



OFFICER DECISION RECORD

This form should be used to record Executive decisions taken by Officers

Type of Decision:	Major Operational Decision*		
	<p>Highlighted sections apply to this ODR:</p> <p>A Major Operational Decision is an Officer decision which is not a Key Decision and which is likely to meet one of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) it will result in the Council incurring expenditure, including the loss of income – in excess of £100,000, with the exception of operational expenditure identified within the agreed Service Plan and Service Budget; (b) it is a decision which has been specifically delegated to Officers – for example to conclude an agreement or contract within the outline terms agreed by the Cabinet; and/or (c) it is a decision which is controversial and/or politically sensitive in nature or is, in the opinion of the Director, of such significance that a published record of the decision would ensure transparency and accountability in relation to decision making within the Council. 		
Decision Maker:	Jess Gibbons, Chief operating Officer		
Service Area:	Environment/Infrastructure	Date:	5/1/24
Contact Name:	Martin Whitchurch	Tel No:	01202 128467
E-mail:	Martin.whitchurch@bcpcouncil.gov.uk		
Subject:	Improvement of Environment in Poole Park – trial closure of Park Entrance (adjacent to Twemlow Avenue/Whitecliff) to motor traffic		
Decision taken:	<p>Undertake a 28-day trial closure of one of the three access/exit points in Poole Park, creating a closure to through traffic to improve the park Environment. Publicly consult at the same time as the trial closure to enable the public experience and better understand the impact.</p>		

Note: once the consultation period has closed all responses will be assessed ahead of a final decision as to whether the closure shall be made permanent or removed.

Options considered:

1. Simultaneous trial closure and consultation.
2. Consultation ahead of a trial closure.
3. Do nothing, retain park management in its current arrangement.

Reasons for the decision:

Option 1 Enables the public to experience the pros and cons during the consultation period and should therefore output in more informed responses to the consultation.

Option 2 was not selected because responders to the consultation would be having to imagine what the impacts both positive and negative may be.

Option 3 was not selected as it would not achieve the intended outcome of the trial which is to determine if the closure improves the environment within the park.

Background:

- Poole Park is a heritage listed park, in a Conservation area. Opened in 1890, the road was originally designed for horse and carriage, but now provides access to the park, including as a through road between Poole Town Centre and the Whitecliff area.
- The road in Poole Park is not adopted highway.
- The park is closed to vehicles 7.30 am – 10am Mon-Sat, to reduce the impact of rush hour traffic, creating a car-free environment. The closure of vehicles has been in place since at least the 1980's.
- Closing one of the three vehicle entrances would not prevent any vehicle from still being able to access all areas of the park but it shall significantly reduce the number of vehicles using it as a cut through between Sandbanks Road and Poole Town Centre and the reverse – it will in-effect make the morning peak closure operate throughout the day – if the early morning peak can accommodate the closure then there is no highway capacity related reason for it not to remain in place daily. (see map in background Information document).
- The car parks and parking areas shall be unaffected, all car parks and access to concessions will still be accessible by vehicles.
- There would likely be a minor impact on the surrounding highway network as it absorbs traffic previously diverting through the park.

Consultations undertaken:

Internal consultation:

- Leader, Portfolio Holder for Climate Mitigation, Environment and Energy, Ward Councillors for Parkstone and Poole Town.
- Council Services: Legal, Insights, Communications, Environment, Commercial, Infrastructure,
- The Insights and Communications teams are supporting a 28-day public consultation from 17 January 2024. With significant local media and social

media interest, consultation responses are expected to be of a high number.

- The opportunity to complete the survey will be online, in the park concessions and libraries in paper form.

Headlines from previous consultation and engagement.

BCP Council 'Rethinking the future of parks and open spaces' public consultation, Insights T report July 2021. Residents were asked 'what would they change about one open space in BCP area'.

"The most commonly mentioned space was Poole Park (55 times) and more than half of the mentioned traffic and vehicles (32 times)". Specific comments:

"Poole Park, please stop through traffic at all times..."

"Stop cars driving through Poole Park (as done previously in Meyrick Park and Kings park).

"Poole Park: remove through traffic"

"Poole Park should be traffic free..."

"I would stop through traffic in Poole Park..."

Poole Park Life Evaluation report, Resources For Change consultants, employed to deliver evaluation and monitoring of the Poole Park Life project, November 2021.

Summary comments:

"There was general feeling that through traffic should be further reduced in the park, if eliminated, with one saying, "It's a park not a road". Concern was expressed that not enough had been done for pedestrians and that many of the paths along the improved road and around lake had not been improved."

Survey Findings:

"People were keen that the improvements and the activities in the park did not stop now project had come to an end. Their aspirations were varied but key themes emerged as follows. The most common response to this question was to 'maintain well what we have got'. There was a sentiment in the responses that past improvements had not always been well maintained therefore this was an area for future improvement.

