

COUNCIL MEETING

1st March 2021

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FOR ORAL REPLY

1. From Stuart Mayer to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

Crofton Road Cycle Scheme - Approximately 20% of the road's width has now been allocated exclusively to bicycles, yet cycle usage along this stretch of road is low. If cycle uptake predictions are not met, and bicycle traffic remains below 1% of all traffic along this stretch of road, will you remove the cycle lane?

Reply:

The Crofton Road scheme is a walking and cycling scheme. Over many years across London congestion is increasing, due to more car journeys being undertaken. This scheme is intended to make walking and cycling a realistic new choice for residents and visitors' short journeys, thus allowing those residents and visitors for whom this choice is not an option to continue to drive. This scheme has been viewed in the context of commuters using Orpington Station, in particular. This scheme is not reducing the number of lanes on Crofton Road.

Supplementary Question:

The design has changed since the public consultation and the downhill stretch of the cycle lane has now been raised. At peak times vehicles tail back from the station all the way up the hill, and now we have this change vehicles will no longer be able to temporarily move into the cycle lane to allow emergency vehicles through. Have the hospital trust and the other emergency services been consulted on this significant deviation from the original plan?

Reply:

I can confirm that, as with all schemes, we have undergone statutory consultation and consulted with the emergency services. All schemes are subject to review after implementation and if there are any particular issues along those lines that only become apparent later then we will examine and address them in due course.

Additional Supplementary Question from Councillor Christopher Marlow:

In light of residents' concerns regarding the implementation of the Crofton Road cycle lane, will the Portfolio Holder commit to holding a post-implementation review once the scheme has been completed that will report to the Environment and Community Services PDS Committee with a particular focus on safety and traffic?

Reply:

Yes.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Simon Fawthrop:

Can the Portfolio Holder outline what criteria needs to be met for this scheme to be classed as a failure, for example, how many accidents, how many deaths, increase in cycle lane usage, length of traffic jams, to name but a few.

Reply:

As with all schemes, we will review this scheme, and, as I just committed to Cllr Marlow, it will come back to the PDS. If future issues arise, alongside the usual and on-going road safety commitment across the borough, we will make those adjustments and changes in time.

2. From John V. Powell to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

There has been a tsunami of complaints regarding the Orpington to Locksbottom cycle lane with regard to both safety and justification. Does the Council intend to continue ignoring the voting public, especially as now a number of serious road safety concerns are emerging?

Reply:

There was a public consultation for Crofton Road which showed the majority of respondents to be in favour, so the Council is in no way ignoring the public. As part of the design process the scheme has been subject to a two-stage road safety audit process and two more audits will follow once the scheme is completed, and I also refer you to my previous answer to Cllr Marlow.

Supplementary Question:

This project is a fatal accident waiting to happen; how do the Council justify not acting now rather than waiting for a tragedy?

Reply:

As I have previously indicated, we will be monitoring this for road safety as soon as the implementation is finished. Some of the issues that are there during the build we hope will disappear. Some of the road markings that have been laid down have not stuck very well - we will be re-surfacing the road very shortly which will allow the road markings to stay in place, which should then address any issues that people have highlighted so far.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Tony Owen:

Given that one head-on accident has already been reported, attributed to the changed road configuration by Orpington Station, if public concern proves to be justified and a corporate manslaughter charge is brought, who would be deemed culpable, the designers of the scheme, officers who recommended it, or Councillors who voted for it?

Reply:

I am not qualified to answer that – I would have to refer it to the Director of Corporate Services.

3. From Richard Gibbons to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

May I commend Portfolio Holder and team for recent active travel infrastructure improvements supporting the PM's Gear Change strategy? Many more residents are choosing to walk and cycle. Due to wear and tear to footways and public rights of way, would you review highways budget to enable proper maintenance, repair and improvements?

Reply:

The Council undertake regular inspections of the highway network, and in addition we encourage members of the public to report issues they see through Fix my Street.

I am pleased to be able to confirm that the existing budgets are sufficient to maintain all highways and carriageways in a safe condition.

Supplementary Question:

Bromley Council has published a series of eleven circular walks which take walkers on routes that cross busy roads at various points. Would you review the risk assessments for these routes and consider installing pedestrians crossing signs to alert motorists, as per the DfT guidance?

Reply:

If Mr Gibbons would forward me the details of those I will certainly investigate.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Keith Onslow:

Would the Portfolio Holder agree that, throughout the present difficulties with Covid over the last twelve months, our highways and pavements repairs team have done a splendid job in acting efficiently on repairs as reported? I personally have reported a number of these in Petts Wood and Knoll ward and have been pleasantly surprised that they have been attended to very promptly and efficiently.

Reply:

Thank you for the chance to highlight the work of our internal team and Riney our contractors. Riney and all our contractors have made an exemplary effort over the last year given the working conditions and I would entirely agree with you.

4. From Richard Gibbons to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Services

Healthy, safe, attractive end-to-end journeys are essential to enable more children and adults to travel by active modes. In Orpington, the link from the Crofton Road improvement scheme via the station underpass to Mayfield Avenue is not fit for purpose. What progress is being made with stakeholders, and what are timescales for improvements?

Reply:

The Council has already been in discussion with South Eastern about this link or tunnel, but because the approaches and the underpass are the responsibility of Network Rail we also need to engage with them. A meeting has been arranged

between the three parties in mid-March and it is hoped will result in a way forward, although this may depend on the future availability of funding that can be secured and any other feedback that we might get from users.

Supplementary Question:

What would you like to say to colleagues who may be described as lapsed conservatives for turning their backs on the Prime Minister's bold vision for cycling and walking and for dismissing the Secretary of State for Transport for saying that we want half of all journeys in towns and cities to be cycling and walking by 2030?

Reply:

The Secretary of State is able to express their view. It may be part of the city or on the periphery of the city - an average is made up of lots of different areas. In this borough, we wish to offer people as many choices as possible for their journeys so they can make a truly informed choice and the best choice for them to make that journey.

Additional Supplementary Question from Cllr Tony Owen:

Given that this scheme to Mayfield Avenue is currently footpath, can I ask please that the three Petts Wood and Knoll Councillors are notified of what is going on and are given an opportunity to contribute.

Reply:

I think that this footpath is on the border of three wards, and we will engage with all ward members.