

Community Safety and Environment Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes

Wednesday 16 September 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), Stephen Cowan (The Leader of the Council), Adronie Alford, Amanda Lloyd-Harris and Andrew Brown

Officers: Ian Hawthorn (AD Environment Special Projects and Highways), Bram Kainth (Chief Officer - Public Realm), Anvar Alizadeh (Group Manager Structures), Matt Hooper (Chief Officer - Safer Neighbourhood), Monica Roucou (Community Action and Engagement Officer)

Guests: Adam Matan, Lorraine Ainscow-Searle, Maria Doulton (Police and Crime Commission) Tim Abbott, Rufus Foster, Joey - Le Gresley (H&F Consultants) David Rowe (TfL) Superintendent Mark Lawrence (Metropolitan Police)

A number of residents also attended to ask public questions on Item 5.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. ROLL CALL AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair carried out a roll call to confirm attendance. There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That, the minutes of the meeting held on the 20th July were approved.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chair noted that the Committee had received a lot of questions and comments on the Hammersmith Bridge item. To address the main concerns in a manageable way, representative questions were chosen to cover the top issues and concerns. The questions and answers can be found under Item 5, Hammersmith Bridge.

5. HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE

Bram Kainth (Chief Officer - Public Realm), provided a presentation on Hammersmith Bridge and noted the following key updates:

- The bridge was closed to pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic on 13th August 2020.
- Sensors positioned throughout the bridge alerted engineers to a rapid increase in the size of dangerous micro-fractures in the cast iron pedestals.
- There had been a significant financial impact of Transport for London's (TfL's) emergency budget and resulted in the £25m existing budget being reduced to £17m.
- TfL were unable to commit to any further resources until the outcome of further negotiations with the government.
- The Leader sent two letters to the Prime Minister, seeking the government's engagement and financial support.
- The secretary of state announced a taskforce to review the engineers plans on 9th September 2020 and the first meeting was held on 16th September 2020.
- Design concept for full stabilisation and strengthening were being finalised and this would cost £46m.
- The Council was also exploring detailed design options for a temporary bridge for pedestrians and cyclists and this could take up to 9 months, costing £27m.
- Full restoration and strengthening, including stabilisation works would cost £141m and up to £163m for a quicker option.
- The Council was exploring a number of proposals for a ferry service.
- The Council had requested TfL to put on extra bus services on routes 533 and 378 to address school transport concerns.
- TfL were also exploring a point to point coach services for school children.
- Alternative walking and cycling routes had been identified by Council officers and measures on how to improve these routes were being explored.
- A temporary road bridge proposal was assessed by TfL in November 2019; however, this was rejected due to key reasons highlighted in the presentation.
- It was noted that immediate urgent stabilisation measures were being developed to reopen the bridge to pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic.

Councillor Stephen Cowan (The Leader of the Council) addressed the committee and gave an update on the work of the taskforce. The first

taskforce meeting was held on 16th September 2020 to review the engineer's reports. The taskforce was Chaired by Baroness Vere of Norbiton and included representatives from the Council, TfL, the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames, Network Rail and the Department for Transport. The Leader provided details of the discussions that were had at the taskforce meeting and noted that everyone involved in the taskforce was keen to open a safe fully functioning bridge to pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles as soon as possible. The Council would go to tender with TfL when assurances on finances were provided by the government.

The Leader stressed the urgent need for short term mitigating actions and noted that he wrote to Baroness Vere on the 15th September 2020 setting out some of the main challenges faced by members of the public due to the closure of the bridge. The Council was working closely with the taskforce on proposals for short term alternatives which included a ferry service or a temporary road crossing.

The Chair explained that she had received some written questions from members of the public in advance of the meeting and speakers would also be invited to ask a question or make a comment to address the main areas of concerns as follows:

Q1: Can officers address if an emergency bridge or temporary crossing is planned and if so, what the timeline for implementation is?

In response the Chair explained that during the meeting we had heard about the various options for a temporary crossing therefore this question had already been addressed. She asked officers to outline the different options that were being explored for an emergency bridge or a temporary crossing, including timelines and requested that this be published as soon as possible.

Action: Bram Kainth

Q2: I am a resident of Hammersmith and Fulham and have children who go to school on the other side of the river, and their commuting time has gone up significantly by bike each time they need to get across. We are very concerned that they will not be able to continue to get across by bike once it starts getting dark earlier due to security concerns. Does the Council have a viable solution within the next few weeks?

