

RICHMOND UPON THAMES TRANSPORT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

CONSULTATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES - DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT (V01 - OCTOBER 2000 VERSION WITH H & T COMMENTS)

INDEX

SECTION 1

1. INTRODUCTION
2. BACKGROUND
3. HEALTH, SAFETY, WELFARE, AND QUALITY OF LIFE

SECTION 2 - FACTS AND FIGURES

4. FINANCE (2000-2001)
5. ACCIDENT STATISTICS
6. TRAFFIC SPEEDS
7. TRAFFIC VOLUMES

SECTION 3 - CURRENT PROCEDURES

8. UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (currently under review).
9. TRANSPORT PLANS
10. TRANSPORT CONSULTATIVE FORUM
11. TRANSPORT SUB COMMITTEE
12. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

SECTION 4 - CONSULTATION AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS - THE NEW STANDARD PROCEDURES RECOMMENDED BY THE TRANSPORT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

13. SOURCES OF POTENTIAL TRAFFIC SCHEMES
14. NEW ROLE FOR AREA CONSULTATION MEETINGS
15. CLASSIFICATION OF POTENTIAL TRAFFIC SCHEMES
16. IDENTIFICATION OF SENSITIVE ISSUES
17. IDENTIFICATION OF PARTIES TO BE CONSULTED
18. INITIAL PRE-CONSULTATION PUBLICITY
19. OUTLINE PLANS, PROPOSALS AND FIRST CONSULTATION
20. ANALYSIS AND REVIEW OF FIRST CONSULTATION REPLIES
21. PROCEED OR REJECTION DECISION - DELEGATION TO OFFICERS
22. REVISED PLANS, PROPOSALS AND SECOND CONSULTATION
23. ENVIRONMENTAL, FUNCTIONAL AND SAFETY AUDITS
24. FINAL ANALYSIS AND REVIEW OF CONSULTATION REPLIES
25. THE OFFICER'S REPORT TO THE TRANSPORT SUB COMMITTEE
26. PREPARATION OF FULL DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
27. NOTICE OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS
28. PUBLICATION OF COMMITTEE AGENDA
29. CONSIDERATION BY TRANSPORT SUB COMMITTEE
30. CONSIDERATION BY ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

31. NOTIFICATION OF DECISION TO INTERESTED PARTIES
32. PUBLICATION OF DECISION
33. APPEALS - INDEPENDENT REVIEW
34. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION
35. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY MONITORING
36. POST APPROVAL CHANGES TO TRAFFIC SCHEMES
37. PROJECT COMPLETION AND SAFETY MONITORING
38. TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNALS UNIT - NOTE ON ACCOUNTABILITY

SECTION 5 - SUMMARY OF OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

ANNEXES

ANNEXE A - PERSONAL INJURY ACCIDENT STATISTICS YEARS 1995 - 1999

ANNEXE B - THE ACCIDENT ICEBERG

RICHMOND UPON THAMES TRANSPORT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

CONSULTATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES - DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT (V01 - OCTOBER 2000)

SECTION 1- SETTING THE SCENE

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is the first draft of a discussion document about consultation procedures produced for the Transport Consultative Forum which: -

- examines the transport planning and consultation procedures currently used in the Borough of Richmond upon Thames;
- identifies the perceived strengths and weaknesses of those procedures;
- suggests ways to enhance those procedures by building on those strengths and remedying those weaknesses; and
- recommends changes to ensure the greater accountability and democratisation of the process.

It has been drafted by a member of the Forum, and, in presenting the "Clients View" does not necessarily reflect the views of the Highways and Transport Department, or of Councillors, over some of the issues raised. Its first round of recommendations will be debated by the members of the Forum, and may be the subject of considerable revision before a final version is produced.

It does not cover routine maintenance of roads, pavements, signs etc. or any other aspect of the "good housekeeping" so necessary for safety and a pleasant environment. Many parts of the Borough show worrying signs of increasing neglect - a subject that can, and no doubt will be, debated at a later meeting of the Transport Consultative Forum.

2. BACKGROUND

The Borough has had a good record on consultation, having been one of the first Councils to open Council Meetings to the public, and allow members of the public to address Councillors at those meetings. In the past, there have also been Area Traffic Studies carried out by Transport Engineers which have involved detailed consultation in public meetings with local residents to identify their specific traffic problems and concerns, and to examine ways of alleviating those problems and concerns. With the increasingly difficult financial situation, this Council, like so many others, has been forced to find imaginative ways to fund transport schemes that would not qualify for allocation of local funding from Council Tax receipts.

As a result, there is a feeling among the general public that the original spirit of openness and involvement that was so apparent in the early days has been lost. The general perception is that: -

- consultation processes are less thorough;
- official evidence produced to Committee is insufficiently detailed and no longer as balanced;
- the scales are heavily weighted against objectors to schemes that have “official” backing;
- Councillors meet beforehand to agree how to vote, and sometimes seem to fail to take full account of the evidence given by members of the public at the full meeting;
- “new evidence”, whether factually correct or not, produced by Councillors and Officers after the public speakers have finished cannot be challenged, and can lead to poor decision-making; and
- schemes perceived as essential by local residents are not being given proper consideration - particularly if substantial funding is involved.

This paper seeks to find ways of regaining the goodwill and trust of the general public, by returning to, and improving upon, the more open consultation procedures used a decade or so ago. It also examines a range of linked issues.

3. HEALTH, SAFETY, WELFARE, AND QUALITY OF LIFE

3.1 Improving standards for all - the aim

Most of the agenda items presented to Committee contain a statement along these lines - *“The Council strategy seeks to promote environmentally friendly transportation policies and gives priority to safety and the environment on the Highway Network”*. There are rarely any supporting statements and facts to demonstrate how this is being measured or achieved.

The maintenance, and wherever possible, improvements to, the health, safety, welfare, and quality of life for all who live, work, or travel through the Borough must be at the very top of the agenda when any transport scheme is under consideration. At present, this is not always the case, although it might have been the genuine intention at the time of the inception of any scheme that does not meet this requirement. There are no specific measures currently in place to assess the benefits or otherwise of schemes that are already, or about to be, implemented.

