

ECS PDS Special Meeting—Written Questions from the Public.

15th July 2022

1) Question from Anne-Marie Conneally:

Can the committee explain its decision not to support School Streets given that the main issues seemed to be a small group of complaints and some associated costs which could potentially be met elsewhere?

Bromley currently has 6 school streets identified (<https://www.bromley.gov.uk/cycling-walking-school/school-streets>) for 82 primary schools. Our neighbours in Croydon have 14 permanent and 21 under consideration across 72 primary schools.

1. Why is Bromley unable to support this if other boroughs can?
2. What other measure for our children does the council intend to take that focus on hub areas like schools rather than borough wide initiatives?

Response to Question 1:

At the committee meeting I made the following statement

School Streets – A Statement by Cllr Nicholas Bennett JP, Executive Member for Transport, Highways and Road Safety

The premise of the Call ins and the questions are incorrect, School Streets are not ending and remain one option as the Council continues to support active travel and road safety outside our schools. Whilst not being actively promoted each application will continue to be assessed in its merits.

By their nature most primary schools recruit from a relatively small catchment area. In most cases children live within walking distance and this is the primary form of active travel in School Travel Plans. Some faith schools and those in rural areas have wider catchment areas and therefore these children may have to travel by public transport or in some cases by car. Children in Years 5 and 6 are encouraged, wherever possible, to walk to school without parental support, to develop their independence and confidence and prepare for transition to secondary education.

Every school in Bromley is encouraged to produce a Travel Plan and the Council's School Travel team assists each school to ensure that their plan is tailored to the school's circumstances. In 2019, when the last accreditation took place Bromley had amongst the highest number of Gold or Silver accreditations, for increases in the number of children walking to school. TfL is currently conducting a fresh accreditation. Changes in the way children travel to school are measured, and this allows the Council to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the various measures used to promote active travel in the Borough.

There are several measures available to the Council to promote active school travel, School Streets being one of them. The cost benefit of each measure must be considered, along with the resource implications. The Council supports an anti-idling campaign for schools; cycle and scooter training; active travel campaigns to support walking, scooting, and cycling; road safety education and the introduction of pedestrian crossing facilities on routes to school; the Junior Travel Ambassadors Scheme; as well as supporting School Crossing Patrols at schools that want them.

The Council does not support the introduction of ANPR cameras. Each camera costs around £25,000 with annual running costs of £5,000 a year. Enquiries with other councils has not produced any evidence that enough PCNs would be issued to pay for their cost. For a school with two cameras a 1,000 PCNs would have to be issued to match the cost of the cameras and in any event, it is not the purpose of such cameras to be used for income generation. Income from PCNs is not ring fenced and is subsumed in the general council income. Even if the revenue generated were ring fenced to the School Travel budget, the expenditure of an average of two cameras per school street at £60,000 for around 90 minutes a day for 190 school days a year would be poor value for money.

School Streets at some schools help in the promotion of active travel, but they are not a panacea and are not suitable at all schools. Experience has shown that schools which were considering introducing them decided not to when they realised the commitment which would be required by the staff. Again, it is impractical to expect residents within a school street to take on the commitment as, inevitably, the burden would rest on the retired or those working from home to operate barriers, in all weathers, twice a day for 190 school days. Should residents, under the auspices of a school, wish to support a school with their travel plan in this way then the Council would clearly have no objection provided there were no reasons why such a School Street would be impracticable.

At the pilot School Street in Hayes, the consultation exercise showed that most residents of the streets just outside of the School Street itself were not in favour of the School Street continuing, with 79% being against the School Street, primarily due to the displacement of traffic and other nuisance.

2) Question from Louise Clark:

In the Review of School Streets presented to the Environment Committee on 21 June the Council stated that one of the reasons they have not remained active is that no funding has been “allocated for the considerable cost of installing and maintaining cameras.” What calculations have the Council made on the extent to which ANPR revenues could offset the cost of installation and maintenance?

Response to Question 2:

I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.

3) Question from Helen Brookfield:

School Streets are proven to reduce car journeys to school. Bromley Council's Local Implementation Plan (LIP3) agreed it would "focus initiatives to reduce the impact of air pollution... where vulnerable people may spend significant amounts of time- e.g. schools " and that a "key focus " would be to "shift switchable short local trips away from the car" stating, "it will be necessary to reduce the impact of the school run by shifting school trips from cars to other modes". If Bromley Council is not going to support School Streets then what are they going to do to reduce the number of car journeys to school?

