

# Southend Car Cruise PSPO Evidence

---

## Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the evidence required to apply a PSPO for car cruising applied to Southend-on-Sea City.

## Data Parameters

- 2.1 This report brings together available information and action taken against car cruising between 01/01/2020 – 28/02/2023

## Key Findings

- 3.1 The following has been identified as a key finding;
- Unauthorised Car Cruising Events occur during British Summer Time (BST)
  - Saturdays and Bank Holiday Mondays are the usual days for these type of events to occur
  - Western Esplanade and Marine Parade is a popular area for this type of activity as it offers a 'strip' to drive along, parking, amenities and easy to do U-turns, either using road layout or driving around smaller residential streets
  - Persistent car clubs that continue to organise unauthorised events have met with both Southend Council and Essex Police Officers to inform them about the need for an event permit
  - Most car cruise/meets has about 1000 participants at each event.
  - There appears to be a cycle of a few 'well behaved' unauthorised events followed by a significant Anti-social, aggressive event; of the 17 events occurred in 2021, 8 of them required enforcement
  - Current enforcement includes car cruise injunction warnings, section 59<sup>1</sup> warnings including vehicles seized, dispersal orders and road closures
  - Complaints include excessive noise, use of residential streets and dangerous driving
  - This activity can have direct impact on pedestrians and put pedestrians at risk
  - An unauthorised event puts extra pressure on services and resources

---

<sup>1</sup> Section 59, Police Reform Act 2002

## Evidence

### 4.1 Temporal & Spatial

The table below outlines the number of events that have taken place and Southend-on-Sea City Council are aware are scheduled to happen.

|                  | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>January</b>   |      |      |      |      |
| <b>February</b>  |      |      |      |      |
| <b>March</b>     | 1    |      | 2    | 1    |
| <b>April</b>     | 1    | 1    | 2    | 1    |
| <b>May</b>       |      | 5    | 1    |      |
| <b>June</b>      |      | 4    | 4    |      |
| <b>July</b>      | 1    | 4    | 1    |      |
| <b>August</b>    | 1    | 3    | 3    | 1    |
| <b>September</b> | 1    |      |      |      |
| <b>October</b>   | 2    |      |      |      |
| <b>November</b>  |      |      |      |      |
| <b>December</b>  |      |      |      |      |

These events occur during British Summer Time (BST), as more daylight in the evenings, plus weather conditions are likely to be drier and slightly warmer. It is highly likely events occur at weekends, with Saturday evening being the most popular, followed by Bank Holiday Mondays.

Event start times occur between 1900-2000hrs, meeting at either Western Esplanade or Marine Parade. Historically, these roads were used as a car cruising 'strip'.

Western Esplanade and Marine Parade is approximately 1.5miles road along the seafront with the ability for drivers to make a U-turn or drive around using smaller residential roads, Marine Parade operates a 20mph speed limit and Western Esplanade has tier bayed parking, allowing drivers to park together from either side of the road. The area is a tourist hub and has amenities attractive to all.

### 4.2 Social Media Intelligence

Unauthorised car cruising events can be organised via the use of social media. As of 2020 this has been monitored. The table below outlines the number of intelligence received for unofficial organised meets per year.

| 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023                                     |
|------|------|------|--|
| 7    | 6    | 11   | 3 for this year have been planned so far |

Whilst there is various organisers, there are 3 car clubs that are persistent in organising meets within Southend, with one club hosting 26% of meet ups. The number of people interested in attending these events can be from 25 to 4000.

Officers from Southend-on-Sea City Council and Essex Police (Southend) met with organisers in June 2021 and July 2022 outlining the requirement from organisers to submit an event application form and supporting documents for these events to be

authorised and be issued with an events permit. At time of production 0 car cruising event applications have been made.

### **4.3 Enforcement**

Southend-on-Sea City Council has previously obtained injunctions to give police and council enforcement officers extra powers to deal swiftly with dangerous driving and antisocial behaviour at unauthorised car cruise events.

Officers when present at a car cruise event have been trained to enforce the Injunction by firstly educating and explaining to individuals why a specific behaviour they are undertaking is an offence, and will hand explanatory leaflets to car cruiser participants.

Where events have been identified in advance a link to the Southend-on-Sea City Council website will be posted to the Facebook page of the organising group, directing them to the Injunction overview and a copy of the final sealed order.

All unauthorised car cruises are monitored for anti-social behaviour in relation to the car cruise. The following behaviours have been witnessed;

September 2020 over 5000 people registered interest in attending this event. Both Council and Police was in attendance, giving advice to the car enthusiasts and reminding them of the Covid-19 restrictions in place. Police was authorised to issue fines (up to £10,000) for non-compliant persons. No fines were given,

April 2021 A car group affiliated with another group, meaning approximately 1000 vehicles was in attendance. Southend CCTV observed a number of vehicles driving in a dangerous manner and performing stunts. Car enthusiasts held up traffic, whilst undertaking wheel spins. Section 59<sup>2</sup> warnings were issued, 1 vehicle seized and 1 driver dealt with dangerous driving. Southend Council issued 10 official car cruise injunction warnings.