3.2 The way ahead

The lack of a benefits assessment procedure gave such concern to one local Community Association, that it has proposed the following amendment for inclusion in the Borough’s Unitary Development Plan (UDP) to ensure that the health, safety, welfare and quality of life of people living and working in the Borough are always given proper consideration in future:-

“ The Borough, and its Councillors and Officers, have responsibility for protecting, and wherever possible, enhancing, the health, safety, welfare and quality of life, for all who live and work in the Borough. To ensure that any proposed new or modified traffic schemes do not have adverse effects on people living and working in the Borough, all such schemes will be the subject of the following procedures: -

- **Full publicity for the scheme from the earliest stages**
- **Publication of comprehensive accident and other relevant statistics which justify the scheme**
- **Consultation with all interested parties - particularly local residents, Community Organisations, and businesses**
- **Environmental Audits**
- **Safety and Functional Audits**
- **Review by the Borough's Transport Forum**
- **Publication of all Environment and Transport Committees' Agendas**
- **Opportunity for the public to present evidence to the Environment and Transport Committees when each scheme is being considered (*note - this is already part of the system; each person is allowed 3 minutes to present evidence*)**

An independent appeals procedure will be available to members of the public where the procedures outlined above have not been fully complied with."

3.3 Informing the public

The Association believes that publication of such a statement in the UDP would tell everyone that there is a proper publicly accountable procedure that must be followed by all. It removes the possibility of schemes being introduced without proper consultation and the manipulation of information by any person or party to support or undermine schemes. In reality, many of the procedures outlined above are carried out in some form at some time or other. The problem is that there is no consistency in working and consultancy procedures, each Transport Team having its own style. This is further complicated when Councillors carry out well intentioned "consultations" using political documents, and then proceed to use the results of this statistically flawed procedure to justify a scheme which may, or may not, be necessary or desirable.

The Council meets its statutory requirement to publish legal, planning and other notices by advertising these in the Richmond Comet, a paid for Kingston based paper with negligible circulation within Richmond upon Thames. According to the Borough's Information Officer, "the circulation is irrelevant" - apparently the Borough in seeking to meet its legal obligations, has put cost above its responsibility to keep residents fully informed. This is, in many residents' view, a totally unacceptable situation. New arrangements are proposed in Section 4 below.

(Note: - Council has web site.

[Http://www.richmond.gov.uk/depts/env/planning/applications/default.htm](http://www.richmond.gov.uk/depts/env/planning/applications/default.htm))

SECTION 2 - FACTS AND FIGURES

4. FINANCE (2000-2001)

4.1 Finance - general.

Funding for transport schemes of all sorts has become increasingly scarce as Central Government has monitored local expenditure ever more tightly, and capped those councils that it considered to be overspending. Small and relatively efficient Boroughs like Richmond appear to have consistently received less than the national average Revenue Support Grant. Councils are also limited as to the increase in Council Tax chargeable, so that a shortfall in central funding cannot be made up by Council Tax increases.

4.2 Types of funding

Traffic schemes are funded in three ways: -

- (a) Revenue Budgets - Parking Fees and Fines **and Council revenue – very limited**
- (b) Capital Expenditure – **The majority of this fund is from central government. Very limited amount of Council capital, none of which is from Council tax.** This For use on local safety schemes. Additional funds can be borrowed where necessary
- (c) Other, including Section 106 contributions from Developers as part of planning approval e.g. for improved public transport services.

4.3 Finance - London wide expenditure (responsible Boroughs)

	2000/2001
(a) London Bus Priority Network (Bromley)	£15million
(b) Cycle Network (Kingston)	£6million
(c) London Bridges (Westminster)	£19million
(d) London Lorry Ban (Transport for London)	£0.12million
(e) Carriage condition survey (??)	£0.35million

4.4 Finance - London regional

(a) SWELTRAC (Richmond)	£1.7million
(b) West London Leadership (WELL) (Hounslow)	£1.1million
© South East London Transport Strategy (SELTRANS) (Bromley)	£1.7million

4.5 Finance - funds allocated to Richmond under ITP bid.

(a) Maintenance of principal roads	£0.491million
(b) Authority Block	£0.626million
(c) Bridges	£0.104million
(d) Cycle Network	£0.225million
(e) LPBN (distributed)	£2.919million

(f) SWELTRAC (as leader) £1.7million

4.6 Authority Block (£0.626million - expenditure.

(a) Traffic Control Signal Unit (TCSU) £0.2million
(b) Annual Accident Review
(c) Area Traffic Studies
(d) Traffic calming - public request
(e) Pedestrian facilities - public request
(f) School Safety Zones
(g) Access for emergency services, buses etc.

4.7 Funding transport schemes

All the items under 4.6 and 4.5 d-f are all subject to the same procedures and the funds are all from central government.

As can be seen from paragraph 4.6 above, only £0.426million is available from Authority funds to cover a whole range of vital schemes. As a consequence, any scheme seeking funds from this source receives the most rigorous examination, and many do not even get considered. However, if a proposed scheme can be linked in some way, however tenuously, to one of the expenditure heads under 4.5 (d) to (f) above, funds become more easily available, and may not be the subject of such rigorous examination. This is not good practice, and could lay Councillors and Officers open to scrutiny by the National Audit Office. It is essential that every scheme is subject to identical, and rigorous, monitoring procedures - irrespective of the source of funding.

5. ACCIDENT STATISTICS

5.1 Personal injury traffic accidents

The Borough relies on data produced by the London Accident Analysis Unit (LAAU) for its record of accidents. Only those accidents involving a motor vehicle; **and** an injury to a person; **and** a report by the Police to the Metropolitan Police Performance Information Bureau (PIB) appear in these official statistics. The PIB processes accident reports and passes details electronically to the LAAU for further processing on a London-wide basis. These accidents are known as Personal Injury Accidents (PIAs).

The Police classify injuries as: -

- **“Slight”** (an injury of a minor nature such as a sprain, bruise or cut judged not to be severe, or slight shock);
- **“Serious”** (an injury that results in detention in hospital, such as a severe fracture, concussion and internal injuries, or an injury causing death more than 30 days after the accident; or
- **“Fatal”** (an injury that results in death within 30 days of the accident).