Car/ roads/ access and parking was perhaps the biggest area of comment in this section. As already been mentioned there is a range of opinions on the topic but there seem to be a consensus around the idea that this issue was not yet satisfactorily addressed and work is needed to continue. There is a strong feeling that this is unfinished business.

Miniature Steam Train. There used to be a narrow-gauge railway operating in the park. This closed in 2018 and is a much-missed attraction.

Ongoing support for volunteers and a continued programme of events was also seen as important as these had been popular activities during the life of the project and were seen as providing a key link with the local community.

Note: It is the responsibility of the 'Responsible Officer' – that is the Officer making the decision – to obtain the comments and signature of the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer **before** taking the decision and then send the completed record of the decision to Democratic Services for publication.

Finance and Resourcing Implications:

Background Information:

A trial closure has no financial impact to operations on the ground as the infrastructure is in place where the park is closed daily during morning. Temporary signage and information are to be provided at a cost of <£1k.

Resource impact on respective teams managing the consultation, particularly the Communications team with a high volume of interest from media outlets and fielding social media queries.

Budget has been identified for all activities linked to this trial within the existing Poole Park budget area.

A permanent closure requires a low level of infrastructure improvements, <£10k, in the short term as the gate is closed off and made safe and attractive to wheeled users, cyclists and pedestrians. If the outcome of the consultation supports the closure of the Park Entrance (adjacent to Twemlow Avenue/Whitecliff) to motor traffic the closure shall be made permanent with the use of capital funding that has already been identified.

- Comment of the Chief Finance Officer:

The cost of this trial is minimal and budget has been identified to fund it. I therefore support the trial.

Name: Adam Richens

Date: 15.01.2024

Signature (of Chief Finance Officer):

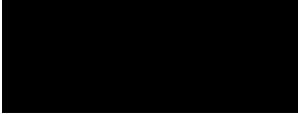


Legal Comments:

The proposed closure of the Park Entrance (adjacent to Twemlow Avenue/Whitecliff) to motor traffic is deemed to be an officer decision. This is based on the current precedent of the daily closure of the park entrance to vehicular traffic between the hours of 7.30 am – 10am Mon-Sat, to reduce the impact of rush hour traffic. The road networks in Poole Park are not designated highways or contained within the statutory register of highways, as such this is an operational decision that does not require a Traffic Regulation Order process to be undertaken. However, by following a typical process of 28-day consultation period the Council is following usual practice of consultation to gage the views of members of the public

The proposed live trial undertaken as part of the public consultation is in alignment with the Council's usual practice of consultation on such matters of road closures and the period of consultation would be in line with or equivalent to statutory requirements for such matters. Importantly, it should be noted that all consultation feedback shall be considered ahead of any decision to make the trial closure permanent or to revert to the current arrangement. I therefore support this decision.

Name: Janie Berry **Date:8/1/24**
Signature (of Director of Law and Governance):



Risk Assessment:

Reputational – Following the keyhole Bridge decision and publicity with Cycling UK, the public, active travel groups and other stakeholders may view the Council is acting because of the previous administrations decisions where it reversed a closure.

Communications messaging and the consultation will need to be carefully worded to set out that the purpose of this closure is to improve the Environment within Poole Park.

Accessibility - The EIA (attached) does not consider the trial to adversely affect any protected groups. The two-week notice period provides time for people to adjust their routes and acknowledge the trial. The trial does not prevent anyone from being unable to drive to any area of the park.

Health and Safety - No health and safety concerns have been identified.

Name: Martin Whitchurch

Date: 5/1/24

Signature (of Officer Completing Assessment):



Impact Assessments:

- Attached as Appendix 1.

Information for publication

- High level of public interest in the trial closure.
- Expected scrutiny of a final decision following analysis of the consultation, including FOI's or similar requests for transparency of decision making.

None

Any declaration of interest by the Officer responsible for the decision

Nature of Interest

No

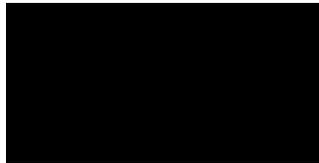
Note: No Officer having an personal financial interest in any matter should take a decision on that matter. Other interests of a non-disqualifying matter should be recorded here.

Any conflict of interest declared by a Cabinet Member who is consulted by the Officer taking the decision	Name of Cabinet Member	Nature of interest	Details of any dispensation granted by the Monitoring Officer
No			

Decision taken by: (print name and designation) Jess Gibbons

Jess Gibbons Chief Operations Officer

Signature:



Date of Decision: 17/1/24

Date Decision Effective:

Date of Publication of record of Major Operational decision: As shown on web site

Note: A record of this decision should be kept by the Service Area within which the decision falls.