

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Climate Change and Ecology Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Tuesday 3 January 2023

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Nicole Trehy (Chair), Ross Melton, Stala Antoniades and Jose Afonso

Other Councillor: Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology)

Officers:

Bram Kainth (Strategic Director of Environment)

John Galsworthy (Assistant Director – Parking)

Hinesh Mehta (Head of Climate and Ecology) (attended remotely)

Clerk: Debbie Yau

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Laura Janes.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. CLEAN AIR NEIGHBOURHOODS

John Galsworthy (Assistant Director - Parking) presented the item on Clean Air Neighbourhoods (CANs). He gave a detailed presentation on what Clean Air Neighbourhoods were, the health and ecological problems they addressed, and how they were being delivered in the borough.

In reply to Councillor Jose Afonso's question, John Galsworthy noted that data for main causes of nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide (NO_x) were 50% from road traffic and 20% from heating and power based on London-wide data. He believed the Head of Climate and Ecology would be able to provide data specific to Hammersmith and Fulham (H&F). Councillor Afonso requested that data and documents be dated for future reference.

ACTION: Hinesh Mehta

Noting the authority's intention to publish H&F air quality data to support research and assist additional scrutiny, Councillor Ross Melton asked about the timeline. John Galsworthy introduced the open-source platform that allowed users to download a personal exposure app which shall cover the areas that users had visited. The hyperlocal network map enabling zoom-in would provide fine resolution data in relation to air quality. The app was expected to be ready by the first quarter of 2023.

ACTION: John Galsworthy

Responding to Councillor Melton's enquiry about the effects of the CAN scheme on different types of vehicles, John Galsworthy noted that emergency vehicles were affected positively because with fewer cars using the side streets, they could now move faster. As regards the delivery vehicles, it took most delivery companies around 2 to 3 weeks to reroute their drivers. It took slightly longer for changes to update on Google Maps.

Noting that the traffic in the proposed South Fulham trial was expected to be reduced by 25% overall, including 4% on main roads, Councillor Melton sought details about data collection. John Galsworthy noted that the cameras on the routes could count the number of vehicles passing through, in addition to classifying the types of vehicles and their eligibility to enter the area or otherwise. Councillor Stala Antoniadou noted that under the proposed scheme, a tonne of carbon dioxide (CO₂) was expected to be removed per day. She asked for the baseline figure. Hinesh Mehta (Head of Climate and Ecology) noted that the emission of CO₂ across the whole borough was 680,000 tonnes per year with majority coming from buildings using gas boilers for heating.

Councillor Melton asked whether similar traffic reduction could be achieved if the Council extended the scheme to other areas after consulting the residents in those neighbourhoods with a view to eventually achieving the reduction borough wide. John Galsworthy explained that by picking strategic areas, the schemes in place had already had impacts across the borough by displacing traffic back to main roads. On the extent of reduction, John noted that in implementing these types of schemes, the

rule of thumb was that one third of the traffic would use alternate routes, one third would disappear, and one third would remain where it was.

Councillor Antoniadis noted that through traffic and school traffic had made up 75-80% of all traffic and asked how much it would cost for schools to use public transport instead of cars. John Galsworthy noted this varied from school to school. Some schools had travel schemes, with some running green travel arrangements of different degrees. In any case, it was not forthcoming to tackle school traffic as any scheme might end up displacing traffic to a neighbouring ward. Councillor Antoniadis suggested that the Council consider improving public transport to school areas.

Noting that similar schemes had been implemented by other boroughs, Councillor Antoniadis asked whether experience had been drawn from them. John Galsworthy said some boroughs used the area approach in traffic reduction which H&F had adopted - others that had used a street approach had attracted backlashes from the public. Nevertheless, H&F was pioneer in using the technologies involved in the H&F CAN scheme.

The Chair relayed a question from Councillor Laura Janes on rewilding and the optimal use of land for greening. On the timeframe of implementation, Bram Kainth (Strategic Director of Environment) said it depended how well the scheme was accepted and how quickly it could be implemented. It was currently run on an experimental basis and it was necessary to prove the trial scheme met the objectives before further actions like maximising the use of space could be taken. He hoped this would follow soon.