If Police attend an accident and there appear to be no PIAs, there will normally be no record of that accident for use in the planning process. A summary of the number of **recorded** PIAs and accidents occurring in the Borough is at Annexe A.

5.2 Other traffic accidents

There are many accidents, some of which involve personal injury, that do not find their way into the Local Safety Scheme process. Accidents take place at many locations, but will not be officially recorded as having taken place because the Police were not called, or if they were, no-one was recorded as being injured. Nor will they be recorded if someone that was involved in an accident to which the police were called, who said that they were not injured because they had no symptoms at the time, but were subsequently found to have been injured (e.g. minor fracture, whiplash, or shock).

5.3 PIA Statistics and their role in funding.

It is generally accepted that the quality of the accident statistics are not as good as they ought to be. The only definite figure being the PIAs reported by the Police, but these form only a small proportion of all accidents across the Borough. Their importance lies in the fact that as with all London Boroughs, these are the only accident figures being used to compare each Borough's performance, and more importantly, the basis for obtaining central funds for safety schemes. Central funds are fairly freely available if a scheme tackles the problem of reducing centrally recorded PIAs; other accident reduction schemes have to be funded out of the local Authority block, and are the subject of very close financial scrutiny. The latter schemes have to compete with a whole range of other projects that are funded from Council tax receipts. A consequence is, that unless centrally recorded PIAs involving a motor vehicle occur, few other road safety schemes are implemented.

5.4 The "Accident Iceberg"

There is concern that virtually all effort is aimed at reducing PIAs recorded by the Police and LAAU, whilst a substantial number of other accidents, many involving injury, go unreported. The PIA figure is just the tip of the Accident Iceberg (see annexe B). The lack of reliable, indeed of any data, about this wide range of unrecorded accidents that are potential PIAs, is of considerable concern. Concentration solely on reducing recorded PIAs distorts, and also undermines, the credibility of the transport planning process. Councillors and Traffic Engineers will not normally take action unless around four recorded PIAs per year have occurred over the last three to five years - a simple method of prioritisation as funds are scarce.

5.5 Accident statistics - is a more comprehensive recording system now necessary?

Every road accident is a potential PIA. With the increasing use of computers, the opportunity for introducing a much more comprehensive computerised accident record system is now with us. A computerised mapping (GIS/IT) system has the potential to simplify record keeping and analysis, such a system is being developed for use within the Borough.

For example, the Borough Department that is responsible for repairs to traffic islands, lampposts, walls, railings, road signs, etc. should have information about a whole range of traffic accidents that are currently be outside the recording system.

(R.01) It is therefore recommended that any accident which involves a vehicle mounting a pavement or demolishing railings or a traffic island etc. should be treated as at least equal to a serious Personal Injury Accident, as any pedestrian standing at the place of impact would almost certainly be seriously injured, or worse still, killed. A record of such accidents, and damage to street furniture, is seen as a future important source of accident data once the GIS/IT system is fully in place.

Over reliance on PIA statistics, without the inclusion of accident statistics from other sources, including reports of minor accidents from the Police and others, reduces the flexibility of the planning process, and rules out safety schemes to meet local needs.

5.6 Location of each accident

Accidents are recorded by estimated distance from points of reference, e.g. 50 metres west of High Street/North Road Junction on Barnes Way. The Police may record a series of accidents occurring in the vicinity of the junction, although none might have occurred actually on the junction. Presentation of accident figures as if all were occurring in one place to help justify a scheme is not helpful and may lead to a less suitable safety scheme being introduced. To help Councillors who may not be familiar with the location under review, **(R.02) it is therefore recommended that a plan showing the precise location of each accident (where accidents are a justifying factor) should form part of the supporting documents for each agenda item considered at Committee.** The GIS/IT system could be used to record all accidents by Post Code National Grid, OS Grid, or Latitude and Longitude - this may help in the various data analyses required for more sophisticated planning in the future.

5.7 Costs of each accident

Accidents vary in severity and it is not possible to cost each one accurately. The Borough use figures from the Dept. of Environment Highways Economic Notes to produce average cost benefit for a prevention of an accident in each category. The figures for 1997 were: -

Fatal	£902,500
Serious	£102,880
Slight	£7,970
Average (all)	£30,250

(R.03) It is recommended that if the individual average accident costs are used to prioritise potential schemes, steps should be taken to ensure that locations with more fatal or serious accidents are not overlooked.

6. TRAFFIC SPEEDS

6.1 Speeding in built-up areas

One of the major complaints from residents is that a substantial proportion of drivers consistently exceed the 30mph speed limit in built-up areas, speeds well in excess

of 45mph being a regular occurrence on many commuter routes outside the rush hour. Side roads also suffer from rat-running vehicles during the rush hour, these may not exceed 30mph, but because of the nature of those roads, 30mph is too fast for safety. Residents on all types of roads are often believed to exaggerate the speed and volume of vehicles because of their genuine fears for the safety of their families and others. A consequence of this, is that when residents seek traffic calming or other measures to increase safety, their concerns are sometimes not treated with as much respect as they might deserve. The Police are not interested in carrying out speed checks in 30mph areas unless a substantial number of vehicles are exceeding 45mph - even then, checks tend to be carried out during office hours when offending is at its lightest.

6.2 Analysing traffic speeds

Traffic engineers usually install speed check equipment when a traffic scheme is under consideration, or where there are substantial numbers of complaints. The figures are presented in a manner, which can be difficult to understand. It is usual to present the figures as 85th percentile average speeds e.g. a 36mph 85th percentile speed over a 24 hour period would mean that 15% (1 in 6) vehicles exceed 36mph in a 30mph area. These higher speeds peak at different times of the day, thus between 7.30am and 8.30am, it may be only 20mph, but 39mph between 10.30 and 11.30, and 45mph after midnight. It is possible that Councillors and others would find a 24 hour graph linking traffic volumes and speeds a simpler way of assessing risk.