In response Bram Kainth (Chief Officer - Public Realm), noted that the Council sympathised with all members of the public who were adversely affected by the closure of the bridge. He explained that the bridge was closed for the safety of the public and this remained the Council's top priority. To ensure that these concerns were mitigated in the short term, officers had requested a full audit on all the alternative pedestrian and cycle routes so lighting along these could be improved.

The Leader apologised for the level of disruption caused by the closure of the bridge. The Council was working with the taskforce to explore a number of options and find an immediate solution by the time the days got shorter. This would be addressed as one of the key priorities at the next taskforce meeting.

and further details of the Council's plans should be available to members of the public in the coming weeks.

Q3: Many residents raised concerns over the safety of the alternate cycling and walking routes that people are now taking. There were concerns about insufficient lighting of these routes – particularly as the days are getting shorter, the dangers of increased traffic, and winter weather conditions. Are there plans to address these issues and are there plans for an alternative, safe pedestrian crossing?

In response Bram Kainth (Chief Officer - Public Realm) explained that this question had already been addressed in the response to the previous question. The concerns relating to the safety of the alternative routes would be passed on to the engineers as a priority.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler felt that the Beckett Rankine proposal to construct a temporary bridge adjacent to Hammersmith Bridge to allow motorised traffic to cross the River Thames until the main structure could be restored was the most popular option amongst residents locally. She asked why this had not gone ahead. Bram Kainth, referring back to the presentation provided the key reasons why the Beckett Rankine proposal had been rejected by TfL in October/November 2019.

Q4: Why is a temporary ferry service which can be organised within days not in place?

Bram Kainth (Chief Officer - Public Realm) reiterated that whilst the Council was looking at various options outlined in the presentation to address the concerns expressed, the Council's number one priority remained the safety of the public. He explained that options for a ferry service were actively being explored. The decision, whether to proceed with a ferry service would be taken by the taskforce within the coming weeks.

The Leader apologised to the members of the public for all the issues they were currently experiencing. He felt that a ferry service was the most appropriate short-term solution and noted that there was a broad consensus at the taskforce meeting that this was a priority and needed to be addressed urgently.

Q5: The existing bridge should be urgently and as cost effectively as possible replaced with a modern one with the existing facade perhaps attached to retain something of the history of the bridge.

In response the Leader explained that the costs and timescales for building a new bridge were similar to restoring the existing bridge. In addition, it was concluded by engineers at the initial taskforce meeting that the bridge could be fully restored. The Council's primary responsibility was to restore the existing bridge so that it was fit for purpose. However, options for a modern bridge had also been explored. These discussions would continue with the taskforce to find the quickest and most effective solution for the members of the public.

Q6: My son's school journey has doubled in time and we're really feeling the impact of the closure of the bridge. How can we as members of the public feel confident that this will be resolved urgently?

The Leader explained that one of the key objectives of the taskforce related to the urgency of developing a plan to safely reopen the bridge to the members of the public. One of the key challenges for the Council was to identify funding to restore the bridge. However, since the intervention of the Prime Minister, the Council welcomed the Government's full engagement to help move this forward. In addition, formal meetings with the taskforce would take place on a weekly basis. Reassurances were provided that the engineers would be reviewing the lighting along the alternative routes as a matter of urgency.

Q7: Can the Council publish the recent engineers reports and associated correspondence, given that so much about the bridge construction is already in the public domain?

Bram Kainth (Chief Officer - Public Realm) noted that the engineer's reports had not been released to the public for security reasons inline with TfL's policy. The Leader added that all the technical information had been shared with the relevant authorities and the government.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler noted the impact the closure of the bridge had on the residents of the borough and queried whether active steps had been taken to offer acknowledgement of the current situation. In response the Leader confirmed that a letter had been sent to all residents on the 16th September 2020 apologising about the inconvenience, the of the bridge had caused to many residents in the borough.

Councillor Iain Cassidy asked for further clarification to be provided as to why the Beckett Rankine proposals were not taken forward by TfL. Bram Kainth provided a detailed overview of the various challenges faced by the implementation of these proposals and outlined the technical reasons why these had not been successful.

Councillor Ann Rosenberg asked if a structural survey was commissioned by the Cabinet responsible between 2010-2014. Councillor Andrew Brown explained that the administration at the time continually assessed the condition of the bridge. However, at the time there were no serious concerns discovered regarding the structural integrity of the bridge.