ACTION: Bram Kainth

The Chair was concerned about measuring success among factors like residents' views, levels of CO₂ and NO_x, number of vehicles on the streets, and the weighting of each. John Galsworthy said that the re-routing of the traffic under the scheme had brought pollution away from people and cameras were used to ensure filtering of the through traffic. As far as he understood from the consultations, residents believed the scheme had reduced traffic and improved air quality.

Noting that the proposed implementation date of the CAN for South Fulham (east and west) and Brackenbury was both November 2022, Councillor Afonso asked why the latter did not proceed. John Galsworthy explained that the resident working group would like to take the matter to a larger resident group which was due to meet in the next few weeks. This was to ensure that the scheme met the objectives of people in Brackenbury.

The Chair invited public questions from the floor.

Peter Kmapp called on the Council to reduce PM2.5 (ultra-fine particulate matter that is now widely acknowledged as being the air pollutant which has the greatest impact on human health) emitted from wood burning stoves. He also expressed concern about the need for Google Maps to catch up with the changes brought about by the scheme.

Bram Kainth noted that apart from reducing traffic, the authority had been looking into ways to tackle other forms of pollution such as those emitted from wood burning stoves and exploring what could be done to improve air quality. Members noted the call for more education among those who undertook wood burning.

John Galsworthy said that Goggle had received warning notices about the locations of the cameras and the need to get a permit for accessing certain roads/side streets. It took Goggle about 1 to 1.5 months to update the app.

Ruth Mayocras sought information on the response time of emergency service vehicles using CAN roads before and after the implementation of the schemes.

John Galsworthy noted that specific H&F statistics on the response time of the emergency service vehicles were not available. He said that unlike the LTNs which were blocked by physical barriers, road closures under the CAN schemes were gated with padlocks which could be open by the emergency service vehicles and such might just cause a small delay.

On Ruth Mayocras' further enquiries, John Galsworthy noted that car ownership in the borough was around 40% and the Council encouraged more walking and cycling for local journeys.

Ruth Mayocras noted that cycling uptake had been minimal due to the displacement of the cycle lanes by trucks and lorries. The Chair said the CAN adopted a holistic approach in rolling out environmental-friendly policies which should include a sensible division of road surface for different users. John Galsworthy noted the use of road space by different types of competing users as in the case of junctions where the probability of accidents was unfortunately high. Part of his team's work was to reduce the conflict by re-routing the vehicles and giving particular attention to cycling at the big junctions.

David Morris welcomed the trial scheme which helped reduce traffic. He reflected the concern that some Uber drivers dropped their passengers at the scheme boundary instead of residents' front doors. John Galsworthy advised that the authority had engaged Uber as well as Bolt, both of which had sent briefing packs to their drivers some of whom might need more time to familiarise themselves with the scheme. He said that as long as the journey started or ended within the CAN boundary, they were eligible to enter the area. He noted that incidents of dropping passengers at scheme boundaries were decreasing. Each household was accessible without going through the cameras.

Wilf MacDonald Brown noted that it had been 3 years since the Council had declared a climate emergency and yet the measures proposed did not seem to be ambitious enough to respond to an "emergency". Bram Kainth remarked that this was a question related to the pace of the strategic programme in addressing the climate emergency. If the CAN measures could help address the traffic in the residential streets, similar measures might be imposed on the main roads which would bring more impacts across the borough.

Wilf MacDonald Brown expressed concern about H&F being an outlier in rolling out School Streets, a popular scheme in which the road outside a school had a temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times. John Galsworthy responded that most School Streets counted their success for the street outside the school only, disregarding the fact that a lot of traffic was displaced one or two streets away. John noted that H&F aimed to reduce the traffic in its totality, and school traffic would come down naturally as a result of re-routing. Additional measures like closing particular roads might then be taken. He disagreed with Wilf's view that the displacement could direct the pollution away from hundreds of school children. John said that during congestion, pollution inside the cars due to exhaust of the former vehicles tended to be worse than staying outside. That was why H&F was trying to find a better solution to knock off the trips altogether.

