

Community Safety and Environment Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Tuesday 18 June 2019

PRESENT

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

Other Councillors: Councillors Stephen Cowan (the Leader of the Council), Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for the Environment) and Patricia Quigley

Officers: David Chapot (Prevent Manager), Chris Bainbridge (Head of Transport Policy), Sharon Lea (Strategic Director of Residents' Services), Bram Kainth (Chief Officer Highways), Dan Levene (Media Manager), Valerie Simpson (Head of Environmental Health), Matt Hooper (Chief Officer - Safer Neighbourhood), Kim Smith (Chief Executive)

External: Linda Moss & Iain Killingbeck (TfL), Casey Abaraonye (HF Cyclists), Annabel Clarke (Hammersmith Society)

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sue Fennimore.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE**

Chris Bainbridge, Head of Transport Policy and Network Management, provided a presentation of the Councils plans to fully restore Hammersmith Bridge. He showed slides that provided a brief history of the bridge, including a sketch of the original drawings and plans. The bridge was originally designed to move and flex to absorb shock and vibration. In the post war period, weather and vibration damaged the suspension system, Preventing it from flexing. As a result, this stressed the iron, creating small cracks in the casings surrounding the bridge's pedestals.

In 2012, the Council spent £250,000 on decking however, no plan to fully test the structural integrity or fully refurbish the bridge existed until 2015. It was noted that between 2015 to the current date the Council and Transport for London (TfL) had undertaken £5.35 million of works so far, including weekly safety checks. Furthermore, state of the art sensors had also been installed. Detailed safety checks had revealed 5 micro-fractures so far. World-class, specialist engineers were monitoring the bridge on a daily basis and dismantling the casings around the micro-fractures to identify the repairs needed.

The Council was working in collaboration with TfL to re-open the bridge and restoring it to its former Victorian splendour as soon as possible. It was noted that a full diagnostic would be carried out by mid-August and a more precise timescale would be available, however this might be as long as three years.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler said that the condition of the bridge was previously discussed at the Community Safety and Environment PAC in December 2018. However, she felt that immediate action was not taken by the Council which had led to an emergency closure. Therefore, she queried why funding negotiations with TfL had not progressed sooner.

Councillor Stephen Cowan (the Leader of the Council) explained that the Council needed to review the overall detail to determine a suitable solution to refurbish the 132-year-old suspension bridge. In 2015, the Council commissioned a full structural integrity assessment to check all aspects of the bridge's structure. The safety checks revealed that works needed to be carried out to repair the decking and refit the bolts. TfL had committed £25 million towards the repair of the bridge; however, the work was delayed.

In April 2019 the bridge was closed to motor vehicles until major safety critical strengthening work was completed. The Council's engineers discovered hairline micro-fractures which had started to appear in the iron casings around the pedestals of the bridge. To date, 5 micro-fractures had been discovered and a thorough evaluation was being carried out to establish the extent of the damage.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked whether the Council had established who would be funding the repair works. In response, the Leader explained that funding structures were in place. However, engineers were still in the process of establishing what works needed to be carried out to restore the bridge. Therefore, funding had not yet been finalised. In the meantime, the Council was proactively working with TfL to create a plan for the repairs to fund the restoration of the bridge.

The Leader explained that all funding options would be explored with the Government and TfL. The Council may introduce a toll on the bridge, though H&F residents would be exempt from paying.

The Leader took a moment to formally thank TfL, The Mayor of London and Councillor Gareth Roberts (Leader of the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames) for their huge efforts, working in collaboration with the Council to support the refurbishment of the bridge.

A resident asked to what extent was the bridge damaged and why were the cracks not spotted earlier, given that weekly safety checks had taken place since 2015. The Leader explained that the bridge was currently closed to motor vehicles and a comprehensive review was being carried out to determine engineering solutions. Furthermore, ultrasonic testers had also been implemented to assess the level of corrosion.

A resident noted that a suspension structure was rebuilt in Budapest and was interested to know whether this had been examined by the Council. In response the Leader said that engineers had taken this into consideration, however the Budapest bridge was structurally quite different to Hammersmith bridge, despite looking similar.

Councillor Iain Cassidy queried whether inspections carried out by engineers had gradually intensified since they commenced in 2015. The Leader said that they had intensified recently. Micro-fractures had been discovered using the latest ultra-sound technology. Furthermore, he noted that there had not been an inspection process prior to 2015.

A resident thanked the Leader for a detailed presentation and analysis of the bridge. He felt that the bridge was originally designed for pedestrians, cyclists and horses and carriages as opposed to heavy traffic. This was due to the detrimental effect motor vehicles would have on the materials used to build the bridge. Therefore, commented that the Council should not re-open it to motor vehicles in the foreseeable future.

Councillor David Morton asked for clarification around the timescales for the re-opening of the bridge. The Leader explained that at this stage it was difficult to predict how long the repair work would take, however this could take as long as three years. A precise timetable including costs would be made available in September once engineers had carried out full investigatory works. In addition, the Council was working with engineers and TfL to re-open the bridge to motor vehicles at its earliest convenience. However, the bridge was currently only open to cyclists and pedestrians.

