

ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH

HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 7:00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Members:

Councillor Bill Freeman (Chair), Councillors Peter Brooks, David Gardner, Sizwe James, Christine May, Gary Parker, Aidan Smith and Matthew Clare.

Officers

(Interim) Assistant Director Transportation; Transport Strategy Manager;
Committee Services Officer

Other Members in Attendance

Councillors Geoffrey Brighty, Mehboob Khan and Leo Fletcher,

Item

No.

1 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mick Hayes

2 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

Resolved –

That the list of Councillors' memberships as Council appointed representatives on outside bodies, joint committees and school governing bodies be noted.

4 Minutes

Resolved -

That the minutes of the meeting of the Highways Committee held on 3 February 2021 be agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

5 Traffic Reduction Trial West Greenwich - Response to Petitions

The Transport Strategy Manager gave a brief summary of the report and the experimental West Greenwich Traffic Reduction Scheme (TRS), which was currently within a six month consultation period, ending in March. A recommendation will then be made to the Cabinet Member, to agree any amendments, make the TRS permanent or remove it. The recommendation will be based upon an evaluation of all consultation responses, which the petitions would form part of, and other evidence set out in the report.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Transport Strategy Manager confirmed that traffic data and air quality data had been and would continue to be collected and would form part of the evidence to be presented to the Cabinet Member to inform their decision.

The Lead petitioner for the petition set out at appendix 1 addressed the Committee stating their concern that the process to implement the TRS had not been conducted in line with central Government guidance on the explicit consultation process and timescale. The public survey questions were loaded to reach a desired conclusion to install the TRS. The TRS would create more pollution and congestion, with drivers stopping and starting and making longer journeys and was engineering gridlock.

The Committee asked the speaker if he had evidence of an increase in congestion and pollution and what suggestions he had on how future consultation on the TRS's should be conducted. The Chair allowed the speaker to respond but as the speaker had lost audio connectivity, they were unable to.

The Committee was addressed by the representative for the petition as set out at appendix 2 who advised their petition related to the perceived impact on Greenwich East and Maze Hill as a direct consequent of the West Greenwich Traffic Reduction Scheme (TRS). Since implementation of the TRS traffic backed up along Maze Hill, with Westcombe Park Road becoming a car park and it was understood with an evidenced 17% increase, with no recognition or, apparent consideration, to the displacement impact of the

Scheme. The current schemes recommend had limitations and it was not clear why automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology could not be used as an option.

The speaker commented on proposals for traffic management measures in the Westcombe Park and Maze Hill area. They confirmed to the Committee that there were residents who would welcome a 24/7 approach, similar to West Greenwich TRS, whilst others a more flexible approach, through the use of ANPR or timed opening scheme using similar controls as CPZ's, as there were residents, such as elderly and vulnerable residents that needed to retain access Trafalgar Road. Residents were monitoring how the outcome and proposal was going to be evidenced and sought proper community engage and consultation to identify all options and the implications of each, in order to make an informed response. The benefit of ANPR, which is a proposal that came from Council officers not the community, would be its flexibility if it's really properly monitored.

The Transport Strategy Manager responded to the Committees request for clarification on ANPR that Council Officers had experience of using ANPR and found that most people complied with regulations, as drivers don't want to receive a fine. He noted that a lot of 'rat running' was as a result of people following sat navs which would not route people via any closed roads, which would also help compliance. If the use of ANPR was agreed, this could be accommodated within the funding allocation for the TRS.

The (Interim) Assistant Director Transportation reminded the Committee that the report presented the response to petitions submitted to Council. That a decision was not being made, at this time on the future of the TRS and confirmed that there was financial flexibility to consider a range of options when that decision is made.

The lead petitioner of the petition set out at appendix 3 addressed the Committee advising their petition represented 14 local streets, in which they felt the vast majority of residents in favour of the TRS. The roads in the area were not suitable for the level of traffic they were attracting and had seen positive improvement in traffic levels since the introduction of the West Greenwich TRS. There were no traffic jams, no damage to residents' cars, less pollution, and residents felt safer knowing that emergency services could get through if we needed. There was no perfect solution, but the positives massively outweighed the impact on people having to take a few minutes longer to make a journey by car and they urged the Council to make the scheme permanent.

