

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 6
8 MARCH 2022	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Task and Finish Group to Examine the Issues with Car Cruising In Peterborough	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Steve Allen, Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Communities	
Contact Officer(s):	Rob Hill, Assistant Director, Community Safety Ian Phillips, Head of Communities and Partnership Integration Clair George, Head of Prevention and Enforcement Service	Tel. 07815 558081

INTERIM REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO EXAMINE THE ISSUES WITH CAR CRUISING IN PETERBOROUGH

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Task and Finish Group	Deadline date: <i>n/a</i>
<p>It is recommended that the Communities Scrutiny Committee consider and comment on the interim report from the Task and Finish Group and endorse the report and recommendations contained within; namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the council shares this interim report with Cambridgeshire Police with a view to agreeing a memorandum of understanding which supports the Council with the implementation of injunction(s), community protection orders or public space protection orders. 2. That the Chief Executive of Peterborough City Council and a member of the Council's cabinet agree to champion this issue and to engage with both Peterborough MPs and the Police and Crime Commissioner to secure their support in championing this issue. 3. That the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Police and Crime Commissioner is asked to compile a report on how the police should tackle this issue. 4. That the council fully costs the financial implications of developing an injunction for car meets in Peterborough. 5. That the council fully costs the financial implications of introducing Community Protection Orders. 6. That the council fully costs the financial implications of developing measures to prevent car meets from taking place at Pleasure Fair Meadow car park, as part of the Woodston PSPO. 7. That the Highways Team produces detailed plans, with a clear indication of costs, of how it proposes to alter the layout of Stapledon Road to ensure it is no longer suitable for antisocial driving. 8. That the Task and Finish Group continues its work by exploring sources of funding that are available to reduce the funding burden on city finances. 9. That the Task and Finish Group makes a further attempt to engage the car cruise community. 10. That the council's Planning Department should actively consider whether future planning applications should consider measures that will prevent antisocial driving. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report is from the Task and Finish group established by the Communities Scrutiny Committee to explore issues connected with car meets in Peterborough.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The report is to brief the Communities Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Task and Finish group to date.

2.2 This report is for the Communities committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.1, Functions determined by the Council:

2. Neighbourhood and Community Support (including cohesion and community safety)

2.3 This report links into the Corporate Priority: Keep our communities safe, cohesive, and healthy

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	n/a
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 In November 2020, the former Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee (now the Communities Scrutiny Committee) established a cross party Task and Finish group, the Terms of Reference of which are as follows:

Purpose

To make recommendations to the Committee to inform the development of initiatives that prevent, or mitigate the impacts of:

- Unauthorised car meets in Peterborough.
- Anti-social use of any motorised vehicle to the detriment of our residents.

Scope

Using a combination of reviewing good practice and learning from elsewhere, discussions with expert witnesses, research, analysis of data, and interviews with councillors, develop proposals that set out:

- i. all available powers that can prevent unauthorised, anti-social, dangerous car meets from taking place or continuing,
- ii. what other legislative powers may be obtained to help address this issue,
- iii. proposals for working with organisers to facilitate, where possible, safe events for static car meets that are lawful and non-disruptive to our residents,
- iv. advice and support to private landowners in the defence and protection of their property.

4.2 Car cruising and anti-social driving on public and private roads and car parks is not a new issue and has been happening within Peterborough for decades. Over recent years, the numbers of people taking part, either as active participants or as spectators, has been steadily growing, causing an increased nuisance for residents impacting their quality of life.

4.3 This nuisance is not limited to occasional screeching of tyres or sounding of horns. It is a chronic noise nuisance that can last from 9pm until 3am on any day of the week, but particularly at weekends.

4.4 It is crucial to make a distinction between car cruises and other anti-social use of vehicles. Car cruises are generally unauthorised events that anyone may attend to meet other car enthusiasts. These events are often organised in public or private places (typically car parks) without permission. Those who attend do so principally to socialise with other enthusiasts and to look at their cars. These events are generally described as 'static,' which means there is no driving. However, the unauthorised events are not subject to health and safety risk assessments, no one is generally 'in charge' of ensuring the event is safe and no facilities such as toilet or rubbish collection are provided. Although car cruises can generate a lot of noise, this is usually when cars join or leave the event, or when loud music is played.