7. TRAFFIC VOLUMES

7.1 Measuring traffic volumes

Traffic engineers usually measure traffic volumes in conjunction with speed checks. 24hour traffic flows are rarely produced, 7.30am to 6.30pm figures being the norm. The rush hour has been starting earlier and earlier to avoid queues, with London bound traffic well on its way by 6.30am. Traffic congestion may appear to have stabilised, or even reduced, but the reality is that congestion is spread more thinly over a longer period in many parts of the Borough. Traffic patterns can vary as drivers try to find less congested routes, often returning to their original routes after a period of several days.

This variation in the traffic cycle means that planning a scheme on the basis of single day traffic flow counts is risky, and other measures should be employed at the same time to gauge whether the traffic flow count is representative, or whether more measurements over a longer period are necessary.

7.2 Figures produced for planning purposes

All traffic schemes presented to Committee should include detailed traffic flow patterns, speed and volume analyses, but do not at present. **(R.04) It is therefore recommended that measurements of traffic flow patterns, speed, and volumes should be taken over a period of several days, and an analysis of that data be made available with the other papers for the Agenda item. Consideration should also be given to the use of Video Cameras, possibly linked to computers, for analysis purposes - a cheaper and more efficient method,**

which allows re-analysis at a later date.

SECTION 3 - CURRENT PROCEDURES

8. UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (currently under review)

Every Borough has to prepare a Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which records how it will implement Central Government policies and its own policies covering all aspects of local government. The UDP is reviewed and updated every five years or so, and a revised draft is deposited by the local Council in Libraries and Council Offices. Local residents and organisations can comment on, and propose amendments to, the UDP. These are considered by a Government Inspector in public, and evidence may be given in writing and also in person.

The UDP contains sections specifically about the Borough's short, medium and long-term transport policies and strategies, which in turn form the basis of Annual Transport Plans. Unfortunately, awareness of the UDP among local residents is probably under 1 in 500 - a very serious problem. This lack of awareness does place additional responsibilities on Officers who must ensure that the interests of the general public are analysed, identified, and quantified accurately, whenever a new transport or other scheme is under consideration.

9. TRANSPORT PLANS

Each year, Highways and Transport Department produces a Transport Policies and Programme Document containing the year's policies, factual data about the various programmes being carried out in co-operation with other Boroughs, road networks etc. It also acts as a bidding document for funds from various sources. This year an Interim Transport Plan (ITP) for the year 2001-2002, has been prepared by Officers in conjunction with the Transport Consultative Forum. The ITP has been approved by the Environment Committee and sent to the Government of London's Office (GOL) for scrutiny and comment. The ITP also forms the bidding for local and central funds document, and cross references various strands of transport policy.

10. TRANSPORT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

The Borough's Transport Consultative Forum (TCF) was set up in late 1999 to produce a new style transport Plan involving both Council Officers and representatives of business and the wider Community. It has produced an Interim Transport Plan for the year 2001-2002, which has been submitted to the GOL for consideration, approval, and allocation of funding. The Forum will have an important future role in the transport planning process, as it has representatives from a wide cross-section of the Community, and therefore, often has detailed local knowledge of the issues and problems involved in a particular scheme. A Citizens Panel has also been established for independent consultation purposes.

11. TRANSPORT SUB COMMITTEE

The Transport sub-Committee is a sub-Committee of the Environment Committee previously it had been a sub-Committee of the Planning Committee. The new arrangement is considered to be a more sensible arrangement because of the importance of environmental considerations in transport planning. This Committee

meets on a regular basis to consider a range of transport schemes placed before it by the Highways and Transport Department. The Agendas are placed in every local library **three** working days before each Committee meeting, this is usually the first time that the general public becomes aware of the schemes under consideration. Some local residents may have prior knowledge where the scheme has arisen from a local request, or where some form of consultation has taken place.

Members of the public are allowed to address the Committee for three minutes, and may be asked further questions by members of the Committee where further clarification is required. Three minutes is rarely enough time, but can be adequate when a group of speakers arrange to cover different aspects of the scheme which may be the subject of support or objections. Provided that no “new evidence” (see paragraph 26 below) is produced by Councillors or Officers after all the members of the public have spoken, the arrangements are a reasonable compromise. The main weakness in the system is the lack of notice to members of the public, and the shortage of time to carry out consultations with other local interests.

At present it is not clear why some decisions are taken by the Transport sub-Committee, whilst others are referred to the Environment Committee.

The Transport Sub-Committee considers and decides on schemes. If however the Committee is unable to reach a decision, the matter is referred to the Environment Committee.

The Environment Committee addresses strategy and policy-related issues and other referred by the Transport Sub-Committee.

12. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The Environment Committee works along the same lines as the Transport sub-Committee, and has the same strengths and weaknesses. It tends to deal with the larger or more controversial transport schemes, and a range of other issues. **(H&T Please insert the selection rules here).**

SECTION 4 - CONSULTATION AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS - THE NEW STANDARD PROCEDURES RECOMMENDED BY THE TRANSPORT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

13. SOURCES OF POTENTIAL TRAFFIC SCHEMES

Traffic schemes can be generated from a whole range of sources, in this Borough, the most common sources are: -

- **Personal Injury Accident Data - need to reduce numbers of PIAs**
- **Public Transport Services - need to improve services**
- **Transport Engineers' observations - problems found on inspection**
- **Local residents' concerns - generally speed and danger related**
- **Pressure and other special interest groups - pursuing their policies**
- **Ward Councillors**
- **Local Community Associations**

- **Political Party Associations**
- **Area Consultation meetings with Councillors (six monthly)**
- **By-product of decisions made by other Council Departments (e.g. new schools, old peoples' homes, housing developments etc.)**

14. NEW ROLE FOR AREA CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Ward Councillors meet their constituents at these twice-yearly meetings. The precise function and role of these meetings in the planning process is rather vague. Until fairly recently, minutes of these meetings were confidential to Councillors, and as a consequence local residents had no idea whether their concerns had been recorded, or whether Councillors were taking any action. It is understood that copies of minutes are now being placed in **every library in the borough**.

