

**ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the special meeting held at 7.00 pm on 17 December 2018

Present:

Councillor Will Harmer (Chairman)
Councillor David Jefferys (Vice-Chairman)
Councillors Mark Brock, Colin Hitchins, Angela Page,
Will Rowlands, Melanie Stevens, Kieran Terry and
Angela Wilkins

Also Present:

Councillor Kira Gabbert, Councillor William Huntington-Thresher, Councillor Russell Mellor, Councillor Keith Onslow, Councillor Tony Owen and Councillor Michael Tickner

41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ian Dunn and Samaris Huntington-Thresher. Councillors Angela Wilkins and Angela Page attended as substitutes.

42 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

43 ORPINGTON: CROFTON ROAD CYCLE ROUTE: CALL-IN
Report CSD18184

At its previous meeting on 20th November 2018 the Committee had considered a report on the proposed Crofton Road Cycle Route in Orpington. The Committee had supported the proposals and the Environment and Community Services Portfolio Holder had subsequently decided on 26th November 2018 to approve the scheme. On 3rd December 2018 notice of a call-in had been received from Councillors Tony Owen, Simon Fawthrop, Russell Mellor, Keith Onslow and Harry Stranger. The reasons for the call-in were that -

1. The expenditure proposed was not a good use of taxpayers' money;
2. The demand for the works proposed was not proven;
3. The works would make travel times worse for buses and other vehicles;
4. The works would lengthen emergency vehicle response times on a critical major route from the Princess Royal University Hospital.

The two options before a PDS Committee when considering a call-in were –

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- (i) to take no further action on the call-in; or
- (ii) to refer the decision back to the Executive giving reasons why it should be re-considered.

A message from the Crofton residents Association objecting to the scheme had been tabled; Committee Members had also received messages from Bromley cyclists, the local borough group of the London Cycle Campaign.

The Chairman invited Cllr Tony Owen to explain the reasons for the call-in. Councillor Owen took the Committee through the report to the meeting on 20th November, highlighting that the scheme was not a good use of taxpayers' money and there was no evidence to support the decision to proceed, such as accident statistics or demand from pedestrians or cyclists (who would probably use other routes to get to the Station.) He did not consider the figure quoted of 21,000 journeys per day diverted to cycle trips was credible, and questioned whether there was actually any public support for the scheme given the low response to consultation. The additional refuges and crossings would slow traffic, adding to congestion and pollution, delaying emergency vehicles and causing difficulty with bus schedules. He had spoken recently with two of the ward councillors, neither of whom were very happy with the scheme. In conclusion, he considered that the scheme was unnecessary and costly, and that some carefully placed lines and signs at modest cost were all that were needed.

The Chairman read out messages received from Councillor Robert Evans, one of the ward councillors, and from the Orpington BID.

The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services to address the Committee in support of his decision to approve the scheme. He set the proposals, which were in accordance with the Mayor's Transport Strategy promoted by TfL, in the context of the Council's policy of encouraging active travel and a range of transport options, and the importance of Orpington Station as a cycling hub. Take up of cycling was low in the borough, and this could be related to the level of provision of cycle facilities. As the population of the borough increased, with road space being limited, it was important to minimise conflict between cyclists and pedestrians, and one of the aims of this scheme was to prevent cyclists from cycling close to property boundaries and entrances.

Officers confirmed that funding for the scheme was being provided by TfL, and was justified by their analysis. It was confirmed that the figure of 21,000 journeys related to the whole town centre, not just the Crofton Road route. Officers had worked closely with ward councillors and the Crofton Residents Association, but it was agreed that the response to the consultation was low at just 26 responses, so the 65% in support of the scheme was from a very small total of replies. It was also clarified that the scheme should not slow buses; the aim was to reduce speed closer to 30mph, not to promote more dramatic speed reductions. The whole length of the road was fairly wide, with central hatching and refuges already in place. A Member commented, as a former emergency service driver, that the scheme would not make any difference to ambulances travelling to and from the PRUH.

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Councillor Keith Onslow also addressed the Committee in support of the call-in, stating that this was not a good use of public money and that the scheme should be re-considered. A Council survey had taken place on one day in June 2018 and had found only 91 cyclists using the route between 7am and 7pm, which cast doubt on the 21,000 figure. He had experienced a traffic jam next to a cycle superhighway - he had seen only two cyclists use the route in 15 minutes, while pollution had been dreadful.

In response to questions from Members, it was confirmed that if the scheme did not proceed TfL would reclaim the money they had allocated and it would not be available to the Council to use for other purposes. The different uses of zebra and pelican crossings were discussed – TfL charged £5k per annum for maintenance of each signal controlled crossing. Officers explained that TfL used a very thorough methodology to assess cycling potential.

A Member referred to the disproportionate number of cyclists killed or seriously injured on Bromley's roads, and suggested that people would cycle where good facilities were available. Although the scheme had been reduced, it still covered the key piece of the route where demand was expected to be at its greatest. Ward Councillors had been concerned about the stretch from Ormonde Avenue to Crofton Avenue, and the cycle facilities had been removed from this section, although improved pedestrian facilities and public realm enhancements had been retained. The scheme included a substantial 25% contingency, so an overspend was not likely.

The Chairman commented that the scheme fitted into the Council's overall strategy to encourage cycling. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that this route had been given a higher priority than the route from Green Street Green to Orpington town centre.

The Chairman invited Cllr Owen to sum up his opposition to the scheme. He reminded the Committee that there was very little public support for the scheme, that it was a questionable use of public money and that there were potential knock-on effects to roads in his ward.

RESOLVED that no further action be taken on the call-in.

The Meeting ended at 7.54 pm

Chairman