Casey Abaraonye considered the designation of School Streets might have a greater impact on the school children in terms of fostering concepts of active transport and ways of interacting with the environment. John Galsworthy appreciated the objective of active transport to get more people cycling to schools but felt H&F's approach enabled longer and safer cycling routes to schools.

Leo Murray referred to the potential safety issues outside school gates, and reflected a Headteacher's urge for the Council to designate School Street to address them. He considered that directing traffic in nearby area of the schools away had somehow encouraged speeding which in turn deterred cycling. John Galsworthy noted that speed monitoring did not materially change the area and the local residents should be responsible for their actions including speeding. The borough would benefit from the whole area approach by reducing the traffic capacity and then repurposing the space. The Chair requested that the Committee revisit the subject of school traffic in the context of the CAN at a future meeting.

ACTION: John Galsworthy

Casey Abaraonye considered LTNs helped suppress traffic and bring positive impacts for emergency vehicles both within and outside their boundaries. He also saw the merits of closing Harwood Terrace. On his suggestion of putting up coded signage to inform residents important changes, John Galsworthy undertook to look at the idea as long as they did not interfere with the legal signage. The Chair said the Committee would follow up to ensure that practical signage were in place to guide traffic through the affected areas.

ACTION: John Galsworthy

On transport strategy raised by Casey Abaraonye, John Galsworthy said it was related to reprioritising and reallocation of space for road users including cyclists and pedestrians. There was advocacy for re-claiming parts of the highways for greening. The Chair was keen to see that H&F could encourage and enable other boroughs to consider implementing the transport strategy adopted by H&F.

Regarding the ambitious net zero target by 2030 under which traffic would be reduced by at least 27%, Leo Murray sought details of the Transport Plan including specific mode shift measures and the responsible parties for achieving this target.

In response, Bram Kainth highlighted the ambitious CAN scheme which would be implemented in steps by first rolling out a series of projects for local residential streets and then followed through by measures on the main roads.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Ecology) pointed out that traffic reduction of at least 27% by 2030 was as challenging as other targets set to address climate emergency. The matter had been given great significance in H&F which had set up a Climate Unit and organised a Cabinet post specifically to deal with climate change and ecology. He and the Cabinet Member for Public Realm who had responsibility for transport and highways would deal with high level strategic issues together. In fact, the impact of climate change straddled across Cabinet portfolios like education, planning, housing and finance. He agreed to provide a response to the concerns raised by the Headteacher.

ACTION: John Galsworthy / Councillor Wesley Harcourt

In reply to Leo Murray's further enquiries, John Galsworthy noted that H&F did not have specific target of traffic reduction. As traffic volume was directly proportional to the traffic capacity i.e. available road surfaces, it was expected that about one third of traffic would be reduced after rolling out the measures under the CAN scheme. The Chair noted that it took time for residents concerned to change their mentality and behaviour. John added that residents' acceptance of a local measure might justify for its application for the whole area. The general strategy was to change their behaviour to a more sustainable traffic mode.

In reply to Anna Maynard's enquiry, the Chair advised that she could contact any members of the Committee in relation to concerns on food and climate.

The Chair relayed the questions submitted by Rosemary Mortimer and requested the officers to provide a response in writing:

1. What effect – if known – has the South Fulham CAN had on businesses, retailers, service providers, small builders, pubs and restaurants within the area and also on its boundaries?
2. Are surveys, consultation and assessment of the potential effects on the businesses mentioned above proposed for other potential Clean Air Neighbourhoods?

RESOLVED

1. The Committee noted and commented on the presentation.

5. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the dates scheduled for future meetings:

- 31 January 2023
- 28 March 2023

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.52 pm

Chair

Contact officer: Debbie Yau
Committee Co-ordinator
Governance and Scrutiny
☎: 07901 517470
E-mail: Debbie.yau@lbhf.gov.uk