

Minutes

PROPERTY, HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

18 October 2023



Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Keith Burrows (Chairman) Alan Chapman Darran Davies Elizabeth Garelick Kamal Preet Kaur Tony Burles Ekta Gohil</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Sophie Wilmot, Senior Transport Planner Steve Austin, Traffic, Parking, Road Safety and School Travel Team Manager David Knowles, Head of Transport and Town Centre Projects Lisa Mayo, Road Safety & School Travel Manager Steve Clarke, Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Also Present: Councillor Jonathan Bianco, Deputy Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Property, Highways and Transport</p>
30.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Steve Tuckwell and Councillor Peter Money with Councillor Ekta Gohil and Councillor Tony Burles substituting respectively.</p>
31.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
32.	<p>TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>An amendment was suggested to minute number 25, where it was originally stated that "... there were no exceptional inflation items", it was later confirmed by officers that the development of housing stock was an exceptional inflation item that fell within the remit of the Property, Highways & Transport Select Committee. It was agreed that the minutes would be amended to reflect this.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 20 September 2023 be approved, subject to the agreed amendment.</p>
33.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE ITEMS OF BUSINESS MARKED AS PART 1 WILL BE</p>

CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC AND THAT THE ITEMS MARKED PART 2 WILL BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE (*Agenda Item 4*)

It was confirmed that all items on the agenda were marked as Part 1 and would therefore be held in public.

34. **SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEW INTO THE COUNCIL'S ROAD SAFETY INITIATIVE AND ACTIVITIES AROUND THE BOROUGH'S SCHOOLS** (*Agenda Item 5*)

The Chairman introduced the item highlighting that the first witness session for the Select Committee's review into road safety initiatives and activities around the Borough's schools would focus on evidence gathering from internal officers and the relevant Cabinet Member. With the following session focussing on external stakeholders such as school representatives and pupils.

The Chairman welcomed the witnesses to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Witnesses for this session included:

- Councillor Jonathan Bianco - Deputy Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Property, Highways and Transport
- David Knowles – Head of Transportation and Town Centre Projects
- Sophie Wilmot – Senior Transport Planner
- Lisa Mayo – Road Safety and School Travel Manager
- Steve Austin – Traffic, Parking, Road Safety and School Travel Team Manager

In giving an overview of road safety around the Borough's schools, officers stressed the importance of having a working partnership between the Council and Hillingdon's schools. Of the dozens of schools across the Borough, each school was different in terms of its students, road environment, accessibility, outlook and attitudes. The Council aims to collaborate with the Borough's schools although it requires responsiveness from the schools themselves, which varied from school to school. Where the Council does work with schools, officers can offer a range of tools and projects to help improve road safety in the local vicinity of schools, these were outlined further in the report.

The Committee heard from Lisa Mayo, Road Safety and School Travel Manager, who's remit included the School Travel and Road Safety Team (STaRS). The team ensure the safety and well-being of students on their journeys to and from school; working closely with schools, parents, and local communities to promote safer and more sustainable travel options for students and develop Transport for London (TfL) Accredited School Travel Plans. The STaRS Team including a manager, two officers, a Borough Cycling Support Officer, a team of Practical Pedestrian Trainers, a team of cycle instructors, and the School Crossing Patrol Officers (SCPOs). The team was available to work with any school in the Borough, not just those maintained by Hillingdon as the local education authority.

The Committee were informed that recent changes had taken place regarding the naming of TfL's road safety education programmes; since September 2023, all road safety education programmes now came under the umbrella of TfL Travel for Life.

The Committee sought clarification regarding the Council's School Crossing Patrol Officers (SCPOs) as to the reasons why their numbers had dwindled in recent years, why it was difficult to recruit new SCPOs, and what was being done to combat the

difficulty in recruiting. Officers highlighted that SCPOs tended to be very dedicated personnel, likely to be of an older generation and often had a link to the school at which they operated as an SCPO for example as a parent or ex-parent of a pupil at the school. It was a notoriously difficult role to recruit into given the unusual daily working hours through all seasons and there was a huge challenge in finding the right people for the role. Some neighbouring London Boroughs had suspended their SCPO programmes indefinitely where Hillingdon still had 12 SCPOs. By way of clarification, officers informed the Committee that, in terms of what was being done to ensure road safety was maintained, officers were looking at alternative methods. Engineering means were able to compensate for a lack of SCPOs in many cases and more investment in road safety engineering was deemed to be a more appropriate use of efforts due to the difficulty in recruiting SCPOs; more vivid and suitably located pedestrian crossings were highlighted as useful engineering means of helping to ensure road safety at the start and end of the school day. The Committee noted that engineering solutions were among the best solutions that can be achieved and discussions between officers and any schools identified as in need of possible assistance were paramount to identifying what kind of help could be delivered. Officers highlighted a recent example of productive cooperation between Council officers and St Helens College who were in need of improvements to an adjacent pedestrian crossing, it was noted that the school were a useful partner which resulted in the necessary crossing improvements being implemented.

