

Community Safety and Environment Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Monday 20 July 2020

PRESENT

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

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

Officers: Sharon Lea (Strategic Director for the Environment), Masum Choudhury (Head of Transport), Steve Hollingworth (Assistant Director Leisure Sports and Culture), Richard Duffill (Borough Cycling Officer), Michael Masella (Project Team Manager), Solomon Castillo (Highways, Parks and Waste), Bram Kainth (Chief Officer - Public Realm) and Amrita Gill (Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sue Fennimore and David Morton.

2. ROLL - CALL AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler requested that a report on the Policing and Crime Commission be brought to a Committee meeting as soon as possible. Furthermore, she was keen to understand the work that was being carried out by the Gangs, Violence & Exploitation Unit.

The Chair explained that she understood the importance of bringing a report on the Crime Commission to a Committee meeting. However, felt that items

relating to the Covid-19 pandemic needed to be considered as a priority at this Committee meeting.

RESOLVED

THAT, the minutes of the meeting held on 28th January and 10th February were approved as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions received.

5. PARKS AND OPEN SPACES IN THE BOROUGH

Steve Hollingworth (Assistant Director Leisure Sports and Culture) introduced the report that highlighted the actions taken by the Council in parks and open spaces in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. On 22nd March a decision was taken by the Council to close all parks due to the lack of social distancing and health risk from the spread of the virus. Following the closure of the parks, many complaints were received from the public. Most people understood why this action was taken, but also placed an importance on the value of green spaces for exercise, walking dogs and for mental wellbeing. It was noted that parks were re-opened on 27th March once all signage was in place and enough staffing was secured to engage with residents and help maintain social distancing.

The following measures were implemented by the Council to ensure that parks were being managed in a safe way:

- The Parks Police worked closely with CCTV to ascertain which parks had immediate need for response.
- Temporary restrictions were introduced on cycling and jogging between 10am and 6pm to allow pedestrians to use the riverside path more freely.
- Several marshals were introduced on Hammersmith Bridge to encourage social distancing.
- Recommendations were put in place to limit the number of people attending funerals in line with Government guidance.
- Idverde, the Council's ground maintenance contractor, introduced safe working practices for staff to maintain social distancing and provided good resilience.
- Litter was identified as a significant issue in parks as many people neglected to take their litter home with them. However, this was cleared away on a daily basis.
- Tennis courts were reopened in mid-May with appropriate signage and a new online booking system in place.
- Toilets in Ravenscourt and Bishops Park were currently only open between 9am and 3pm to ensure that there were enough staff available to keep them clean.
- Council services, including the parks team, were reviewing their performance during the lockdown, ready to respond to a potential second lockdown if required.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler thanked officers for providing a detailed report and was impressed with the work carried out by Idverde during the period of uncertainty. She felt that 3pm was too early to close the toilets in Ravenscourt and Bishops Park due to the increase in visitors during the summer months and urged officers to review the opening hours.

Steve Hollingworth noted that the opening hours would be reviewed. He outlined the reasons why the opening hours for the toilets were reduced. Adequate resources were put in place to ensure that the toilets were managed in line with the Government guidelines.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler said that the padel tennis courts were a popular attraction with the local community and asked why these were not open. In response Steve Hollingworth explained that the padel tennis courts were created without planning permission. Therefore, the business was in breach of its lease and would need to apply for planning permission before the padel tennis courts could reopen.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler said that the Council had received a high volume of complaints from residents following the closure of parks in the borough. She noted the value of green spaces for exercise and mental wellbeing purposes, particularly during lockdown and felt that the closure had caused unnecessary inconvenience to residents.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for the Environment) explained that a large number of people were congregating in open spaces, therefore the Council felt it was necessary to close the parks until appropriate social distancing measures were in place for the safety of the residents.

Councillor Iain Cassidy said that the River Walk was a focal point for managing social distancing in the borough and asked how local pubs worked with the Council to ensure public safety was being met. Steve Hollingworth explained that the Environmental Health Team visited pubs to ensure safety measures were in place. Overall pubs were responsible and did comply with the licensing advice provided by the Council.

Councillor Iain Cassidy asked whether the temporary restrictions for jogging and cycling were still in place along the Riverside Path. Steve Hollingworth explained that the hours had been reduced because there were fewer Police officers present along the River Walk to ensure the restrictions were being enforced. However, enforcement was now being carried out via CCTV and intelligence received by the Parks Police. Additionally, signage was still in place and this was regularly being reviewed by the Council.

Councillor Iain Cassidy said that the wider road section along Hammersmith Bridge had been split into two narrow walkways which caused accessibility issues for some people trying to cross the bridge. He asked for further clarification to be provided around the management of the Bridge. Steve Hollingworth said that a full updated response would be circulated to the Committee.

Action

Councillor Ann Rosenberg noted that the Pavilion Café in South Park which provided access to a disabled toilet was closed during the week and asked when this would re-open again. Steve Hollingworth said that the Café should remain open during the summer months and would contact the tenant to ascertain the reasons for closure.

Action

The Chair asked for clarification to be provided around the maintenance of public spaces in particular what could be done to prevent dangerous littering after an unauthorised event took place. Steve Hollingworth explained that the Police were not issuing fixed penalty notices for littering. However, the Council's contractors were clearing litter on a daily basis to ensure the parks were safe for public to use. In addition, the Council would also look to place additional signage to encourage people to take their litter home with them. Regarding illegal gatherings the Police were actively seeking intelligence to prevent these from taking place across London and were issuing fixed penalty notices where necessary.

The Chair thanked officers and the Council's contractors for their hard work and efforts during these unprecedented times.

