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ECS PDS-17th November 2021—Oral Questions from the Public with Answers:

1) Question from Alisa Igoe:

The greenery around Stockwell car park, Kentish Way, is very overgrown. I enclose photos showing the mess and the tripping dangers where the brick wall has fallen. The entire area has obviously not been touched for years. I believe this is a Bromley Council car park on Council land. If so, are the Council's contractors not required to regularly tend to this area.

Reply:

There are areas along Kentish Way that are TFL responsibility outside of the Stockwell car park and we have contacted TFL to explain the overgrowth of their areas of responsibility. Within the Stockwell car park, our current shrub pruning and hedge cutting programme allows for 2 cuts per annum as contracted responsibility. Some areas will receive more attention due to their location and nature of site. This has been reported to our service provider idverde and they have attended to ensure all shrub beds within our demise are within specification for the winter. The brick wall works have been reported to our Property Department under the Infrastructure repair requirements.

Supplementary Question from Alisa Igoe:

Can you tell me when you contacted TFL please?

Reply:

I would have to get back to you on that as it would not have been me who contacted them

2) Question from Alisa Igoe:

Reference: Agenda Item 16: Review of Temporary School Streets

When Bromley Council was awarded £204k by TfL to improve school routes, with £72k of that funding available for implementation of 11 School Streets to assist 15 schools, why did the Council not anticipate the need to procure ANPR cameras for these experimental school streets?

Reply:

The guidance for the London Streetspace bids was that they should be low cost interventions to spread the benefit of the funding as widely as possible and to be implemented as quickly as possible. Only measures to support social distancing and support the return of pupils to our schools that could be implemented in a matter of weeks could be supported. It is therefore likely that on two grounds a more expensive bid involving the procurement of cameras would not have been successful.

Supplementary Question

Within agenda item 16 (Review of School Streets) you say that 3 of the 6 School Streets have failed due to lack of resources. You also have six Councillors with overwhelming positive comments. I am wondering why the Council did not use mobile ANPR cars at the start of the installations because you do use them for parking enforcement at the same schools. I have actually seen them myself at my local primary schools.

Reply:

The ANPR cars have not been operational (they have been decommissioned) because of the law change around parking rules which took place about 8 or more years ago. It is now a requirement for on street parking offences to be dealt with by actually placing a parking ticket on a car window. So we do not have such cars.

3) Question from John Perkins:

The consultation report that was produced to justify approval of the cycleway scheme suggested it could generate up to 21,000 cycle trips per day. What data is there on the actual usage of the cycleway and whether cyclists consider it is of any practical benefit? (Crofton Road).

Reply:

The 21,000 cycle trips was provided by a TfL analysis of cycling potential and applied across the route and the destinations of Orpington High Street/Station. Crofton Road and access to Orpington Station from the west is therefore for a key part of the route but wouldn't be expected by itself to generate 21,000 trips or use the whole length of the route. As the project has only recently been completed, including the carriageway resurfacing and remarking, it will take a bit of time for usage to grow and it also needs to be recognised that this time of year will have a negative impact on the potential market as will the numbers of people still working from home and not commuting into London, for example. The project has been supported by the local cycling group Bromley Cyclists who remain supportive.

Supplementary Question:

I have noticed that previously a lot of comments were made about the shortness of the cycle lane and that the construction of that element is out of disproportion to the impact on other road users. A cycle facility is beneficial but all that we have so far really does not serve any useful purpose. Is there any plan to extend it to Orpington Town Centre which could be

regarded as a beneficial part of the route? This would be an advantage over the limited facility that we have at the moment.

Reply:

Going back to the original paper that came to this PDS in 2017 (or it may be even earlier than that), the original proposal was for a number of phases from Locksbottom to either Orpington Station or Orpington High Street. At that time it was intended to start at the Locksbottom end to Crofton Roundabout. That consultation raised a number of comments and challenges with residents suggesting different routes. There was a disparity of views. The route between the roundabout, Crofton Avenue and Crofton Lane and Orpington Station was clearer and had significantly more support and far less questions. So therefore we changed the phasing into two. The original expectation was that there would be further phases to the project. The project is funded by TFL and any further phases would be subject to successful bids into TFL for future funding.

4) Question from John Perkins:

Does the Council agree that the project management of the cycleway scheme was extremely poor? Parts of Crofton Road were left with no safe crossing point for lengthy periods, there were 3-way traffic lights at Crofton Lane for far too long and the road surface was left in a very poor condition.

Reply:

The Crofton Road works were completed by the Council's contractor, who were also responsible for managing implementation of the project. The Council's role was to monitor the project against the agreed programme and specification. Although the contractor had originally planned to use several construction gangs working simultaneously throughout the project, delays were encountered relating to Covid-19 issues. Social distancing guidance prevented larger gangs working together, and several operatives contracted Covid-19 or were instructed to self-isolate restricting the resources available on site. Similar issues affected the contractors supply chain with construction materials, particularly concrete products, being in short supply. The programme was also delayed due to low temperatures which prevented concrete being used on site for a couple of weeks during the winter.