It is obvious that these meetings should have a formal role in the transport planning process - particularly as a potential source of new traffic schemes. Attendance at these meetings is sparse in some Wards, but considerable in others. Once residents learn that their views about a range of traffic and transport matters are being listened to, attendance is likely to increase. Councillors, Officers and Residents will benefit from the opportunity of meeting face to face, and thus gain a better understanding of how the planning system could be made to work more efficiently. **(R.05) It is therefore recommended that the function of Area Consultation Meetings be reviewed, with the objective of identifying local concerns about traffic and transport, and feeding these into the transport planning system - possibly by formal report of meetings to Committee.**

15. CLASSIFICATION OF POTENTIAL TRAFFIC SCHEMES

Irrespective of the source of a potential traffic scheme, a clearly understood system of classification and priority is essential. It must be: -

- flexible;
- easily monitored;
- seen to be clearly linked to the UDP and Annual Transport Plans;
- under constant review to ensure that the scheme is still necessary; and
- given a date by which the scheme is likely to be implemented.

Such a system exists in part, but needs upgrading to meet modern requirements for more easily understood information. **(R.06) It is therefore recommended that a review of the method of presentation take place, and "batting order" lists prepared for each Ward, and for the Borough overall.**

16. IDENTIFICATION OF SENSITIVE ISSUES

Transport Engineers are involved in devising schemes that can add to the quality of life for some people, but can have the very opposite effect on others. There are five specific issues which generate much heat and ill-feeling among local residents, Engineers should be fully aware of these, and ensure that these are fully considered as part of the planning process. They are: -

- (i) Lack of early consultation (addressed by this paper)
- (ii) Loss of property values
- (iii) Loss of road side car parking spaces
- (iv) Increased noise and air pollution
- (v) Reduction in quality of life for local residents

17. IDENTIFICATION OF PARTIES TO BE CONSULTED

The identification of all the parties to be consulted is critically important to the smooth running of the planning process - but one of the most difficult to achieve. A particular problem with transport planning is that a very wide range of people can be adversely affected by a scheme designed to meet a local problem. For example, a traffic calming scheme in one place can create congestion, danger, and pollution in another. At present, most schemes are considered in isolation, and the wider implications do not seem to be addressed. The present arrangements encourage NIMBYism by organised groups at the expense of others in a less fortunate situation. Insufficient consideration of the wider effects of a proposed scheme is a weakness that this document attempts to address.

As every potential scheme is different, it may not be possible to produce a simple list of "consultees". Instead, it may be necessary to work through a list of questions to help identify all the interested parties. This list could include: -

- (a) Major or minor scheme?
- (b) Who will benefit?
- (c) Who will not benefit?
- (d) Who is scheme aimed at - pedestrians, cyclists, disabled, local residents, local motorists, through traffic etc.?
- (e) Will noise increase - who will be affected?
- (f) Will air pollution increase or be more concentrated - who will be affected?
- (g) Will traffic levels increase or decrease - who will be affected?
- (h) If traffic is being diverted - where will it go - will it avoid school safety zones?
- (i) Local pressure group - is it representative of local opinion?
- (j) If result of a petition or questionnaire - were the questions balanced, complete, fair, objective and relevant? What was the % response rate?
- (k) Is it a NIMBY proposal?
- (l) Are the views of the less articulate and less fortunate adequately represented?

(R.07) It is recommended that the method of identifying parties to be consulted should look at widening the range of factors to be considered.

18. INITIAL PRE-CONSULTATION PUBLICITY

The major, and most often heard criticism of the present transport planning process, is the failure to notify all local residents and other interested parties of schemes under consideration until planning has reached a fairly advanced stage. Quite often, local residents and others do not hear of a scheme until it appears on a Committee agenda - too late to influence the Officer's briefing notes - or to consult with others about the benefits or disadvantages of the scheme. In the worst case scenario, local residents and others do not even hear about the scheme until the Committee's decision is reported in a local paper! Even where new schemes have been generated by local pressure from residents and Councillors, many interested residents and others will not hear of the scheme unless there has been detailed coverage in the local media. This document seeks to address these problems.

(R.08) It is therefore recommended that at the very minimum, the following first steps to publicise a potential transport scheme should be taken:-

- (a) Notices with outline options on lamp posts in the local area**
- (b) Press releases with outline of options likely to be considered, local radio should be included to reach those who do not read local papers**
- (c) Letters to each household (per Electoral Roll) in the immediate area**
- (d) Letters to businesses in the immediate area**
- (e) Letters to local Amenity Groups**
- (f) Letters to local Political Parties**
- (g) Letters to local Police, and Area Traffic Safety Officer**
- (h) Copy of Notice on Borough web site**

This action should ensure that the majority of people likely to be affected by the potential scheme become aware of the possible implications of that scheme.

19. OUTLINE PLANS, PROPOSALS AND FIRST CONSULTATION

Having carried out the action in paragraphs 17 and 18 above, Officers will become aware of the support or otherwise for the various options and which issues are likely to be most contentious. At this stage, the Officers can prepare outline plans for the options which have most support, produce summaries of benefits or disadvantages for each of the options. These can be circulated internally as necessary, before starting the first consultation procedure. It is important that Officers should not prepare detailed plans at this stage. There are two reasons for this; one, to avoid giving the impression that the scheme is well on the way to being cut and dried; and two, Officers, having spent a great deal of time and effort in producing detailed plans, may feel the need to “defend” their design, and may not welcome constructive, but sometimes critical, comment.

Having taken action under paragraphs 17 and 18 above, Officers will also have been able to prepare a list of people and organisations to be consulted. In addition, a press release, an item on the Council web site, and a copy in the local library, should ensure that all interested parties are aware of how the proposed scheme is developing. The use of Email should be maximised to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

20. ANALYSIS AND REVIEW OF FIRST CONSULTATION REPLIES

This next stage is likely to be very similar to current procedures, and no proposals are made - balance, fairness and objectivity are taken as read. **(H&T please insert current arrangements here)**

21. PROCEED OR REJECTION DECISION - DELEGATION TO OFFICERS

This next stage is likely to be very similar to current procedures, and no proposals are made. However, where a request for a scheme has been received from a member of the public, and that scheme is rejected by an Officer, this rejection, with reasons, should be notified in writing. In fact, sometimes no reply at all is made, and the proposer is left in the dark - this may be due to overwork, but is not a satisfactory situation. A short note on an acknowledgement card, or an explanatory telephone

call might well satisfy most people. **(H&T please insert current arrangements in here)**

22. REVISED PLANS, PROPOSALS AND SECOND CONSULTATION

This stage is likely to be very similar to current procedures, and no proposals are made. At this stage, Officers will be deciding whether to proceed with the original scheme, a modified scheme, or to recommend rejection. Their decision will be based on the replies received, Councillors' views, and the public reaction to the scheme. Where a decision is made to recommend acceptance of a scheme, whether original or modified, detailed plans should be drafted for this final stage of the consultation process. **(H&T please insert current arrangements here)**

23. ENVIRONMENTAL, FUNCTIONAL AND SAFETY AUDITS

(R.09) It is recommended that for every proposed traffic scheme, independent formal Environmental, Functional and Safety Audits should be carried out.