The Committee discussed with officers the possibility of promoting the SCPO roles as a volunteer position among parents at schools. Officers confirmed that schools had been approached to this effect in the past and it was regarded as an additional responsibility that staff and parents were not willing to take on; this was respected by officers as the primary function of schools and staff was education matters. Members sought clarification whether an engineering approach was more cost-effective than SCPOs; it was noted that there had been instances of schools having a member of staff, and in some instances a SCPO, present at traffic lights merely to press the zebra crossing button which was clearly an inefficient use of time.

With regard to the free Adult Cycle Training that was due to resume in 2024 following the Covid-19 pandemic, it was highlighted that a trial session had taken place in mid-October 2023 to scope the delivery of these sessions going forward; the trial was a success and Members were encouraged by the commencement of these sessions from April to October 2024. Members also sought clarification regarding the attendance data around Cycle Training/Bikeability schemes. Officers noted that they report the attendance of these schemes to the Bikability Trust quarterly and that this information could be provided for the Committee.

The Committee queried the impact that the rise in popularity of electric bikes was having on the delivery of cycle safety programmes. Officers confirmed that there were concerns regarding the power and speed of e-bikes, it was noted that it was an emerging area and advice may need to be forthcoming. The Council had issued advice previously on e-scooters and there was a possibility that similar such advice would be needed.

The Committee noted that a lot of the secondary schools in the Borough were academies and wanted to know what challenges officers faced when communicating with these schools. Officer confirmed that, following the Covid-19 pandemic, there had been a steady return to engagement from academies in the Borough, however it was noted that there were challenges with regard to engagement. All of the schemes offered by the Council were free of charge but it was dependent on the appetite from

the schools as to whether they take up the Council's offer. Officers regularly approached all varieties of schools to offer sessions but the response received was dependent on the schools' willingness to engage. If concerns had been raised from residents or parents regarding specific schools and their road safety conditions then the team would be inclined to use local Ward Councillors as a means of facilitating engagement from schools.

The Committee particularly praised officers efforts with regard to Practical Pedestrian Training where the report had stated:

"In 2013/14, Hillingdon trained 5310 children in both KS1&2. In 2022/2023, the borough has trained 13,484 pupils ranging from 3 to 11 years old. This identifies a 154% increase in 9 years."

It was confirmed that this increase could be attributed to the improved levels of engagement and communication between officers and schools over that time period. In comparison to other London Boroughs, it was noted that Hillingdon was highly regarded in the delivery of these types of sessions. The Chairman confirmed this as a member of the London Road Safety Council. Hillingdon was in the minority of Boroughs that provide these schemes in-house, it was noted that a number of London Borough's outsourced the delivery of these schemes.

The Committee noted that the 'Safe Drive Stay Alive' programme was no longer being funded by TfL. Since the removal of funding for this programme, TfL had developed a similar programme called 'Travel Smart' which touched upon cycling and pedestrian safety in addition to driving, the resource had a quiz element to it; it was noted that the new resource was engaging but it lacked the emotional impact of the 'Safe Drive Stay Alive' sessions. Officers highlighted that Hillingdon was the only London Borough to have delivered this programme in schools, however the future of 'Travel Smart' was uncertain as TfL had put the programme on hold.

The Cabinet Member for Property, Highways and Transport addressed the Committee noting that in the last year there had only been one petition heard with regard to road safety specifically around the vicinity of a school in the Borough. It was noted that, on occasion there were requests to reduce the speed limit around some schools to 20mph; whilst the Cabinet Member was reluctant to consider 20mph zones generally, the exception to that was around the Borough's schools where further consideration of these requests and the circumstances would be made. The Cabinet Member emphasised the road safety schemes offered to schools for free by the Council and sought to highlight the need for the Borough's schools to engage with these programmes where there would be any road safety concerns as education of these matters was important in improving the road safety risk. On a separate level, it was noted that the Borough utilised other means of road safety around schools including zigzag lines by the entrance.

The Committee congratulated officers on the excellent work they did educating the Borough's children in road safety matters at such a formative and important age. However, it was noted that a common issue communicated to Ward Councillors regarding road safety around schools was the behaviour of parents; instances of blocking driveways, double parking and inconsiderate parking were endemic at the start and end of the school day.

The Committee thanked officers for providing a list of schools whereby engineering measures were proposed in the coming years and were minded to explore what further

detail there was for school related engineering measures and proposals in the 2023/24 year as these would currently be in various stages of development.

The Chairman thanked officers for attending and congratulated them on the positive work they do for the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Select Committee used the first witness session of the review to broaden understanding of the Council's practical and strategic approach to road safety around the Borough's schools.

35. **DRAFT HILLINGDON CYCLING STRATEGY 2023 - 2028** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Sophie Wilmot, Senior Transport Planner, and David Knowles, Head of Transport & Town Centre Projects, were present for this item and introduced the report for the Committee. It was highlighted that, as an outer London Borough, Hillingdon was expectedly fairly car heavy and cycle light but there were many funding opportunities made available by Transport for London (TfL) with regard to cycling and Hillingdon now had a TfL Borough Cycling Support Officer who advises Hillingdon's officers on prospective infrastructure proposals and assists in securing grant funding from TfL to deliver parts of the Council's new Cycling Strategy. The Strategy was in a draft format for the Committee to view and was subject to consultation before it was scheduled to formally be approved by the Cabinet Member for Property, Highways and Transport at the end of 2023.

