

EXECUTIVE

27th November 2019

Questions from Members of the Public

- 1. From Parisa Wright, Founder, Greener & Cleaner Bromley (& Beyond) to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services** (written reply provided)

In order to further assist air quality & the borough's carbon footprint, will the Portfolio Holder ask TFL to:

(a) urgently upgrade their Bromley borough buses to cleaner vehicles which all at least enjoy stop/start technology; and

(b) agree a date within the next 2 years for the introduction of hybrid and electric bus routes into the borough?

And importantly, how can residents and local community groups support this?

Reply:

The bus fleet is a matter for TfL to determine however Bromley's LIP3 (fig. 16) sets out our aspirations for a lower emission bus fleet. Bromley has recently benefited from cleaner buses as a result of the Low Emission Bus Zone in Lewisham and fleet renewal in recent months for example on the 208 and 227. Bromley already has Hybrid bus routes and between 2025 and 2030 our LIP sets an aspiration for all routes to be Hybrid or Electric. Officers will continue to raise the type of vehicles serving Bromley during their regular liaisons with TfL. I have also requested that this is added as an agenda item for the Public Transport Liaison group in January. Local community groups can contact TfL or their GLA member in the usual manner.

- 2. From John Cooper to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services**

(Prior to asking his question, Mr Cooper referred to the minutes of the meeting in May 2019 when he had attended. He stated that the minutes did not reflect the assurances given that a crossing would be in place by October, and this had not materialised. The Leader recognised this and acknowledged that that there had been some slippage in the scheme.)

Corner of Homesdale Road and Liddon Road, Bickley - crossing and traffic calming measures -

How has the site met national assessment criteria since 2009 and what do results show about: difficulty in crossing for children, disabled and elderly people; access to key local amenities (such as Tesco, which is the biggest supermarket in the area), vehicle delays during peak periods; carriageway capacity; and vehicle speeds?

Reply:

Bromley undertakes a review of its highway network each year and identifies all locations where 5 or more injury collisions have occurred in the latest 3 year period. Each cluster site is then reviewed to see if there are any cost-effective improvements that can be implemented to maximise road casualty savings per pound spent. Thankfully, over the latest period for which data is available, there have been no collision casualties at the junction of Liddon Road with Homesdale Road. Further north on Homesdale Road, near the junction with Page Heath Lane, there are plans to consult on a possible zebra crossing. The need for a crossing to be considered has been identified through the School Travel Plan process at some of the four nearby schools, with subsequent traffic and pedestrian counts being undertaken. Consultation will be undertaken in December or January.

Supplementary Question:

I have sent photos of two quite serious crashes in the last six weeks at the site in question. I wanted to ask whether you were aware of this photograph of this exact site, blind corner, taken in 1895. It shows that the road has exactly the same dimensions as it has now. Would you agree that this demonstrates the urgency of works being commenced as soon as possible? With particular reference to kids that get off the buses in the morning and have to cross that road (the photo shows children playing in the road and it is from the time of horses and carts, and now there are now juggernauts going down there.)

Reply:

I was not aware of that picture. This has been drawn out through the school travel planning process as a point that would help children approach school through active means. Everything that the Council likes to do, where we want things to be done as much as where we do not want things to be done, we undertake a consultation. That does, unfortunately, add a bit of delay while we consult. Whilst I understand that there is urgency, there is also a duty for us to consult.

3. From Mark Lees to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

When did the Council first notify Beckenham residents about your intentions over Beckenham Library? By what various means did you carry out the consultation and what was the general response from the residents? What statistical analysis have you carried out to show the results of this consultation?

Reply:

This report deals with initial approval to proceed to procurement for concept designs - it is not the decision. This will allow the Council to more fully determine the viability of the scheme, primarily by having a costed schedule of works for the new library and cultural venue at the Public Hall.

Assuming that this work does show the scheme to be viable public consultation will commence prior to any subsequent report asking for approval to take the scheme forward to the following RIBA stages. Item 3.20 in the report says that public consultation will be undertaken on completion of this concept design.

It is worth noting, with reference to your last point, that where other libraries have moved to central High Street locations, such as in Orpington, the usage increased.

Supplementary Question:

Do you not think that initial consultation with the residents should be carried out at the first step? Surely it would have been the logical, and dare I say it, the responsible and decent thing to do? After all, we the residents of Bromley pay for these facilities through our Council and general taxes. Now that you see the strength of feeling in favour of retaining the library are you going to put a halt to this going any further?

Reply:

I think the point is that until we have a proper concept design which everybody can have a proper look at consultation would not have any proper meaning. There are lots of rumours and ideas and concepts floating around, and none of them may bear any relation to what is actually produced, so a consultation would be meaningless at this point.

4. From Garnet Frost to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

In the light of the wave of dismay and indignation with which the Council's plan to demolish Beckenham Library has been greeted, will the Committee now allow a pause for consultation before endorsing this proposal? (I mean public consultation, and not consultation with the developers or amongst yourselves.)