Councillor Andrew Brown thanked all the officers for their hard work towards the actions taken to date for the interest of public safety. He sympathised with the significant impact the closure of the bridge had on the lives of many local residents in 2019 for motorised vehicles and 2020 for pedestrians and cyclists.

Councillor Andrew Brown requested detailed timelines of the studies and investigations that had been commissioned by the Council, included in the Leader's letter to local residents on 16th September 2020.

Action: Bram Kainth

RESOLVED:

That, the Committee noted and commented on this item.

6. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSION REPORT

Matt Hooper (Chief Officer - Safer Neighbourhood) provided a presentation on the Policing and Crime Commission's (PCC's) final recommendations. It was noted that the Commission was created in November 2018. Since then, members of the Commission had undertaken a huge amount of field work, interviews and research to inform their final report. The report set out 35 'ambitious recommendations, each one evidence-led and designed to make residents safer, less fearful and better informed'. The report served as a resource and benchmark and included 7 headline recommendations as follows:

- 1. Crime communication infrastructure*
- 2. A new H&F crime helpline*
- 3. Disbanding existing resident engagement structures*
- 4. New recommended groups, committee and roles*
- 5. Prioritise pupil safety*
- 6. New H&F youth commission*
- 7. Addressing drug and alcohol misuse*

In total 33 actions were proposed for the Council, Metropolitan Police and other organisations. 18 of these were supported, 12 were partially supported and 3 were not supported. The 3 actions that were not supported for either legislative or financial reasons were; a new H&F crime helpline, disbanding existing resident engagement structures and addressing drug and alcohol misuse.

Superintendent Mark Lawrence, relating to recommendation 3, noted that Ward Panels were functioning across the borough, some more well attended and more productive than others, but these cannot be disbanded. These were driven by The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the central Neighbourhood Unit. Again, representation could always be increased, and everyone was welcome to join. It was crucial to deliver a consistent engagement strategy across London and Ward Panels formed part of that. However, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) recognised the validity and importance of the Ward Action Groups recommended in this report and made a commitment to ensure Ward Panels and Ward Action Groups work together to achieve the best outcomes.

Councillor Sue Fennimore (Deputy Leader) praised the sheer amount of work that had gone into the PCC. She thanked everyone that was involved in the Commission to bring forward these recommendations for an important and invaluable piece of work.

The Chair also thanked the members of the Commission for taking their time to address the Committee.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked Councillor Sue Fennimore to clarify what her views were on the recommendations included in the report. In response Councillor Sue Fennimore noted that she was grateful for all the work carried out by the Commission to produce these recommendations. All recommendations would be presented at Cabinet for consideration in November 2020 at which point it would be collectively determined which ones would be taken forward.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler asked for further clarification to be provided on whether Council officers were involved in responding to the recommendations. In response Matt Hooper noted that the Council worked in collaboration with the Police to jointly agree and respond to the recommendations proposed by the independent Commission.

Lorraine Ainscow-Searle (Police and Crime Commission) asked why the recommendation to consider working with the Police to adopt a diversion scheme for drug users such as that operating in Thames Valley was not supported. Matt Hooper explained that this was a significant programme of work which due to current resource and funding restrictions, the Council was not in a position to deliver at this time. However, the Council had agreed to extend the funding for the resilience project, and this would be made available post 2021.

Councillor Victoria Brocklebank-Fowler provided a summary of concerns regarding the arrangements for Ward Panels and the Ward Action Groups set up across the borough. However, noted that she was in favour of some of the other recommendations outlined in the report.

Councillor David Morton commented that he was the Chair for the Ward Action Group in Avonmore and Brook Green. He felt that these had worked extremely successfully and there was good integration between Council officers, Police and the Safer Neighbourhood team. Additionally, he provided a summary of the improvements that could be made in future to ensure these continued to work well.

Adam Matan (Police and Crime Commission) noted that the Commission had worked very closely with residents and key stakeholders to collate their views and action some of the challenges that were faced in the borough. He was pleased with the recommendations that had been submitted to the Council and hoped that these were implemented to achieve a practical solution for crime going forward.

Summing up the discussions, the Chair thanked everyone in attendance for their contributions, and efforts that had gone into developing the proposed recommendations

RESOLVED:

That, the Committed noted the recommendations of the Policing and Crime Commission (PCC) and the H&F officer responses.

Meeting started: 6:30pm
Meeting ended: 9:30pm

Chair

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