

Community Safety and Environment Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Tuesday 28 January 2020

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Bora Kwon (Chair), Iain Cassidy, David Morton, Ann Rosenberg and Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler

Other Councillors: Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for the Environment)

Officers: Bram Kainth (Chief Officer – Public Realm), Osagie Ezekiel (Deputy Head of Parking), Masum Choudhury (Head of Transport Policy – Public Realm), Hitesh Jolapara (Strategic Director of Finance and Governance), Emily Hill (Assistant Director of Finance) Kellie Gooch, (Head of Finance -Environment) Gary Hannaway (Head of Finance - Parking), John Galsworthy (Parking Manager)

Members of the Deputation: James Spokoini and 2 Residents

1. MINUTES

Safer Cycle Pathway and A4 Cycle Highway

Councillor Bora Kwon (Chair), Iain Cassidy, David Morton, Ann Rosenberg and Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler noted that the cost figures for the engagement process had not been circulated and requested that this action be followed up.

Councillor Bora Kwon (Chair), Iain Cassidy, David Morton, Ann Rosenberg and Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler requested that it be made clear in the minutes that Officers said that there wasn't an option for the scheme to not be implemented, if residents didn't support the proposals.

RESOLVED

That the, subject to the above the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Sharon Lea (Strategic Director of Residents' Services)

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. 2020 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS)

Corporate Budget Context

Emily Hill (Assistant Director of Finance), gave a presentation outlining the Council's budget proposals and noted the scale of challenges facing local government in recent years. She showed slides that outlined the funding reductions across local government and the Council.

It was noted that the gross General Fund budget was £525m, of which the net budget requirement of £154.3m was funded from Council resources (such as council tax and business rates) and general Government grant. In addition, Government grant funding would increase by £3.6m from 2019/20 to 2020/21 as a result of the Government's pre-election spending round in September 2019. This increase followed a decade of grant cuts with overall funding reducing by £68m from 2010/11 to 2020/21 which was a real terms funding cut of 54%.

The Council continued to face challenges to manage any additional costs that might arise outside of the budget forecast. The budget recommended a 1.99% increase in Council Tax and 2% adult social care precept levy. Each would raise £4.8m over 4 years and £1.2 in the first year. This would support investment in key services for residents and future financial resilience. Additionally, it was noted that the business rates system was changing for a fourth successive year.

It was assumed that the budget gap would increase in each of the next three years if no action was taken to reduce overall expenditure. The Government will undertake a 'fair funding review' in 2020/21. This had the remit of reconsidering how grant was distributed between authorities.

Departmental Budget

Kellie Gooch (Head of Finance - Environment) and Gary Hannaway (Head of Finance - Parking) gave a presentation of the Environment revenue budget for 2020/21, highlighting the following key points:

- The Department managed a controllable expenditure budget of £70m, with a targeted income of £23m.
- The service collected income for Council tax, business rates, land charges and also secured external grant funding from TfL.
- The savings plan for 2020/21 aimed to reduce the existing £1.5m budget pressures, deliver new sovereign services within budget and provide £1m of new budgetary savings for the Council.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked what the council tax collection rate was. In response Hitesh Jolapara (Strategic Director of Finance and Governance) explained that last year the base collection rate was 97.5% and the forecast for this year remained the same.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler queried whether the forecasted spending of the reserves was significantly different compared to last year. Emily Hill provided an overview of how the reserves were spent last year - i.e. moving to a new Council system and IT investment for agile working. It was noted that the Council was very conscious that the reserves played a crucial role in good public financial management and resilience. The reserves for the Council fell into the mid-range category compared to other London local authorities. The Council was in the process of reviewing its financial strategy and had forecasted an extra contribution of £7.2m to reserves this year. These reserves would also contribute to future regeneration schemes such as the Civic Campus.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked how the Town Hall renovation would be funded. Hitesh Jolapara explained that it would be funded through a mixture of revenue and capital expenditure over three years.

Councillor David Morton questioned why there was a drop in business rates from £123m to £78m. Hitesh Jolapara, referring to page 17 of the agenda pack, explained the changes in the business rates regime and noted that this was an assumption of what the Council would retain under the pool. It was noted that this wouldn't have an impact on the funding as other adjustments were made. The bottom line of the table demonstrated that business rates funding for Council services changed very little, although different pilot arrangements had been introduced.

The Chair asked for further clarification around why there had been a fluctuation in business rates compared to last year. In response Hitesh Jolapara explained that the system had been developing since 2017, the difference related to the different rates of retention by Hammersmith and Fulham under the different pilot arrangements and that the instability in the Government's approach to business rates made medium-term financial planning challenging. It was noted that the Council had a stable finance team in place who continued to deliver realistic forecasts.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted and commented on the update.