Officers also highlighted page 7 of the draft strategy which gave an overview of the Borough's existing cycle infrastructure and explained that the strategy would form the basis by which the Borough's infrastructure could be bolstered to promote cycling as a means of active transport going forward. There were also partnership opportunities highlighted where cycle infrastructure and provision could be implemented with partners such as Brunel University who had indicated that there was an appetite to provide cycle infrastructure on their land.

The Committee were supportive of the draft strategy and encouraged its adoption. Members also noted that it was positive to see such a strategy being implemented in Hillingdon as there were traditionally relatively high levels of vehicle ownership in Hillingdon when compared to other London Boroughs.

The Committee sought clarification on how officers were working to ensure the Borough's cycle infrastructure was weatherproof and that cycle paths would remain accessible and safe for use year-round. Officers noted that, along with the Highways and Green Spaces Teams, assessments of suitable materials were made for all new cycle paths and infrastructure in the Borough, this was because paths in different parts of the Borough may be subject to different use patterns and environment for example urban paths, canal towpaths, and countryside paths and trails. This cooperative assessment also ensured that any new cycle infrastructure would not have an adverse impact on its surrounding environment and would be suitable for the local conditions. It was also highlighted that HS2 Ltd had recently delivered a footpath in the north of the Borough using a new permeable material, officers were due to investigate this for potential use elsewhere for the Borough's cycle infrastructure.

Members sought to ensure that cycle routes were suitably well lit to provide adequate safety and usability throughout winter months. Officers confirmed that this was being factored into any new cycle infrastructure proposals although this would need to be

carefully assessed, particularly in green spaces where it may have a detrimental impact on the environment. Officers would be exploring alternative infrastructure options such as low-level lighting, timed closures and bollards to ensure any environmental impact was mitigated.

Members suggested the use of a QR code on page 19 of the new strategy to promote the Dr Bike sessions. Officers noted that the Dr Bike sessions were promoted through the Council's social media channels, via the Council website and through Hillingdon People Magazine which was delivered to every home in the Borough; officers commented that they would ensure a QR code taking readers through to further information about the Dr Bike sessions would be added to the strategy.

Members were particularly encouraged by the canal works, highlighting the positive impact these works would bring in terms of safety along the canal towpaths as this had previously been an area in which Members had received concerns from residents regarding pedestrian and cyclist safety.

The Committee queried cycle signage throughout the Borough. Officers noted that this was an area of concern that needed to be addressed, it was highlighted that TfL had given the Council a significant grant to have consultants review existing cycle infrastructure. The intention was that this would lead to a programme of signage improvements and development. Members were informed that all cycle infrastructure funding came through TfL, either through the Local Implementation Plan or through separate grant funding, or through Section 106 monies.

Members thanked officers for their work and were pleased with the positive direction undertaken by implementing the new Borough Cycling Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee noted and commented on the draft Hillingdon Cycling Strategy 2023 – 2028.

36. **CABINET FORWARD PLAN** (*Agenda Item 7*)

The Committee considered the Cabinet Forward Plan, it was highlighted that the 'Transport for London Local Implementation Plan – Annual Spending Submission' item was included with the Cabinet papers for the 12 October meeting and was available for Members to view. Members also sought to receive information regarding the regular Cabinet item regarding 'Voluntary Sector Leases'; however it was noted that this was a Part 2 report; due to the confidentiality of the report, Members would not be able to consider it at a formal Select Committee meeting, however it was highlighted that the report would be available for Members to view when Cabinet papers were circulated to all Members.

RESOLVED: That the Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

37. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 8*)

Members considered the Select Committee's Work Programme and discussed November's upcoming witness session for the road safety around schools scrutiny review. Members sought to invite senior school representatives as witnesses for the session, officers confirmed that there were a number of witnesses lined up for the November session including school travel leads from two schools, including pupils and parents. Members specifically highlighted Hayes Park School and their ongoing road

safety concerns in an effort to gain a greater understand of the issues the school faced, particularly barriers that staff may encounter in addressing the road safety concerns.

The Committee discussed the possibility of adding a third witness session/evidence gathering session to the road safety review due to the number of stakeholders the Committee would like to hear from. Following a discussion, Members agreed that a third witness session would be appropriate, with a preference for the session to take place in January 2024 and to feature residents who live in the vicinity of schools. Members were encouraged to provide details if they knew of any residents who may be willing to engage with the Committee's review. Members were also informed that Parking Enforcement officers would be invited to attend the new witness session, it was also noted that they were available to receive questions from the Committee offline which could feed in as part of the review.

RESOLVED: That the Property, Highways and Transport Select Committee noted the Committee's Work Programme and agreed to amend the Work Programme as discussed.

The meeting, which commenced at 7.00 pm, closed at 8.09 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Steve Clarke at sclarke2@hillingdon.gov.uk.
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