(a) Health and welfare - independent medical assessment a priority.

An independent medical assessment of the likely adverse effects on the health of people living and working in the area should take place for every proposed local traffic management scheme. It is easy to get carried away with the possibility of making a small reduction in personal injury accidents, for example, whilst failing to recognise that the scheme might be creating a substantially greater number of asthma and other long term respiratory illnesses - some of which could be so debilitating as to be equivalent to a serious personal injury, whilst others may lead to death.

(b) Environmental Audits

Environmental Audits are necessary to identify the likely adverse and beneficial effects of any transport scheme. In particular those involving, air pollution, noise pollution, vibration pollution, and visual pollution.

(b)(i) Air pollution is a serious health hazard for all - particularly the elderly and very young. A typical local primary school which has 360 pupils can expect 20 of those pupils to use nebulisers in the summer to help them breathe, in the Autumn to Spring period, about 35 of those pupils will need nebulisers - 10% of the school population. Across the Borough, the number of children needing to use nebulisers must run into many hundreds. Elderly residents probably suffer from pollution induced breathing problems in equal measure, with fatal outcomes in many cases.

(R.10) It is therefore recommended that accurate measurement of pollutants in the air that we and our families actually breathe should be a priority. The current survey vehicles sample the air using an inlet pipe about 3 metres from the ground - well above head height. Many of the polluting gases are heavier than air, low level sampling inlets are therefore essential. As all residents are concerned specifically about the air they and their families breathe, they would expect layered sampling to coincide with head heights of small children through to tall adults. It has been agreed by the Environment Committee that at least one of the current

sampling vehicles should be modified to sample air at low level. Such readings should be made available for all schemes.

(b)(ii) Noise Pollution is a health hazard. It has long been recognised in the working environment that continual exposure to noise, even at a low level, can have an adverse effect on hearing. Continual exposure to traffic noise can have a similar effect. A particular problem with traffic noise is that it can occur at any time of day or night. If residents' sleep patterns are affected, it can not only affect their health, but may make them more prone to accidents, and less efficient at work due to tiredness. Measures to control night through traffic may be necessary.

(b)(iii) Vibration Pollution is a health and a financial hazard. Not only does excessive vibration affect the quality of life of local residents, including sleep disturbance but it can, and often does, cause damage to property. Residents have little or no redress for such damage as it is rarely possible to identify and prove the guilty party. Measures to limit or divert traffic may be necessary.

(b)(iv) Visual Pollution is an irritant rather than a proven health hazard. Some visual pollution will arise from poor design and planning, or will arise from queues of traffic where none occurred previously.

(c) Functional Audits

Functional Audits are probably carried out at present, but may not be called as such. Essentially these take the form of one transport engineer independently examining the design, layout and specification of a scheme designed by another transport engineer, to ensure that the design fully meets the performance standards laid down. Ideally, this audit should be carried out by someone who has not been involved in the design stage, or in the line management chain. The audit should also include a site visit, because contours and visibility problems are not always apparent from a paper plan.

(c) Safety Audits

It is taken as read that all traffic schemes are intended to improve safety. This is not always the case, and sometimes a scheme, which appears safe from a design point of view, proves to be unsafe when exposed to the varying abilities of the typical road user. The procedure to be followed is virtually identical to that used for Functional Audits.

24. FINAL ANALYSIS AND REVIEW OF CONSULTATION REPLIES

Having completed detailed consultation, various audits, and received much correspondence, it remains for the Officer to follow current procedures. One change necessary will be for all supporting and objecting correspondence to be listed and analysed. Proper weight should be given to petitions and correspondence from organisations representing groups of people, and not treated as if they were single items of correspondence. If possible, separate analyses of correspondence from people directly affected by a scheme, and those less affected by a scheme, should be made. These actions will help to ensure that the requirements of paragraph 25 can be met.

25. THE OFFICER'S REPORT TO THE TRANSPORT SUB COMMITTEE

In a recent appeal case, it was stated that legal advice had been given to the effect that the Officer's report was required to be a fair and adequate representation of the issues, to be accurate in all material respects and cover all relevant points. The law requires that the report contain a fair, accurate and objective summary of the objections/representations received. As McCullough J said in ex parte Cran (Camden Council v Cran):

"Members rely on officers to produce fair, accurate and objective summaries. It is not sufficient to leave members to ferret out some point of significance or to discover some imbalance in the report from studying an appendix. One cannot expect perfection in the field of local government administration – or in any other – but affected citizens and representative organisations are entitled to expect objectivity in those whose duty it is to convey to decision makers what they have suggested."

Examination of reports and verbal evidence given by Officers to recent Committee meetings shows that the standards laid out above are not always being met, in some cases, only selective pieces of evidence are being produced. It is believed by many, that it is partly due to the effect of a single political party having a monopoly of power for a very long period, heavy workloads, and overlong Committee Agendas. In recommending the laying down of a new system for Transport Planning consultation procedures, the Transport Consultative Forum is seeking a balanced, fairer, more open, and more accountable system. **(R.11) It is therefore recommended that Officers review their method of presentation of evidence to Committee to ensure that the standards specified above are met in full.**

Note:- A prerequisite of the planning system is that Officers must have that degree of total independence so necessary for professional advisers, so that their advice and opinions are accepted as informed, objective, and impartial, by all.