A resident said that this was an opportunity for the Council to reconsider its strategy in line with its commitment to combat air pollution, whilst restoring the bridge back to its Victorian splendour. He commented that it was important to deliberate the reduction of traffic in the borough and felt that it would be unreasonable to restore the bridge to its original capacity.

Another resident mirrored these concerns and explained that it was important to recognise the high volume of traffic caused by motor vehicles in the borough, which had an adverse effect on the environment. Therefore, they felt that restoring the bridge back to its original state was not a realistic plan.

The Leader said that many commuters needed to access the bridge, therefore the Council was exploring all opportunities in collaboration with TfL including the possibility of an underground tunnel as a replacement to the bridge, which would allow convenient access whilst considering environmental factors. Following feedback received from the public, the overall aim was to fully restore the bridge, allowing traffic to move back and forth. A full engineering review would also be carried out to determine the full capacity of the bridge. In addition, the Council was fully committed to protecting the environment and providing a cleaner air space within the borough and reassurances were provided that this was being reviewed as a separate issue.

The Chair asked what options had been considered for ensuring venerable residents could still access the bridge. The Leader noted that the Council was working with TfL to establish a robust service to meet the needs of venerable residents on both sides of the bridge. This service would be put into place as soon as engineers confirmed that they were confident that the bridge could be used safely.

The Chair explained that it was essential for the Council to communicate the timeline and plans when it was available in September to keep the public updated of the Council's plans going forward.

RESOLVED

THAT the Committee noted and commented on the update.

5. AN OVERVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE PREVENT TEAM

David Chapot, Prevent Manager, presented the report which provided an overview of the work undertaken by Prevent during the 2018/19 financial year. The report set out details about the performance of the team and the outcome of the Prevent Peer Review. David Chapot gave a presentation and outlined the following key points:

- The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 had made it a legal requirement for local authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism (known as the *Prevent Duty*).
- The objectives of the Prevent strategy were outlined, including the local reporting and accountability processes.
- A steering group had been set up to scrutinise the work of the Prevent team.
- Community engagement played a vital role for the service - The team undertook 237 instances of community outreach in the borough, in addition, the team was in the process assisting in the creation of a local Faith Forum.

- The team had a commitment to offer safeguarding support to individuals vulnerable to radicalisation.
- Training was crucial as it allowed the team to address concerns in line with the Prevent strategy.
- Training in the education and non-education sector was delivered and positive feedback was received.
- The teams peer review took place from 20 to 23 November 2018. A range of external practitioners worked together to assess the work carried out by the Council.
- The peer review found that local delivery was of a very high standard and generally excellent. In addition, a range of recommendations were identified for the continued improvement of local delivery.

Councillor Iain Cassidy asked whether any additional measures had been implemented to improve local delivery, outside of the key recommendations identified as a result of the peer review. David Chapot explained that officers were consistently exploring different ways to improve all areas of the service. In particular the Council was focusing on strengthening its communication and partnership work in collaboration with relevant Council stakeholders and boards to ensure that the best outcome was achieved.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler queried whether the Council had identified any areas of improvement to the service that could be valuable for the future following recent attacks in London. In response David Chapot said that a review was carried out following the Parsons Green terror attack to ensure any lessons learned identified in the Home Affairs Select Committee letter were implemented.

In addition, a Channel Panel was set up with representation from relevant sectors. This acted as an early intervention service to safeguard vulnerable individuals from radicalisation. Monthly community meetings took place to determine areas of risk and any community concerns. Whilst these measures were in place there would always be areas of unknowns that were more challenging to detect at the early stages.

Councillor David Morton asked how success was monitored within the Prevent team. David Chapot explained that the team evaluates various elements of its work. The Prevent team also arranged focus groups and engaged with the Prevent Advisory Group (PAG) - a group of community organisations that scrutinised local Prevent delivery to ensure that the Council was meeting the key requirements – for feedback. In addition, the team has provided feedback forms to individuals who had engaged in the Channel process following their departure.

The Chair asked officers to explain the role of whistle-blowers and if any referrals had been received. Officers explained that the Council worked in collaboration with the Police as they played a vital role in managing risks for individuals. In addition, the Council did receive some referrals from whistle-blowers, and reassurances were provided that any information received was kept confidential.

David Chapot explained that cross departmental working was vital to this service to manage risks and improve delivery. The Prevent team worked with a number of different teams across the Council. These included Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Mental Health, and Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation.

RESOLVED:

THAT the Committee reviewed and commented on the contents of the report.

6. WORK PROGRAMME AND DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

THAT the Committee noted the work programme.

7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

THAT under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business, on the grounds that they contain the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the said Act, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption currently outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

8. AN OVERVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE PREVENT TEAM (EXEMPT ELEMENTS)

The exempt elements of the report were noted.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 9.00 pm

Chair

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