5. REVIEW OF COUNCIL RESPONSE TO MODERN SLAVERY

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

6. PARKING ENFORCEMENT IN THE BOROUGH

Osagie Ezekiel (Deputy Head of Parking) gave a presentation and provided an overview of parking within the borough and noted the following points:

- The Parking & Transport Policy team monitored and reviewed parking policies to ensure that they met the needs of the local community.
- The Council maintained a balance between the different demands from residents, businesses and visitors, whilst ensuring there was good access for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and other vehicles.
- The Council now had 135 Source London charging points, 79 lamp column points and 5 rapid charge points for the use of electrical vehicles.
- An outline of the different parking zone reviews was provided, highlighting that the Council was considering the concerns raised by local residents.
- Cashless parking was on the rise, and 88% of all payments to park were via RingGo.

The Chair noted that the Council had received two deputations from the same group of residents. She outlined the procedure for the deputations and explained that they would be addressed separately, allowing a gap between the two for questions.

Deputation 1 – PCN moving traffic yellow box junction at Bagley’s Lane

James Spokoini, Resident, addressed the Committee on behalf of the deputation and the following points were noted:

- The closure of Harwood Terrace had caused 1000’s of residents to pass through the yellow box junction at Bagley’s Lane which was felt to be an entrapment.
- It was felt that road users were unfairly penalised as traffic was forced through the junction and this needed to be reviewed accordingly. Driver frustration was hugely increased as a result and traffic wasn’t ‘moving freely’ in advance of the junction.
- He felt that the consultation process was flawed, and residents were not consulted properly.
- 61 residents didn’t support the plan and felt that the Council didn’t take the feedback received from all residents into consideration.

A heat map was then circulated to Committee members which highlighted areas in the borough where residents were not in favour of the closure. Mr Spokoini felt that the lack of consultation with residents had a detrimental effect on residents. Feedback received from residents had suggested that the road closure had not improved traffic or reduced congestion. However, it had led to an increase in PCN’s issued as a result of stand-still traffic in the yellow box junction at Bagley’s Lane. He explained that the consultation only addressed residents on the road and felt that a wider consultation was necessary.

Questions from the Committee

Councillor Bora Kwon (Chair), Iain Cassidy, David Morton, Ann Rosenberg and Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked how the closure of Harwood Terrace had affected the day to day lives of local residents. In response James Spokoini explained that he had received a high volume of emails from local residents expressing their concerns around this matter on a daily basis. He

referred to a resident who recently had a stem cell transplant, noting that since the closure her symptoms had deteriorated due to the rise of pollution in her area. In addition, he felt that a better approach could be achieved by re-opening the road whilst a detailed consultation to find a suitable solution with all residents was delivered.

Councillor Bora Kwon (Chair), Iain Cassidy, David Morton, Ann Rosenberg and Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler noted her concerns around the road closure. She felt the closure was 'extraordinary', given such limited consultation with local residents had taken place and as a result had shifted traffic congestion into the Sands End area.

Councillor Ann Rosenberg explained that according to feedback received from residents the gridlock caused by the road closure took place during peak hours. However, outside of these hours the traffic was shown to be fairly light and steady. She felt that this was a wider challenge that needed to be addressed across London.

James Spokoini noted that a petition relating to the closure of Harwood Terrace was submitted in January 2020 and questioned why it had been pushed back to the March meeting of Cabinet. He raised concerns around the Council failing to respond to the needs of local residents.

The Chair explained that an Extraordinary meeting would be held on 10 February at 7pm to provide residents an opportunity to raise their concerns in further detail. This also allowed officers the time to address specific concerns raised at this meeting. Additionally, details of the Extraordinary meeting would be made available on the Council's website.

Deputation 2 – Resident concerns relating to the closure of Harwood Terrace

James Spokoini addressed the Committee on behalf of the deputation and the following points were noted:

- Around 2000 local residents felt that their voices were not being heard in relation to the local experimental road closure at Harwood Terrace.
- He felt that the closure had a detrimental effect upon the lives and livelihoods of local residents and made references to statistics provided at the meeting to support this claim.
- 7 local wards had been impacted by the closure of Harwood Terrace, however they were not part of the initial consultation.
- He expressed concerns around the closure of the road given all the feedback received from local residents.

Questions from the Committee

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler said that James Spokoini had provided a very clear explanation on behalf of local residents. She felt that a wider consultation was necessary. She felt that the project was inadequate and had not thoroughly been planned through from the beginning.

James Spokoini said that a detailed copy of a traffic study relating to the closure of Harwood Terrace was sent to Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for the Environment) to review, however the road still remained closed. In addition, he noted that residents suffered with daily noise and air pollution related issues as a result of the stationary traffic outside their homes. He questioned why the road was still closed given the detrimental impact this had on local residents.