RESOLVED

THAT, the Committee noted and commented on the report.

6. TEMPORARY CYCLE LANES

Masum Choudhury (Head of Transport), introduced the report and noted that levels of walking and cycling had increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, after the Government issued rules and guidance instructing people to avoid public transport and to stay at home to control the spread of the virus. On 9th May the Government announced that Councils should reallocate road space to accommodate significantly increased numbers of cyclists and pedestrians.

It was noted that following the Governments advice and to ensure that a prompt response was delivered in response to the crisis, the Council installed temporary cycle lanes in the borough. More than two miles of pop-up cycle lanes had been marked out with barriers from King Street at the border with Chiswick, around Hammersmith Gyrotory and down Hammersmith Road to Olympia, using more than 3,500 barriers. In addition, new temporary cycle lanes had been installed on Wood lane and at Shepherds Bush Green. The existing policy context for transport, climate change and public realm remained a key driver for change both locally and regionally. It was noted that a report (*Appendix 1*) was presented at the GOLD meeting and to the Senior Leadership Team on 5th May 2020 and 11th May 2020 respectively. This report set outlined the Council's transport response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the revised delivery approach.

Solomon Castillo (Highways, Parks and Waste), provided a presentations of cycle route 9 (along King Street and Hammersmith Road) and cycle route 10

(along Uxbridge Road, Shepherds Bush Green and Wood Lane). He showed slides that outlined some of the detail that went into designing the temporary cycle routes. Feedback from members of the public and businesses, was being used to make changes to temporary schemes such as alterations for accessibility, loading or bus stops. These would continue to be reviewed and design changes incorporated before installing semi-permanent materials.

Councillor Iain Cassidy (Walking, Cycling and Healthy Streets Champion) noted that there had been a significant increase in the number of people cycling in London and the rest of the UK since the lockdown measures were put in place. This had been supported by anecdotal data and many bike retailers had also reported a spike in sales. He asked what could be done to monitor the number of people cycling in Hammersmith and Fulham. Masum Choudhury agreed that there was currently a lot of anecdotal information on the uptake of cycling. Officers would need to review options on how a monitoring strategy could be implemented. This would include carrying out hard traffic counts in the borough to produce data driven evidence to support the reported increase in cycling.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler said that many people in the borough chose not to cycle and were not supportive of the temporary cycle lanes. She felt that the temporary fixtures were not appropriate for car users, causing traffic issues and restricting accessibility into the borough. In addition, she felt that those who were shielding and were at higher risk were more likely to revert back to using cars instead of public transport when returning to work. Therefore, car usage in the borough would be expected to increase and this also needed to be factored into the planning and implementation stages.

Masum Choudhury (Head of Transport) explained that the Council was not intending to restrict people from making essential car journeys. However, this was an opportunity for people to have the option to use other modes of travel particularly when making local journeys if they were able to do so. However, it was important for the Council to consider how the elderly and disabled people would be impacted by this. Therefore, feedback was being gathered from all stakeholder groups around accessibility issues and this would be reviewed and factored into the plan.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked for clarification to be provided on the Council's plan for semi-permanent fixtures and when the traffic order for the temporary cycle lanes was due to expire.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for the Environment) explained that as the pandemic took effect, the volume of motorized traffic decreased whilst the number of cyclists increased. As a result, this had improved air quality and reduced traffic in the borough. The Government was keen to increase the number of people cycling and walking across London and urged Council's to support this policy to maintain the reduction of carbon emissions and improve public safety. The temporary cycle lanes were implemented as a response to this and the measures were introduced on a temporary basis, although depending on their success could become semi-permanent.

Masum Choudhury (Head of Transport) explained that the traffic orders were applied under the Council's existing emergency powers within the Traffic Management Act 2004 on a temporary basis (between 6-18 months). The Council also had the authority to extend the traffic orders should this be necessary.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler requested that full details be circulated to Committee members explaining, under what powers the temporary cycle lanes were installed and the Council's plan to making these semi-permanent.

Action

Councillor Iain Cassidy commented that a charity called Wheels for Wellbeing which provided adapted bikes to people with disability, had reported that many disabled people were able to safely access cycling when the appropriate measures were in place. He felt that overall the installation of the temporary cycle lanes had a positive impact on the way disabled people moved across the borough, noting that when you build good quality infrastructure people were more likely to make safer cycle journeys.

The Chair noted that there were some concerns around the travel direction of the cycle lanes and asked if improved signage would be put up to ensure members of the public were using them correctly. Masum Choudhury said that the cycle lanes did go up very quickly, however since then, improvements had been made and additional signage and markings had been put up along the entire route.

The Chair asked if Officers had consulted all groups representing the visually impaired and blind residents in the borough as some groups reported that they had not been contacted when the temporary cycle lanes were put up. Masum Choudhury said that he would need to check with the relevant officers to ascertain which resident groups had been contacted. The Chair said it was important to ensure that these resident groups were notified of any changes, particularly if these took place within close proximity of their home addresses and impacted them directly.

Action

The Chair asked if there had been any reported accidents since the temporary cycle lanes were erected. In response Masum Choudhury noted that he was not aware of any incidents that had taken place. However, this was actively being monitored by Officers.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler requested for the Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) figures for the last 6 months along the cycle lane routes within the borough be circulated to Committee members for review. Masum Choudhury said that the Council did not currently have access to the KSI figures and would receive these later in the year from the Police. However, would circulate the causality data that had already been submitted to the Council.

Action

RESOLVED

THAT the Committee noted and commented on the report.

Meeting started: 7:00pm
Meeting ended: 9:30pm

Chair

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