26. PREPARATION OF FULL DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Members of the public are given little or no time to consult, investigate, and prepare their submission to Committee. The present arrangements under which a copy of a Committee Agenda is lodged in local libraries a day or two before the meeting is unreliable and severely disadvantages members of the public. In some cases, the first time a member of the public sees an Agenda is at the meeting itself. In addition, having made a three minute presentation to the Committee, and possibly answered questions from Councillors, a member of the public can make no further contribution to the debate. It is recognised that such an arrangement is necessary if debates are to be completed in an orderly manner, but it does lead to the planning process being, on occasion, abused.

Under present arrangements, once the members of the public have spoken, during the following debate, Councillors and Officers can produce "new evidence" like a rabbit out of a hat. This "new evidence" may be of a factual nature and not contentious, but it may also be inaccurate and misleading. It may also be in the form of correspondence from an influential third party who has neither the intimate local knowledge nor technical expertise to comment, but because the public cannot question or challenge any of this "new evidence", it is taken at face value by

Committee members and rarely challenged.

(R.12) It is therefore recommended that all official or third party documents or evidence to be produced as evidence at a Committee Meeting be disclosed in full before the members of the public have spoken. This will ensure that the accuracy and relevance of all documents or evidence can be the subject of scrutiny, and avoid the present risk of abuse. Ideally, this full disclosure list should appear in the library copy of the Meeting Agenda. **(R.13) It is also recommended that if new and relevant material is produced by an Officer or a Councillor after the members of the public have spoken, that the Agenda item be immediately withdrawn for inclusion on the Agenda of the next meeting of that Committee.**

27. NOTICE OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

A list of all Committee meetings is published each month and placed on public notice boards where they exist. Often this list is not available until the first meetings on the list have already taken place. Also the briefest of notes that a Committee meeting is taking place usually appears in the Richmond and Twickenham Times; e.g. "Transport sub, 6.30pm, Wednesday, York House". There are no details of the agenda items to be discussed. Unless local residents monitor these sources, they will be unaware of meetings that are taking place. **(R.14) It is therefore recommended that:-**

- **the Environment and Transport sub-Committees' meeting dates be published at least three months in advance of each meeting;**
- **these dates should be advertised in the Richmond and Twickenham Times;**
- **these dates should be on the Council's Web Site;**
- **these dates should be placed on public notice boards at least four weeks before the date of the first meeting listed; and**
- **these dates should also be listed in each public library.**

28. PUBLICATION OF COMMITTEE AGENDAS

The present arrangement is that a copy of the Committee Agenda is placed in each library **two (?)** working days before the day of the meeting. This is known to be a fairly reliable arrangement, but one which fails on occasions. The revised library opening hours are likely to make timely public access more difficult. Members of the public are severely disadvantaged by this arrangement for a number of reasons:-

- (a) this is the first public sight of the contents of the Agenda and Officer's comments and recommendations;
- (b) considerable research and consultation may be necessary before a member of the public, or group representative can decide whether or not to address the Committee;
- (c) other members of the public may also wish to work on different items on the one copy of the Agenda at the same time; and
- (d) there are no formal arrangements for the submission of late comments or evidence except by a personal address to the Committee.

(R.15) It is therefore recommended that:-

- **the Environment and Transport sub-Committees' Agenda items be published at least seven days in advance of each meeting;**
- **these Agenda items should be listed in the Richmond and Twickenham Times;**

- **these Agendas, including the supporting papers, should be on the Council's Web Site at least seven days before the meeting;**
- **a list of Agenda items should be placed on public notice boards at least seven days before the meeting listed; and**
- **Agendas should be placed in public libraries five working days before the date of the Committee meeting.**

29. CONSIDERATION BY TRANSPORT SUB COMMITTEE

There are no recommendations for changes in procedures at this stage. However, the Chairman should, on occasion, have the right to allow a speaker to exceed the three minute time limit. There is also a considerable reservation among some residents about the desirability of the Chairman having a personal vote and a casting vote. If voting is so tight because the issue is contentious, the decision should be either deferred for further enquiries, or referred to the Environment Committee.

30. CONSIDERATION BY ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

There are no recommendations for changes in procedures at this stage. However, the Chairman should, on occasion, have the right to allow a speaker to exceed the three minute time limit. There is also a considerable reservation among some residents about the desirability of the Chairman having a personal vote and a casting vote. If voting is so tight because the issue is contentious, the decision should be either deferred for further enquiries, or referred to the full Council.

31. NOTIFICATION OF DECISION TO INTERESTED PARTIES

(R.16) It is recommended that all respondents to the consultation exercise should be formally notified of the decision by letter or Email.

32.PUBLICATION OF DECISION

(R.17) It is recommended that the decision be the subject of a press release and publication on the borough's web site.

32. APPEALS - INDEPENDENT REVIEW

(R.18) It is recommended that a formal independent appeals procedure be instituted for use where the agreed procedures have not been completed correctly.

33. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

(R.19) It is recommended that all schemes approved for implementation should lay down a timetable for implementation (see also (R.06))

35. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY MONITORING

Once a scheme has been approved and contracts signed, the safety procedures during the construction period seem to be the responsibility of the contractor. Often

work sites are left in an unsafe and untidy state, with little concern for public safety. This is particularly the situation when one contractor has several jobs in progress at the same. Work sites may be abandoned for days on end, thus extending the period of disruption and inconvenience for local residents and others. This appears to be a particular problem at the end of the financial year when unspent funds are allocated to several projects which are all started so that stage payments can be made. There are also problems with the provision of temporary road signs and marking which rarely coincide with the safety requirements of the project. **(R.20) It is therefore recommended that a review of the project management system take place to ensure that risks to the public are minimised.**

36. POST - APPROVAL CHANGES TO TRAFFIC SCHEMES

Many transport schemes require fine tuning during the construction period. Provided that the changes are only cosmetic or minor, this does not normally require the Officer to report changes to the Committee before the changes are made. Where changes to the approved scheme are of a significant nature e.g. a reduction from two traffic lanes to just one, that scheme ceases to be the one approved by Committee, and it becomes a new one which must follow the full planning procedure. **(R.21) It is therefore recommended that where significant changes to an approved scheme are found to be necessary, the scheme must be treated as a new scheme and follow the standard consultation procedure.**