- 4.5 Contrast this with anti-social use of vehicles. Unfortunately, after attending unauthorised car cruises at one location in the city, it has become commonplace for a number of drivers to relocate to a different part of the city, where they undertake street racing and various forms of stunt driving. Not only does this activity present an immediately threat to the lives of other road users and any pedestrians or bystanders, the noise, and the strong smell of burning rubber that is generated when cars are 'drifted' can carry for over a kilometre and can cause great distress to any residents living nearby. This distress can range from chronic lack of sleep and stress due to the noise to frustration at being unable to open any windows due to the smell of burning rubber.
- 4.6 Councils across the country have attempted to deal with these issues with varying degrees of success. On occasion, a serious incident has acted as a catalyst for agencies to address the problems. Some councils have used physical measures at frequently used locations, whilst others have turned to enforcement action to prevent car meets from taking place, for example, with the use of injunctions or Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs).
- 4.7 Injunctions may only be granted through the courts (subject to evidence and proof that clearly demonstrates the need for action). It can be very expensive to pull together the necessary casework. One local authority estimated that the legal fees alone amounted around a £100k, although this did cover several other district councils. It should be noted that so-call 'blanket injunctions' that prevent 'persons unknown' from gathering, have recently been challenged through the High Court.
- 4.8 There are three main hot spot areas for unauthorised car meets and 'drifting':
- Orton Southgate Industrial Estate
 - Pleasure Fair Meadow Car Park
 - Vivacity Car Park, Hampton

Other areas include Royce Road, Greyhound Stadium and Werrington Brotherhood Retail Park.

4.9 **Findings and Conclusions**

- a) While car cruises need not necessarily lead to antisocial behaviour, the organisers of these events appear not to take any responsibility for ensuring the events are safe. While it is acknowledged that they do discourage participants from behaving antisocially, they are unable or unwilling to control this. Car meets often lead to auxiliary events which cause the most disruption for residents and businesses.
- b) The negative impact of this antisocial behaviour on residents cannot be underestimated. The annoyance is not limited to the isolated screech of a tyre or beep of a horn. It is now common for the noise and the smell to continue from 9pm to 3am Friday to Sunday, and on some weekday nights too. Residents report that the noise is chronic and relentless, pausing only when the drivers need to change their shredded tyres. Residents report an inability to sleep, to concentrate on tasks, to carry on conversations and to hear the television or radio over the noise of screeching tyres. In the Summer months, the noise also prevents residents from enjoying their gardens in the evening. The combination of smell and noise mean residents cannot open their windows to ventilate their homes.
- c) Residents also expressed concern for bystanders who watch the anti-social driving, as well as those law-abiding motorists who may be using the public highway at the same time. Residents are aware that there have been several serious accidents at Stapledon Road, for example, and expressed distress and concern about this.
- d) Residents report difficulty getting through to the police on 101 to report incidents. The introduction of Cambs Police's live web chat facility has been very helpful, as it means residents no longer have to wait for the phone to be answered (call centre operatives tend to answer requests to chat within moments). However, residents report that police operators rarely understand the problem and often tell residents that they cannot send units to the scene

as they are dealing with other emergencies. Some residents say they have given up reporting incidents to the police, as they do not believe anything will be done.

- e) Cambs Police say they do not have the resources to answer all calls for service that relate to dangerous driving. This is despite the police having a range of powers to enable them to deal with the activity if they choose to do so.
- f) Business owners are also impacted with damage to their property, accumulations of rubbish and skips being used as toilets. Stapledon Road is particularly affected, and there appears to be a view held by the police that this is a private road which cannot be enforced. However, whilst the car parks are private property, the road is public.
- g) Both public and private land is being used for car cruises and for antisocial driving. Whilst the Council may be able to implement highway adaptations to deter antisocial driving, it should be noted that it cannot prevent access to private car parks or other land.
- h) Several business owners suggested that CCTV would be effective, as the cars that are driven antisocially often have false number plates and are not legally road worthy. One spoke of a car driving on its wheel rims, which is a motoring offence. Some business owners have invited the police to review their CCTV footage, but to date the police have not done so.
- i) Where intelligence of a forthcoming car cruise or other meet is available, the police have the option to place a dispersal order at the location. However, enforcing the dispersal order is subject to sufficient police resources being available, depending on other local priorities and calls for service. While dispersal orders are generally agreed to have been effective in the past, current Cambs Police policy does not encourage their use.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with residents, businesses, local authorities, and the police. Car cruise groups have been invited to take part in the review but have declined.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 This interim report contains recommendations that require further work to be undertaken, along with a further consultation with Cambridgeshire Constabulary. It is hoped that as these actions are worked through it will impact on the number of car cruise/anti-social driving reports in Peterborough.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 Improves service provisions and responds to the impact these events are having on communities' quality of life.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Do nothing and rely on other agencies to deal with the issues of anti-social driving. This is not an option due to the impact this is having on residents and the need for a multi-agency approach.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 9.1 The recommendation of the final report will have financial implications, at this interim stage the financial implications have yet to be fully costed.

Legal Implications

- 9.2 Although the current recommendations in the report do not have any direct legal implications, the exploring of an injunctions and a public space protection order to cover Pleasure Fair will be undertaken in full consultation with our legal department.

Equalities Implications

- 9.3 N/A

Rural Implications

- 9.4 N/A

Carbon Impact Assessment

- 9.5 The report contains no proposals for changes to service delivery and therefore there is no decision to take which may impact carbon emissions of the council or the city.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 10.1 N/A

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - The interim report of the Task and Finish Group to Examine the Issues with car Cruising in Peterborough

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