May 2021 over 1000 vehicles attended 3 of the 5 unauthorised events. Southend CCTV observed a number of vehicles driving in a dangerous manner, performing stunts and illegally parked. Anti-social behaviour was noted, it was believed 1 vehicle was involved in street racing, resulting in a road traffic collision in Victoria Avenue, Southend. Southend Council closed eastbound carriageway of Western Esplanade to ease congestion and risk. Participants of this event became hostile to Council Officers, resulting in urgent calls to Essex Police, who deployed 3 Operation Support Carriers to reduce the risk of public order offences being committed.

June 2021 A large group of vehicles attended, parking on pedestrian areas of Marine Parade, causing obstruction to pedestrians, resulting in pedestrians walking on carriageway. Heavy congestion was noted, this was likely due to lack of parking for car enthusiasts, meaning they were driving in circuits. Emergency services was having difficulties navigating around the area. Essex Police received complaints of dangerous driving and stunts a dispersal order was put in place.

July 2021 Over 1500 people attended this event. There was illegal parking and obstruction to pedestrians, significant anti-social behaviour, traffic delays and aggressive behaviour, Southend Council Officers withdrew for safety, Essex Police had bottles and other items thrown at them. A dispersal order was put in place as was a 2 hour road

---

<sup>2</sup> Section 59, Police Reform Act 2002

closure in order to clear drivers and crowds from the road safely. 1 Vehicle was seized and driver reported for driving offences.

August 2021 1500 people attended this event. This event was advertised as 'Cruising is not a Crime'. Additional resources was put in place to ensure safety. CCTV identified vehicles doing burnouts. Significant footfall to the area (likely due to bank holiday), section 59<sup>3</sup> warnings issued, 1 motorbike confiscated, for prolonged wheelie and driving close to other road users.

Due to previous issues of obstruction caused by illegal parking along Marine Parade, Southend-on-Sea City Council installed 48 'Rhino blocks' (multi-purpose blocks) on Marine Parade to provide additional safety and to prevent the encroach of vehicles to specific areas.

March 2022, estimated vehicle numbers at car cruise in excess of 350. Community Safety Officers received complaints from seafront traders with regards to illegal parking on the footway at Marine Parade. A dispersal order was implemented by Police across the Seafront and other areas in anticipation of vehicle related anti-social behaviour, Southend Community Policing Team made use of warnings under Section 59, Police Reform Act 2002.

April 2022, large number of vehicles attended. 3000 expressed interest via social media. Significant anti-social behaviour was witnessed, including vehicle related offences and fireworks. Urgent calls were made from Council Officers to Police due to growing hostilities towards them. Police were able to extract the Council Officers and ask them to withdraw due to separation from Police. A road closure was implemented by Police. Essex Fire and Rescue reported they could not attend a nearby fire incident due to the crowds on the carriageway. CCTV identified 16 vehicles involved in doing burnouts, Southend Council issued 16 official car cruise injunction warnings.

## **5. Impact**

### **5.1 Complaints**

#### Complaints to Local MP

3 complaints have been made to local MP regarding car cruises and the following;

- Excessive footfall on carriageways
- Speeding
- Wheel spinning and burnouts
- Noise from sound systems
- Exhaust noises cracking and popping
- Smell of fuel and burning rubber
- Using smaller residential roads to loop back to the Seafront
- Litter

#### Complaints to Southend-on-Sea City Council

Uniform is the database used to record incoming anti-social complaints to the Community Safety Unit. Between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023, the unit received 9 Vehicle Nuisance/Inappropriate Vehicle usage complaints relating to car cruising. Complaints include;

- Reckless/dangerous driving

---

<sup>3</sup> Section 59, Police Reform Act 2002

- Loud music
- Back firing of engines
- Using roads in the evening/early hours of morning as race tracks

136 complaints was received regarding litter/drugs paraphernalia and substance misuse across the City<sup>4</sup>. 1 complaint cited ‘The shelter and path are littered with balloons and silver gas canisters’. Another complainant sighted the concerns for those administering toxic substances ‘...some that may feel inclined to drive with potentially dangerous consequences if intoxicated with these substances.’

Southend-on-Sea City Council Community Safety Officers recorded 16 specific patrols in relation to car cruising. Of which officers recorded 3 verbal complaints received directly to them by members of the public. Stating;

- Constant noise of back-firing vehicles and racing of engines
- ‘After party’ racing around other areas of Southend, constant exhaust noises
- Doesn’t stop until early hours

Complaints to Essex Police have included;

- Number of vehicles racing
- Stunts that are being performed
- Dangerous driving
- Noise associated with backfiring and revving engines.