Reply:

(Before Councillor Morgan responded to the question, the Leader confirmed that consultation meant with the public, and always did.)

There will be consultation once we have a study that we can put in front of people so that they can make proper comments, and until further work is undertaken the potential scheme cannot be fully understood. However, the genuine aim is for Beckenham to benefit from a better library and therefore I hope we will be progressing the matter to the next stage.

Supplementary Question:

Could you give me an idea of the form which this public consultation exercise will take?

Reply:

I am not a specialist in that area of the Council's business, but usually we advertise it, we have a public meeting, an exhibition of any plans and drawings - everything that we normally do. It will be online, on our website, as well.

Additional Supplementary question:

Will the Council organise a meeting where members of the public can attend and make their feelings heard in depth?

Reply:

There is no reason why not.

5. From Barbara Noble to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing

The proposed move of Beckenham Library to the Public Halls will have considerable effect on the Halls' current users, ranging in age from about 18 months to 90 years.

When will an Equality Impact Assessment be published, covering the proposed loss of smaller rooms at the Halls?

Reply:

We have published an equality impact assessment, it is part of the report tonight. Whether it covers those specific points you have raised I am not entirely sure. Certainly, there is no reason why we cannot examine that point as well.

Supplementary Question:

The equality impact assessment you have covered is very good, but it is for the library, it is nothing to do with the other users. How then will the Council propose to survey all the current users of the public halls in order to form such an assessment?

Reply:

There is no reason why all the existing users of the Hall cannot be invited to make comments. That is clearly easier than in many other cases because they are visiting the hall and they will be able to pick up a form to fill in and give their opinions on any proposals that we have. But first of all we need we need the proposals, which is what tonight is about.

6. From Parisa Wright, Founder, Greener & Cleaner Bromley (& Beyond) to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services (written reply provided)

Given residents' air quality concerns around schools, please confirm when the Council's welcome air quality & anti-idling measures, publicised in June this year, become active? For example:

- a) adding to CEO numbers;
- b) giving CEOs mobile air quality monitors & training;
- c) supporting anti-idling fine enforcement by CEOs; and
- d) supporting School anti-idling campaigns with banners, flyers & workshops.

Reply:

We are working through the most effective and efficient way of undertaking the enforcement and hope that this will be in place during early 2020. Campaign material being developed is likely to include banners, flyers and car-stickers. Additional CEOs will be utilised for the campaign.

7. From John Cooper to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

What democratic mechanisms and penalties are in place at Bromley Council to hold those who are responsible for public safety on the borough's roads to account if they fail in their duties or fail to carry out these duties within a reasonable time-frame?

Reply:

Fundamentally, talking about democratic processes, Councillors are elected by residents to set the borough's policies and priorities, and therefore we are held to account by residents, ultimately through the ballot-box. I would also say that our transport policy, known as our Local Improvement Plan, is consulted on before we adopt it, and that process was completed earlier this year.

The Leader added that he had seen the final consultation letters ready to go out, the only reason why they could not go out was the electoral purdah period. They would be posted on 12th December.

Supplementary Question:

What is your understanding of judicial changes in the law since the 1988 Road Traffic Act, in particular with reference to the Council's responsibility and liability in the event of serious accident? How do you feel you have been held to account to these judicial changes in the Court of Appeal and the Law Lords in Parliament with reference to this case?

Reply:

I do not have a legal background and I cannot comment on that specific case. Whenever there is a death on our roads, there is an inquest held, and the judge can say certain things at that point. I think that is probably all that I can say at this point.

Additional Supplementary Question:

The point I was trying to make is that there is judicial precedent. If there was an accident, and there are school children crossing that road all the time, if the Council was proved to have had notice of this and not acted in a reasonable timeframe, and this does go back to 2009, there are quite serious legal repercussions, and I just wanted to raise that and make you aware of it.

Reply:

The Leader responded that, having performed Councillor Huntington-Thresher's role prior to him, his understanding was that the Council fully discharged all its legal duties around safety all of the time.

8. From David Phillips to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing (written reply provided)

At the Committee Meeting on 5 November 2019, the Acting Director, Culture and Regeneration indicated to Members that the proposed relocation of Beckenham Library and transferring management to GLL would result in “the provision of a more modern and improved library service”.

Is this assertion supported by a comparative study of the space available at each venue? What is the floor area of the current site and what will be the total floor area available at the Beckenham Public Hall? What will be the consequent impact on the number of books on display for reference or loan?

Reply:

This report merely deals with initial approval to proceed to procurement to RIBA Stage 2 which will enable the Council to determine the viability of the scheme. This stage will include a full measured survey, however the information available at this time shows that the Public Hall is larger than the existing library. Therefore the assumption would be that a new modern library located at the Public Hall could accommodate more books.