Councillor Iain Cassidy enquired if there was a reasonable outcome that would be welcomed by the residents going forward. In response James Spokoini explained that residents felt that the Council had not listened to them. He suggested that Harwood Terrace be reopened to allow a wider consultation to take place. In addition, he noted that he was not impressed with the way that the Council had handled this situation to date and was keen to find an alternative outcome that considered the needs of all residents.

The Chair gave members of the public the opportunity to ask further questions in relation to parking matters in the borough.

Residents from Fulham Reach noted their concerns around match day parking, particularly in Zone T. They felt that free parking on Saturdays and Sundays enabled non-residents to park in Zone T during match days. However, this caused total gridlock in the area, creating disruption for local residents. In addition, residents felt that as a solution restricting parking for non-residents up to 2 hours before a match would be fitting for residents, businesses and schools. Furthermore, it was noted that a bus network operated down Fulham Road for anyone with mobility issues.

A resident explained that the 2-hour parking restriction prior to a match needed to be applied borough wide due to challenges faced around displacement. Bram Kainth (Chief Officer – Public Realm) explained that issues around displacement were part of a wider challenge faced by Councils across London. In the meantime, the Council would work with local residents to develop a scheme that would directly address the match day parking concerns in Zone T.

A parking stress survey had already been issued in the borough to help better understand resident concerns and demand to help build a picture to inform next steps in time for 2020/21.

Councillor Iain Cassidy enquired whether the Council had any leverage to work in collaboration with Fulham Football club to try and reduce the number of fans driving into the area on match days. Bram Kainth said that he would need to check to see what was agreed as part of the stadium expansion planning application and would explore this further.

The Chair asked if officers had met with Fulham Football Club to further discuss the parking pressures around the stadium. Bram Kainth said that a meeting had not been set up, however a travel plan (an action-based document) was issued during the development of planning arrangements to allow residents to engage.

A resident asked for further clarification to be provided around the protocol for changes made to parking restrictions to the zones within the borough. In response Masum Choudhury commented that it was common to receive parking requests from residents for the Council to make changes accordingly. He outlined the procedure and explained that a statutory process would be followed prior to implementing any changes.

Councillor Iain Cassidy commented that the Council fully supported the idea of co-production and was keen to work with residents on future proposals. He noted that it was important that all residents' views were heard to find a suitable outcome going forward.

The Chair asked for clarification to be provided on timescales. In response Bram Kainth explained that a programme of CPZ parking reviews had been established. It was noted that the Council was keen to progress on this matter promptly in consultation with relevant Cabinet Members. The next steps would be to meet residents outside of the Committee to discuss the matter in further detail.

The Chair advised residents to stay in touch with Councillor Iain Cassidy to raise any further concerns relating to this matter.

A resident in support of the Harwood Terrace closure commented that this trial had been hugely successful. She raised concerns around unhealthy pollution levels and the high volume of cars that passed through on a daily basis. She said the situation had reached crisis point as there had been many minor, serious, and near fatal accidents on Harwood Terrace prior to the closure. Additionally, the traffic across the whole area had significantly reduced as a result of the closure.

Another resident in support of the Harwood Terrace closure felt that the reduction of journey times was not a justifiable reason to re-open the Terrace. He mirrored the concerns raised above and noted that re-opening the road would only cause increases in traffic related issues again. He felt that residential roads should not be used as a 'pressure release' and over time this would not be sustainable. In addition, he explained that the streets needed to be environmentally friendly for cyclists and residents and wholeheartedly supported the closure of Harwood Terrace.

The Chair requested that officers prepared for the Extraordinary meeting and ensured that the report in relation to Harwood Terrace addressed the following key points:

- Outline the history of Harwood Terrace and how the issues arose.
- Outline the consultation and decision-making process for the Closure of Harwood Terrace.
- Provide proposals of how the consultation can be improved going forward and consider the deputation presented yesterday.

Councillor Iain Cassidy asked if newer vehicles with larger footprints (e.g. 4x4s) affected the number of parking spaces available in the borough. Had the Council been required to make different assumptions about the space required for each car? Bram Kainth said that although they may look larger in

size, they usually did fit into the footprint of a standard parking space, and it hadn't affected the amount of parking in the borough.

Councillor Iain Cassidy asked how the Council managed the growth of electric cars in the borough. Had the Council considered the location of the charging points, given the disruption this would cause to pedestrians and disabled people, if they continued to be placed on pavements? Officers explained that the Council would avoid placing charging points on pavements where it was deemed to be a potential hazard to pedestrians. Officers were familiar with the challenges relating to pavement mobility and these would be factored into future development plans. Where it was causing a high level of disruption, the Council would look at moving the charging points to carriage way spaces.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted and commented on the update.

7. WORK PROGRAMME AND DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chair noted that the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and Modern Slavery report would be brought to the meeting in March.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler requested that the Crime Commission report also be brought to the March meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the work programme.

Meeting started: 7:00pm
Meeting ended: 9:00pm

Chair

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