20mph speed limits on streets throughout the borough where people live, work, shop, play or learn, with 30mph as the exception on those roads, where full consideration of the needs of vulnerable road users allows a higher limit.***

An important point to make at the outset here is that whilst some Members may be sympathetic to a default speed limit of 20mph on residential streets, Maidstone Borough Council, as the motion recognises, is not the Statutory Highway Authority and does not therefore have the authority to set speed limits. Furthermore, whilst 20mph limits are often used in more sensitive areas - such as around primary schools, nurseries, hospitals etc and in particular locations with, for instance, limited visibility but which do not lend themselves to physical traffic calming solutions - 'blanket' interventions such as the one proposed are relatively rare and do not presently exist anywhere in Kent.

The request has been discussed with Officers from Kent County Council who have highlighted that many roads in Maidstone which have residential frontages also form part of the Classified Road Network. In addition, they are concerned that a blanket approach would effectively dilute the impact of 20mph limits in those areas where they are most required.

Highway Officers have also made the point that such interventions are generally based on specific evidence around crash history etc, but that with a more generalised request such as this, they would have nothing on which to base a decision. A view would also need to be sought from Kent Police, who may well have concerns about the resources necessary to enforce an approach such as this.

On the basis of the above, it would appear very unlikely that a request to Kent County Council advocating the approach suggested in the motion would be successful.

Members may therefore feel that the more appropriate approach, as is currently the case, is that Maidstone Borough Council continues to make such requests on the basis of specific locations where there is supporting evidence to demonstrate the need for intervention. It is also important to remember that even in circumstances where there appears to be demonstrable need for intervention, speed limit reductions must to be supported by a Traffic Regulation Order which has been subject to public consultation, and there is no guarantee that these will receive local support.