

Scrutiny & Overview Committee

Meeting held on Wednesday, 19 January 2022 at 6.30 pm

This meeting will be held remotely and a recording can be viewed on the Council's website

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Sean Fitzsimons (Chair), Robert Ward (Vice-Chair), Leila Ben-Hassel (Deputy-Chair), Jade Appleton, Mike Bonello and Joy Prince

Also Present: Councillor Muhammad Ali

PART A

1/22 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest made at the meeting.

2/22 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no urgent items of business for consideration by the Scrutiny & Overview Committee at this meeting.

3/22 **Call-In: Key Decisions Relating To The Introduction Of Croydon Healthy Neighbourhoods**

The Committee considered a call-in request set out on pages 5 to 38 of the agenda. In introducing the item, the Chair explained the process for considering a call-in, confirming that the Committee needed to agree whether to review the decision and if it was decided to proceed, to confirm how much time it wished to allocate for the discussion of the item. The Committee agreed that it would review the decision and allocated one hour for its consideration.

The Chair went on to explain that there were three outcomes the Committee could reach as a result of its review. These were:-

1. That no further action was necessary and the decision could be implemented as originally intended.
2. To refer the decision to the Cabinet for its consideration, outlining the nature of the Committee's concerns
3. To refer the decision to Council, if the Committee considered that the decision taken was outside of the Budget and Policy Framework.

At the outset of the item the Chair gave Councillor Scott Roche, as the spokesperson for the call-in, the opportunity to outline his concerns on the original decision. Councillor Roche advised that there had been a number of reasons for submitting the call-in request, firstly there was no clear evidence that the type of traffic scheme to be installed would make a difference to local air quality. There was also a question about whether the Council was listening to the views of the public, as the results from a recent consultation indicated that 61% of responders were in favour of removing existing schemes. Given it had been estimated that £26m would be raised from penalty charge notices issued as a result of introducing the proposed schemes, there was also concern that it was being used to increase revenue.

Given these concerns, the outcomes sought from the call-in were confirmation on how the success of the schemes would be measured, confirmation on how the baseline evidence would be determined, confirmation on what quantitative and qualitative data would be used and reassurance that the Council had sufficient resources in place to manage these schemes.

Following the introduction to the call-in, the Council's Head of Strategic Transport, Ian Plowright and the Head of Highways & Parking Services, Jane Rusbatch delivered a presentation to the Committee addressing the concerns raised. During the presentation the following points were noted:-

- Central Government had been calling on local authorities to take action to lower vehicle usage and as a result councils across the country were in the process of introducing similar traffic management schemes.
- In the guidance provided by the Secretary of State, it was made clear that local authorities needed to implement the schemes for at least a year to measure whether they worked or not. If schemes were removed early, it would be considered a misuse of the funding provided for implementation.
- It had also been made clear that the funding provided to introduce these schemes had been provided for this specific purpose and could not be used elsewhere.
- Monitoring of the schemes was based on statutory guidance provided by the Secretary of State and other guidance provided by Transport for London (TFL).
- There was a range of data being used to inform the schemes including figures from traffic surveys undertaken in 2017 as part of the proposal to introduce 20mph speed limits. Other data used included in-vehicle telematics to give an indication of traffic flow, TFL bus journey data, and data from Strava and Google.
- A series of Vivacity monitoring stations would be installed to record traffic data and there would be three separate types of air quality monitoring equipment installed as well.

- As part of the process the Council would be carrying out extensive consultation and engagement in line with the requirements of the Secretary of State to compile a wide range of feedback.
- The penalty charge notice (PCN) and appeals process was set out in statute and allowed the Council to install automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) equipment on the public highway.
- The ANPR technology allowed contraventions of the scheme to be detected. There was also a statutory process in place to allow the keeper of a vehicle to appeal a PCN.
- The appeals process was set out in writing to the keeper of the vehicle. The process was the same across the UK and if the appeal was upheld then the PCN would be cancelled.
- Having learnt from previous schemes, there will be advanced signage in addition to the statutorily required signage.
- The Committee had been provided with a set of FAQs used to explain the permitting process, exemption process and which permits are free of charge.

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Croydon, Councillor Muhammad Ali, was also provided the opportunity to respond to the call-in, highlighting that although the Council had declared a climate emergency in 2019, work had already started before then on traffic related measures. As traffic emissions accounted for 25% of all emissions in the borough, it was important that action was taken, and at the same time care was taken to bring people along with the Council. There was a clear monitoring strategy in place for these schemes and by their experimental nature it would allow the determination of the potential benefits.

Following the introductions, the Committee proceeded to ask questions about the information provided. The first question concerned the use of the money raised through the scheme from issuing PCNs. It was confirmed that all income from parking enforcement was transferred onto the Council's balance sheet and used to fund the Freedom Pass for pensioners which equated to approximately £13-14m in 2021-22 (Note: a figure of £18m was provided at the meeting and subsequently corrected). Any excess raised above this figure was earmarked and could only be used for highways related schemes.

As an aim of the Healthy Neighbourhoods scheme was to improve health outcomes, it was questioned whether there had been any engagement with the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). It was confirmed that there had been engagement with both the CCG and the Ambulance Service to draw on data around childhood obesity in the borough. The Ambulance Service was also supportive of the use of camera enforcement rather than physical barriers.

In response to a question about the monitoring of neighbouring streets, it was confirmed that this had been increased, although a significant issue was not expected.

Reassurance was sought that there was sufficient resource within the Council to manage the complexity of the schemes proposed. It was confirmed that having learnt from the experience of rolling out the earlier temporary schemes, these schemes would be rolled out using a phased approach. Additional resource would be provided by agency staff who would be employed to assist with the processing of exemption permits. The cost for using agency staff had been built into the project to ensure the level of resource could be flexed as needed on a short term basis.

As a follow-up, it was questioned whether the Council had the resource and experience to process the data produced by the monitoring equipment during the experiment. It was confirmed that the resource was not held within the Council, with external expertise being used, although the Vivacity monitoring equipment was able to analyse the data it collected and present it in an understandable format. It was suggested that the potential for working with a university to analyse the data may be a cost effective mechanism to pursue.

In response to concerns about the accuracy of the monitoring system it was confirmed that the Vivacity equipment had 97% accuracy. All monitoring systems recorded continuously and no images were stored within the system. There were no plans to independently test the accuracy of the monitoring equipment as it was already widely in use elsewhere.

Regarding the data being used it was questioned how the Council would be able to judge whether it had achieved net zero carbon emissions. It was advised that a report by the Mayor of London set out what London needed to do to reach net zero by 2030. One of the key aims was to reduce car usage by 27%, which it was hoped the Healthy Neighbourhoods schemes would help to achieve.

As in certain location temporary schemes had already been in place, it was questioned whether there was true baseline data from before the pandemic to use to judge the success of the scheme. Reassurance was given that there was baseline data available from shortly before the start of the pandemic lockdown, which would be supplemented by data from TFL.

Although it was accepted it was difficult to prioritise the objectives for the schemes as the purpose of the Healthy Neighbourhoods scheme was to take a holistic approach, it was highlighted that there was a risk that the public may think the success criteria was being changed if there was no clear indication of the intended outcomes.

It was advised that the Government was very clear about why local authorities should be introducing these schemes. There was also a clear presumption that they should remain in place unless there was evidence that the benefits were not being delivered. As such there was no clear cut answer on the success criteria, but in going ahead with the scheme it would allow the

collection of data to determine the benefits. How the scheme and its findings are presented to the public would be key to its success. It was suggested that providing the data gathered online for the public to view during the lifetime of the schemes would help the public gain reassurance about what the Council was trying to achieve.

It was questioned whether there had been learning from the previous, temporary schemes that could be used and whether a warning system could be used before issuing PCNs. It was advised that experience had indicated that it was important to use a level of signage over and above the regulated amount. It was also important to clearly differentiate to motorists when they were entering one of the new zones, which could be achieved by a variety of mechanisms such as different coloured road surface at the entrance. It was confirmed that the Council did provide one month's notice before issuing PCNs when introducing a new scheme. If a motorist received multiple PCNs before they received their first letter, they would be able to appeal and have the subsequent fines cancelled.

In response to concerns about temporary carers needing to access roads within the scheme to visit residents, it was confirmed that residents could apply through the exemption process online. If it was not a regular carer, then a retrospective application could be made.

Following its questioning, the Committee moved to determine the outcome for the call-in. It was agreed that a lot of additional information had been provided by the officers and Cabinet Member which had helped to provide reassurance on the concerns raised in the call-in, as such it was agreed that no further action was necessary.

The Committee Resolved: That no further action was necessary and the decision can be implemented as originally intended.

Conclusions

Having agreed that no further action was necessary on the call-in, the Committee reached the following additional conclusions:

1. The Cabinet Member and Officer were thanked for the significant amount of information that had been provided to the Committee, which had helped to provide reassurance on the concerns raised in the call-in.
2. The experimental nature of the Healthy Neighbourhood scheme fitted in to the Council's wider policy objective of taking action to improve health outcomes in the borough.
3. Although concern had been raised about the Council's capacity to resource the administration of the schemes effectively, sufficient reassurance was given that flexibility had been built into the budget to increase resources as needed to meet temporary demand.

4. As it was recognised that the Healthy Neighbourhood scheme may have an impact on a wide range of health outcomes, it was agreed that potential benefits needed to be communicated to the public.
5. The call-in request indicated that there was mistrust of the monitoring that would take place as part of the scheme. Options such as making the data publically accessible online and inviting residents to participate in reviewing the outcomes, should be explored.

Recommendations

Following the consideration of the call-in request, it was agreed to make the following recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Croydon

1. Ongoing communication was needed to promote to the public the potential benefits of Healthy Neighbourhood schemes.
2. That data gathered during the experiments should be made publically accessible on the Council's website.

Consideration should be given to inviting residents to participate in reviewing the outcomes from the experiment.

4/22

Exclusion of the Press and Public

This motion was not required.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Signed:

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Date:

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