The Committee was addressed by a representative for the petition set out at appendix 4 who echoed the previous speakers' comments as the TRS was having a positive impact on both road use and the resident's quality of life. The TRS was diverting vehicles from minor roads back onto the two major roads, as it was before the use of sat navs. There had also been a resolution to drivers trying to push out to re-join the main traffic flow, which caused tailbacks and, due to the uninterrupted traffic flow tailbacks were now rare. It was hoped that the neighbourhood Traffic Management Scheme would be made permanent.

The Committee was addressed by a representative for the petition as set out at appendix 5 who lived in the area where most of the homes were 200 year old cottages with the front door's opening directly onto the street, less than one metre from the road. Many of these homes were fragile and would shake from the constant vibration of traffic and cars would frequently mount the kerb, taking the corner making it unsafe for her children or anyone standing on the Kerb. There was concern of further sinkholes opening up, as happened a few years ago if high traffic levels returned. The introduction of the TRS had allowed the safe use of the narrow pavement by children and adults, and cycling on the road, due to fewer cars and less pollution, with positive physical and mental health results.

The Committee was addressed by a representative for the petition set out at appendix 6, speaking on behalf of a number of residents of Hyde Vale. She advised the Committee that due to terminal lung cancer she was previously unable to walk to the top of Hill without stopping for breath several times. However, since the introduction of the TRS she had been able to walk to the top of the Hill without stopping due to the improved air quality. There was concern at ambulances and other blue light services gaining access, but these concerns have proved to be unfounded with the chair of London ambulance service stating these schemes had not caused adverse effects and were beneficial for people's health, which is a view that has received written support by doctors and nurses. Before the TRS was brought in ambulances were often delayed due to various pinch points on the roads, which has been relieved. The TRS makes it safer to walk or cycle, tackles air pollution and have been found to reduce road injuries, saving lives as well.

The Committee was addressed by a representative for the petition as set out at appendix 7 who advised that as Crooms Hill was a narrow road that suffered traffic jams, aggressive drivers, motorbikes mounted the pavement and ambulances being delayed. Consultation began three years ago with the Council and Ward Councillors undertaking consultation through public engagement, meetings with residents and other stakeholders, and an online survey, culminating in the trial West Greenwich TRS and was still seeking

feedback on the TRS. Over the years piecemeal traffic calming measures had only served to drive traffic onto fewer and fewer streets and the petitioners strongly support the Council adopting the scheme permanently

The lead petitioner for the petition set out at appendix 8 addressed the Committee advising that her petition sought that the TRS be reconsidered. It was appreciated that the residents of some roads had faced abuse from drivers, traffic jams and damage to their vehicles over many years however, the TRS also had a wider, negative impact on local taxi drivers; local retailers, who had seen a loss in trade and issues with stock delivery. The police had faced issues pursuing a robber, late last year, due to being unable to drive through the central area of King George street, which it was suggested meant access would also not be possible for other emergency vehicles. A Freedom of Information enquiry showed that the fire service did not recommend the use of TRS. The environment would not benefit from cars having to drive further and spending more time idling, as traffic needs to flow. Not everyone was able to cycle or walk and there was still a need for residents to be able to use their car. The TRS, should be reviewed in combination with other options, such as a one way system with a 20 mph speed limit, could benefit both East and West Greenwich.

The speaker responded to the Committee that retailers were seeing a compounded loss of revenue due to problems with deliveries and people being unable to park on King George Street or other nearby roads. Residents were already taking longer to complete car journeys, and vehicles were idling and using the bus network. When lockdown is lifted, and traffic levels would increase but a smarter solution, that supported residents and retailers, was needed, such as making Crooms Hill one way with an opposing one way system along Hyde Vale, which would not require investment or ANPR but would allow residents to use their local streets without having to undertake longer journeys.

Councillor Geoffrey Brighty addressed the Committee noting that three of the petitions addressed concerns at the negative impact the TRS was having on residents in both the West and East Greenwich areas. The petitions raise real concerns that the scheme was put into place quickly and he, and other Ward Councillors, were receiving correspondence from a number of residents deeply unhappy with the proposals and the way the Council was implementing it. A speaker had indicated dissatisfaction with the consultation process and residents had raised concerns that that consultation questions were loaded to get the answers that the Council wanted in order to bring in the TRS; and many residents had expressed the desire to have seen a yes / no questions as to the implementation of a TRS. Residents wanted low traffic neighbourhoods but also that all options be considered such as ANPR, which

was used for enforcement in other areas. Through traffic should be stopped but local residents' access by car needed to be maintained, without fear of fines, which an ANPR system could do and may make the proposals more palatable residents and retailers.

Councillor Leo Fletcher addressed the Committee advising that he concurred with Councillor Brighty's comments and endorsed the proposal to consider using an ANPR system which would resolve a lot of the issues raised by residents, around the current scheme.

Councillor Mehboob Khan addressed the Committee, noting that engagement and consultation on the proposal had been ongoing for three years before the West Greenwich TRS was implemented. The Metropolitan Police had requested the Council tackled the level of vehicles using the residential streets at peak hours advising the Council it would be held accountable for any incidents resulting in injury or worse if it did not. The Ward Councillors had worked with and engaged local residents and a one way system had been discounted, as the narrow streets were not suitable for around 8,500 vehicles a day and this would increase air pollution noise and create road safety issues for those areas. He believed that the majority of residents, living within the TRS area supported the arrangements and many of the initial concerns, raised by the petitions, had been resolved. Both the London ambulance service and the London fire brigade supported this type of scheme, in principle. The latest monitoring of air quality on Blackheath Hill showed significant improvement in the last four months than the same period in 2019 and 2018. The scheme was as a result of the demands from residents in West Greenwich.

Members considered the report, petitions and addresses made to them.

The Committee had heard that there had been very significant public engagement over a period of three years. It was noted that it was not for the Highways Committee to make the final decision as to whether the West Greenwich Traffic Management Scheme should be made permanent. The scheme would need to be evidenced and assessed, with all the implications, including any knock on impact to East Greenwich considered and presented to the Cabinet Member, as part of the final and formal decision making process.

The Committee noted that the TRS appeared to have made a positive difference to the area with significant benefits to local people in terms of improved air quality, which was also helping with health and people's wellbeing and was a positive benefit towards addressing the climate emergency. It was accepted that any scheme would not be accepted by all

residents, and some local business may also be impacted, but there was a need to address the traffic issues in this area which were mainly caused by people trying to save minutes on a journey through the Borough. It was noted that most other areas in Greenwich West were already essentially low traffic neighbourhoods due to other methods of traffic restrictions having been installed.

The Committee noted that one-way systems may not be appropriate for the narrow roads and would not stop vehicles speeding. In respect of the use of ANPR, if this was pursued, careful consideration would need to be given as to who would be permitted to use the roads. It was noted that there were a range of different options for both the area covered by any exemption (e.g. only residents of specific roads, all residents within a wider area or set of roads) and the people exempted (e.g. residents, workers and/or visitors). That the current TRS was being trialled and a six month consultation was ongoing - and that residents should continue to response to the consultation.

The Committee accepted that consideration would need to be given as to the wider impact on East Greenwich

The Committee noted that it was not within their powers to make a decision on the future of the TRS but felt, on balance ,the Traffic Management Scheme had been a success and, based on the Officers' reports and presentations from petitioners it had received, it wished it recorded that the Committee recommend to the Cabinet Member that the scheme be permanently implemented.

Resolved –

That the petitions presented as appendices to the report and the proposed approach to deal with the petitions, as outlined in the report, be noted

That it be noted a response will be submitted to Full Council on 31 March 2021.

That the Full Council be made aware of the Highways Committee recommendation to support implementation of the Greenwich West Traffic Management Scheme.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm

Chair