Resurfacing of the carriageway was always a separate project, funded by TfL as part of the London principal road maintenance programme. Due to their own funding issues these works were delayed until October.

Supplementary Question:

Was the Council liaising with Riney throughout this project to ensure that they were proceeding as quickly as possible and more importantly, keeping the public safe?

Reply:

Riney is our major works contractor and we have oversight of all contracts being delivered by them.

5) Question from David Morris:

At the east side of the Crofton Road/Crofton Lane roundabout (down toward Orpington Station) we have a crossing and a bus stop very close to the roundabout. This frequently causes traffic to back up across the roundabout preventing traffic from going to/coming from Petts Wood and also making crossing the road dangerous due to traffic attempting to move to the wrong side of the road to get past. The westbound traffic (toward Locksbottom) is now forced into a sharp right hand curve, narrowing the road substantially, indeed with a bus going toward Locksbottom and a bus at the stop, with the traffic backed up as described above, nothing can go anywhere sometimes. If the bus at the stop should break down then all traffic and the Emergency Services are gridlocked! What are the Council proposing to resolve this problem?

Reply:

It is standard design practice to have crossings where pedestrians want to cross the 'desire line' and bus stops located where they are needed and are often close to junctions, as in Orpington and Beckenham town centres. There may be short delays at any bus stop or crossing place, but these do not normally present a significant problem to emergency services vehicles, which can find their way past traffic delays whatever the cause.

However, the whole scheme has been subject to two Road Safety Audits during the design stage and a post completion Road Safety Audit which did not identify your concerns as a safety issue. It is important to point out that a Road Safety Audit is an independent process, carried out by experienced staff who are not employees of the London Borough of Bromley (LBB) and have not had any involvement whatsoever in the design process. When problems are raised the Client, in this case LBB, are obligated to respond as to how they propose to address the concerns raised.

Supplementary Question:

Has anyone stood at the Crofton Road Roundabout and looked at what happens during the course of a normal day? The crossing, when you get two or three cars stopped there and then a bus or an articulated lorry tries to get past, you are then not able to get from to or from Petts Wood as it gets totally blocked. With the stupid kick to the north that has been put into the roundabout—it now means that you cannot get an emergency vehicle past that junction.

Reply:

I personally have not stood at that junction, but I am happy to go and stand there at some point. My officer team I believe would have stood there, if not I will ensure that they do so in the near future.

Supplementary Question from Cllr Simon Fawthrop:

How much time did the independent auditors actually spend on the route and then giving it the all clear?

Reply from the Chairman:

This question will be addressed when the Committee deals with substantive item on the agenda that deals with this matter.

6) Question from Tony McPartlan:

The feedback from the Temporary School Streets seems to be overwhelmingly positive apart from issues around marshalling the barriers. Considering a number of schools are already struggling with enforcement, would it not make sense to consider ANPR use now and not in June 2022 as proposed?

Reply:

We are still in the period of establishing whether there is a new normal post Covid. As it appears more employers are expecting staff to return to the office, the views of parents may change. In addition the original school streets were generally considered to be the least contentious and the feedback from the additional school street trials will provide useful additional experiences. Once Members have assessed the benefits of School Streets in terms of increase in active travel and decided if they are worth the time and investment of resource, consideration will be given to the costs of the various options for the operation of School Streets. The cost of procuring and maintaining enforcement cameras will need to be a consideration.

Supplementary Question:

It seems to me that ANPR camera use would be a very positive thing to use, so why will it take seven months to look into this? Could this be brought forward to stop the closure of further School Street schemes?

Reply:

We have data presented in the report which shows some increase in active travel, but not a significant level. ANPR cameras are very expensive, so there would be a cost benefit analysis that would need to be done. You will note in the relevant report that subject to the completion of the MoU, (and the support of the Committee) there are two School Streets that are likely to go ahead. Because a school runs out of resources to support a temporary arrangement, this does not mean that they could not re-enter later.

7) Question from Tony McPartlan:

The Riney Contract Report shows that Highway Reactive Works performance fell off a cliff at the start of the year. The report states that discussions have been held with Riney to identify the reasons for this poor performance but no explanation is provided in the report. What are the reasons?

Reply:

Our contractor has stated that there were several reasons for the delays encountered in completing minor highway repairs, although performance has been within the required KPI's since September. Performance declined in January due to social distancing requirements, a shortage of skilled workers and delays in material deliveries due to closures in the supply chain.

Supplementary Question:

Sometimes after reporting issues on 'Fix My Street' residents are notified that the issues raised are below investigatory levels. Who decides which issues are followed up. Is it Riney or someone else? Are those decisions audited or checked?

Reply:

Council officers will go and look at the area highlighted in Fix My Street. They will judge according to Council criteria if an intervention is required. If it is then they will raise the job for Riney to deliver. Riney would submit evidence (often photographic evidence) to show that the work has been done.

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