

Councillors have ‘little sympathy’ for those who complain about 20mph speed limit

Objectors to a new 20mph speed limit across towns in Midlothian have been told an extra minute on their journeys ‘won’t kill them’ by councillors.

Midlothian Council’s SNP administration cabinet was asked to consider nine objections to plans to introduce the reduced speed on urban streets.

And they had little sympathy for those who complained it would make their journeys longer.

Councillor Connor McManus said he had looked over the speed limit plans, which were originally approved by elected members two years ago, and could not see an issue with it.

He said: “There was an expression in the comments that it would take longer to get places. I noted people saying that travelling through Penicuik would take a substantially more amount of time.

“I have run the numbers and I am no mathematician but to get from Mauricewood to Lidl, which is the longest stretch in Penicuik which is in my ward, was three minutes without any traffic light stops. It is now going to be four minutes.

"I am pretty sure a minute will not kill anyone."

Council leader Kelly Parry agreed with his comments adding: "It won't kill you to take an extra minute to get there but speeding can and does kill."

Objectors had claimed reducing the speed in towns could fuel road rage and put children at risk.

One protester said the 'utopian' idea would create the impression roads are safe for children to play on and fail to teach them safety.

However Councillor McManus said roads would not be playgrounds adding "there is no need to drive fast on urban streets."

Councillor Ellen Scott also welcomed the reduced speeding saying recent monitoring of vehicles travelling through her local ward area of Gorebridge had produced some 'horrendous' findings.

She said: "There are roads where children are crossing, so if it takes a few extra minutes so be it."

Among comments from objectors, who described the project as a waste of money which could be spent upgrading the road surfaces had been claims Midlothian Council's 'Tarminator' pothole machine, which was bought by the local authority two years ago, was now being used by neighbouring Scottish Borders Council.

However council officers took the opportunity to address the allegations, which had been circulating on social media.

Derek Oliver, chief officer Place, told the meeting: "I can confirm our Pothole Pro is not being used by Scottish Borders Council. They have their own one. There are only three Scottish local authorities who own their own Pothole Pro, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and Highland Councils."

There was anger after 20mph signs were installed across towns in the county while the public consultation into introducing the new rules was being carried out.

At today's cabinet meeting the report put before councillors asked them to 'consider the objections' made and 'determine whether or not the Order should be made and implemented, as advertised'.

However Councillor Parry said that the decision to implement the speed reduction had already been taken by elected members two years previously.

She said: "Just to make it clear to anyone watching council has already passed this policy unanimously, we are simply hear to consider the objections which we have now considered and we can move on."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter