

Council – 17 July 2024

Labour Party Group Amendment to motion 7a – Upgrading Trafford's Belisha Beacons

July 2024 marks exactly 90 years since Liberal MP and Minister for Transport, Leslie Hore Belisha, passed the Road Safety Act of 1934. One of the measures in this Act, to cut the huge number of fatalities on British roads, was the introduction of the now-familiar yellow beacons either side of zebra crossings.

In 2024, newer technology is available to make Belisha Beacons more effective on our busy streets.

This Council notes:

- Road safety continues to be a significant concern for our residents – especially for children making their way to the schools in our Borough each day.
- Belisha Beacons clearly mark the crossing points when it is dark, but when the sun is strong in the summer, or at a low angle mid-afternoon in the spring or autumn, the effect of the Beacons flashing virtually disappears in strong light.
- Therefore, at precisely the time children are using the crossing – the Beacons become very ineffective at alerting drivers to the fact they are approaching a zebra crossing at certain times of year.
- This issue is particularly pertinent on streets with an East-West orientation that catch direct sunlight at a low-angle.

This Council believes:

- The solution to the problem of Belisha Beacons disappearing in bright sunlight are the new-style Belisha Beacons with an 'LED halo'.
- The 'LED halo' Beacons provide a semi-circular ring of bright yellow LED lights that are still visible in strong daylight, alerting drivers they are approaching a zebra crossing.
- Many new-style Beacons can be seen in supermarket car-parks already, where they are clearly more effective than the old-style Beacons. However, Trafford Council has not adopted this design for the Borough's roads.

This Council further notes:

- Following initial conversations in Autumn 2023 between Timperley Councillors and Trafford Highways, there is a successful trial of the new-style Belisha Beacons in Timperley for the zebra crossing outside St Hugh's School.
- More recently, Trafford Highways have told Councillors that the particular product being trialled in Timperley North is:

"very simple to install as there is no requirement to dig down into the ground".

This Council further believes:

- School children in all parts of Trafford should benefit from the added safety of Belisha Beacons that are more visible to drivers.
- Cost, as ever, remains a difficulty, so a phased approach to replacement will be necessary; ensuring when old-style Beacons fail or are damaged, they are replaced with new-style Beacons.

This Council resolves to:

- Phase out the old-style Belisha Beacons when they fail and upgrade them to the new-style 'LED halo' Belisha Beacons.
- ~~— Prioritize the upgrade of Beacons at pedestrian crossings where the road layout makes the flashing effect of the Beacons particularly prone to disappearing in strong sunlight.~~
- ~~— Prioritize the upgrade of Beacons at pedestrian crossings close to schools.~~
- Prioritise them on a Health and Safety basis as they are best used where low sun is a visibility risk.

Note the installation of upgrades to zebras with the 'halo' LED has been trialled and is seen as a positive approach to improving visibility of zebras. For this reason there is now a programme of zebra upgrades on a phased approach already included in the current years capital programme. Therefore the issues highlighted in the motion have already been recognised and being addressed.