37. PROJECT COMPLETION AND SAFETY MONITORING

There are no proposals concerning project completion, but there are some concerns about safety monitoring. It is accepted that some accidents might occur during the bedding down period for a new scheme, but there are occasions where the design does not meet expectations. All schemes must be the subject of a safety audit after implementation - if any scheme is found to increase risks to the public, immediate safety precautions should be put in place, or in the worst case, the scheme must be suspended. **(R.22). It is recommended that where a safety audit has identified increased risks to the public, the Officer responsible shall have the power to suspend or revoke the scheme forthwith. A full report then being made to Committee.**

38. TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNALS UNIT - NOTE ON ACCOUNTABILITY

When travelling between Boroughs, drivers, cyclists and pedestrians will note a variety of designs of traffic lights, junctions and islands. Some are well designed and user friendly, others are not. Presumably this is due to different TSCU and Borough design Teams. Some Teams like to install the very clear cats' eye lights, whilst others like to install shutters, often for no discernible reason or benefit. Unfortunately, this Borough has adopted shutters, usually poorly adjusted and aligned, and often confusing for users, whether on foot or in a vehicle. In other cases, new designs of lights are installed with no local consultation whatsoever. They are said to be "safer", but no evidence is produced to substantiate this claim. A particular concern for drivers and pedestrians are the loss of repeater lights across the junctions, and the increased heights of the signal lights making them harder to see. An additional, and very serious problem is that TCSU engineers tinker with the timing of the lights when they carry out repairs, and seem to

completely disregard the recommendations of local traffic engineers and residents - in other words, there does not appear to be any accountability for their actions.

(R.23) It is therefore recommended that the design, modification, timing and/or replacement of traffic lights should be the subject of standard local consultation procedures, and the TCSU be accountable for its actions .

SECTION 5 - SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

(R.01) It is therefore recommended that any accident which involves a vehicle mounting a pavement or demolishing railings or a traffic island etc. should be treated as at least equal to a serious accident,

(R.02) it is therefore recommended that a plan showing the precise location of each accident (where accidents are a justifying factor) should form part of the supporting documents for each agenda item considered at Committee.

(R.03) It is recommended that if the individual average accident costs are used to prioritise potential schemes, steps should be taken to ensure that locations with more fatal or serious accidents are not overlooked.

(R.04) It is therefore recommended that measurements of traffic flow patterns, speed, and volumes should be taken over a period of several days, and an analysis of that data be made available with the other papers for the Agenda item. Consideration should also be given to the use of Video Cameras, possibly linked to computers, for analysis purposes - a cheaper and more efficient method which allows re-analysis at a later date.

(R.05) It is therefore recommended that the function of Area Consultation Meetings be reviewed, with the objective of identifying local concerns about traffic and transport, and feeding these into the transport planning system - possibly by formal report of meetings to Committee.

(R.06) It is therefore recommended that a review of the method of presentation [of transport schemes] take place, and “batting order” lists prepared for each Ward, and for the Borough overall.

(R.07) It is recommended that the method of identifying parties to be consulted should look at widening the range of factors to be considered.

(R.08) It is therefore recommended that at the very minimum, the following first steps to publicise a potential transport scheme should be taken: -

- (a) Notices with outline options on lamp posts in the local area**
- (b) Press releases with outline of options likely to be considered, local radio should be included to reach those who do not read local papers**
- (c) Letters to each household in the immediate area**
- (d) Letters to businesses in the immediate area**
- (e) Letters to local Amenity Groups**
- (f) Letters to local Political Parties**

- (g) Letters to local Police and Area Traffic Safety Officer**
- (h) Copy of Notice on Borough web site**

(R.09) It is recommended that for every proposed traffic scheme, independent formal Environmental, Functional and Safety Audits should be carried out.

(R.10) It is therefore recommended that accurate measurement of pollutants in the air that we and our families actually breathe should be a priority.

(R.11) It is therefore recommended that Officers review their method of presentation of evidence to Committee to ensure that the standards above are met in full.

(R.12) It is therefore recommended that all official or third party documents or evidence to be produced as evidence at a Committee Meeting be disclosed in full before the members of the public have spoken.

(R.13) It is also recommended that if new and relevant material is produced by an Officer or a Councillor after the members of the public have spoken, that the Agenda item be immediately withdrawn for inclusion on the Agenda of the next meeting of that Committee

(R.14) It is therefore recommended that:-

- **the Environment and Transport sub-Committees' meeting dates be published at least three months in advance of each meeting;**
- **these dates should be advertised in the Richmond and Twickenham Times;**
- **these dates should be on the Council's Web Site;**
- **these dates should be placed on public notice boards at least four weeks before the date of the first meeting listed; and**
- **these dates should also be listed in each public library.**

(R.15) It is therefore recommended that:-

- **the Environment and Transport sub-Committees' Agenda items be published at least seven days in advance of each meeting;**
- **these Agenda items should be listed in the Richmond and Twickenham Times;**
- **these Agendas, including the supporting papers, should be on the Council's Web Site at least seven days before the meeting;**
- **a list of Agenda items should be placed on public notice boards at least seven days before the meeting listed; and**
- **Agendas should be placed in public libraries five working days before the date of the Committee meeting.**

(R.16). It is recommended that all respondents to the consultation exercise should be formally notified of the decision by letter or Email.

(R.17) It is recommended that the decision be the subject of a press release and publication on the borough's web site.

(R.18) It is recommended that a formal independent appeals procedure be instituted for use where the agreed procedures have not been completed correctly.

(R.19) It is recommended that all schemes approved for implementation should lay down a timetable for implementation (see also (R.06))

(R.20) It is therefore recommended that a review of the project management system take place to ensure that risks to the public are minimised

(R.21) It is therefore recommended that where significant changes to an approved scheme are found to be necessary, the scheme must be treated as a new scheme and follow the standard consultation procedure.

(R.22). It is recommended that where a safety audit has identified increased to the public, the Officer responsible shall have the power to suspend or revoke the scheme forthwith. A full report then being made to Committee.

(R.23) It is therefore recommended that the design, modification, timing and/or replacement of traffic lights should be the subject of standard local consultation procedures, and the TCSU be accountable for its actions.