## 5.2 Footfall

Southend-on-Sea has one of the highest Seaside Footfall, this is particular high in the spring/summer months.

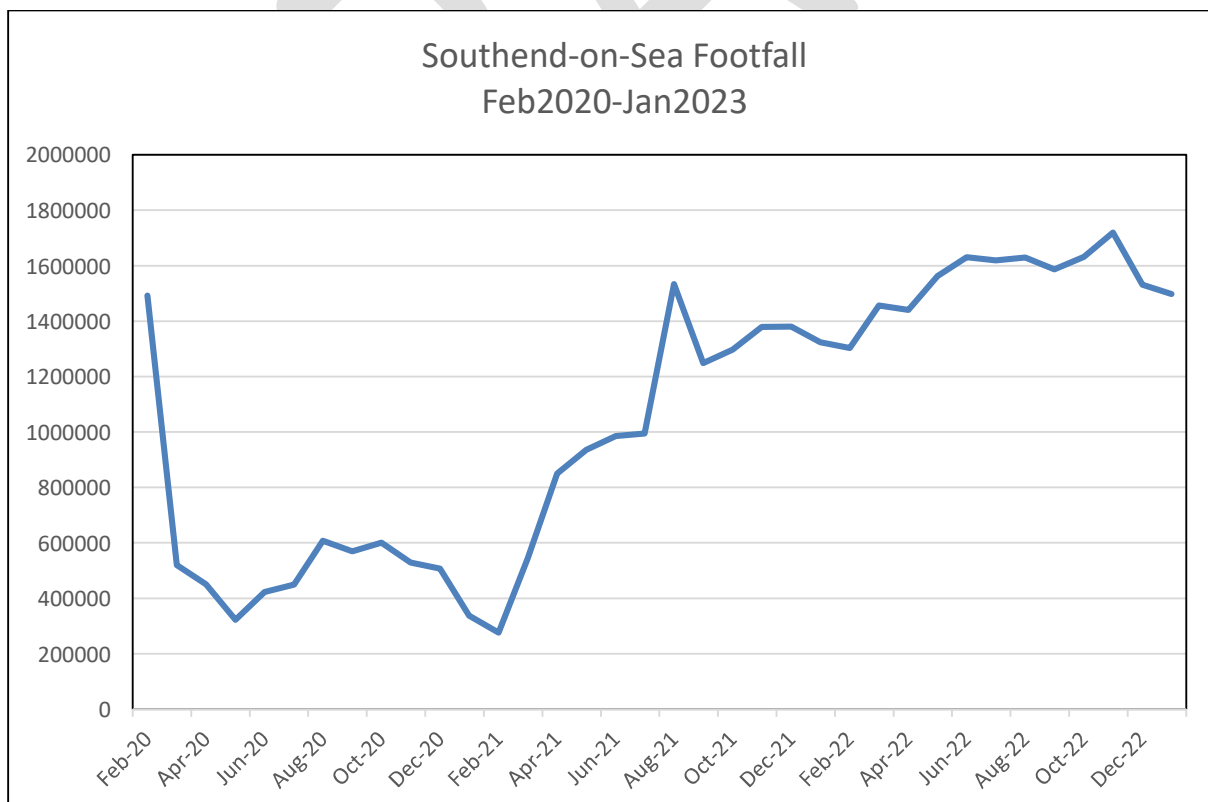


Figure 1 Town and Place AI

<sup>4</sup> Data includes all complaints, the data cannot be extracted for specific events.

Direct impacts of car cruising on people visiting the area is;

- Illegal parking causing obstruction.
- Pedestrians need to walk on the highway to pass obstruction.
- Risk of harm to pedestrians and others in the area from irresponsible driving.
- Increase in vehicles and stunt performing can cause traffic issues.

### **5.3 Resources**

An unauthorised event means there is no event management plan in place by organisers, and no permit provided by Southend-on-Sea City Council. Therefore, should these type of events have issues it puts extra pressure on resources such as;

- ACPOA – required to patrol and enforce parking restrictions
- Southend Council Community Safety Officers – required to patrol, engage with participants, explaining the current injunction in place and enforcing when necessary
- Southend Council CCTV – required to monitor area, advise on activity, provide footage when required to support enforcement activity
- Essex Police (Local policing, community policing and traffic officers) to provide visible patrols, enforce when necessary
- Safer Essex Roads Partnership – required to engage with participants, promoting schemes, campaigns and initiatives designed to change people’s driving behaviours
- Essex Fire and Rescue – required to respond to road traffic collisions

DRAFT