Response to Question 3:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

4) Question from Laura Vogel:

Councillor Simon Fawthrop has asked the Portfolio Holder to list the costs of holding this additional meeting of the PDS committee. Could the Council also list the costs of not providing proper scrutiny, good governance and supporting a robust democracy on the Council?

Response to Question 4:

[The committee discussed, at some length, the matter at its meeting on June 21st. Two opposition parties have abused, in my view, the 'call in' procedure to have a second meeting on the subject by either misunderstanding or wilfully misrepresenting the amended recommendations by the PDS Committee, which I accepted in full. It has been further exacerbated by a politically motivated campaign to flood the agenda with 41 very similar questions again based on a false premise. These questions have taken up the valuable time of senior staff when they could be engaged in more productive work.](#)

[I have referred the matter to the Constitution Working Party with a view to tightening the rules on 'call ins' and on questions to meetings called to do with 'call ins'.](#)

5) Question from Laura Vogel:

Will the council state the increase in the number of cars on Bromley roads that we all endure during school run hours? What does the council propose to reduce school run traffic if it does not support school streets?

Response to Question 5:

[The Council does not hold data to show traffic volume by hour of the day.](#)

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

6) Question from Euan Pyle:

Does the council recognise that one of the best ways to reduce motor traffic is to make other forms of (more road space efficient) transport (ie cycling and walking) safer? And that School Streets actively make these modes of transport safer?

Response to Question 6:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

7) Question from John Blakely:

Please explain how the decision not to proceed with the School Streets programme will enable Bromley Council to reduce car use (currently the highest of all London Boroughs), reduce air pollution and increase road safety especially for children and vulnerable residents?

Response to Question 7:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

8) Question from Oje Egwaoje:

With the increasing number of families with young children moving into Bromley, what does the Council propose to support children travelling independently to school if they stop the roll-out of school streets?

Response to Question 8:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

9) Question from Steve Baynes:

Given the cessation of School Streets, what measure is the Council proposing to combat increases in pollution around schools? Given that childhood obesity is around 30%, ending School Streets appears to double down on harm to children, for the sake of removing minor inconveniences to drivers.

Response to Question 9:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

10) Question from Tara and Paul Kunert:

Will the council reject the recommendations of the report and instead resolve to roll-out school streets in the Borough for the benefit – improved health and wellbeing, better air quality, lower emissions – for all; in accordance with the wishes of the majority of residents, parents and children who voted in favour of the schemes; and in accordance with Bromley's stated policy of promoting active travel?

Response to Question 10:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

11) Question from Alessandro Giordo:

Bromley has the highest % of trips made by car in the whole of London at 53%, and a target within the Mayor's Transport Strategy to reduce this to 40%. Given the School Streets decision, can the Portfolio Holder now provide an indication of how this target will be reached?"

Response to Question 11:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

12)Question from Sian Stickings:

With child obesity levels rising, what specific steps will the Council take to encourage active travel to school if the roll-out of school streets is halted?

Response to Question 12:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

13)Question from Sian Stickings:

What pro-active measures is the Council taking to reduce children's exposure to health-endangering air pollution on their way to & from school?

Response to Question 13:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

14)Question from Rajeev Thacker:

A 2018 report noted the percentage of obese Bromley children doubled between first and last years of primary education. Has Bromley's Health and Wellbeing Board had sight of the school streets decision?

Response to Question 14:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

15)Question from Rajeev Thacker:

Air pollution at the school gates can lead to lifelong health implications. Has this been factored into the cost-benefit analysis of rolling out school streets in Bromley?

Response to Question 15:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

16)Question from Patricia Morgan:

What is the cost per household, say council tax Bill (Band D), of the annual running cost of each School Streets ANPR installation (Assuming the one-off set up costs are funded from reserves)? What percentage increase in council tax does this equate to?

Response to Question 16:

[This a pointless question, the Council does not hypothecate expenditure.](#)

17)Question from Patricia Morgan:

TfL serves Bromley residents who depend on the service to move around the Borough and London for work and pleasure. With the Government removing

grants to support TfL, what revenue creation ideas would the Council support instead of ULEZ charges?

Response to Question 17:

The Council receives the second lowest central government grant in London, a fifth of the highest grant, and it continues to lobby for a Fair Funding Formula to be introduced by the Government.

18) Question from Carolyn Heitmeyer:

At the Environment Committee meeting discussing the review of School Streets, the committee discussed £1m allocated to parks from Bromley's reserves. Why can Bromley Council find £1m for parks but no money to make journeys to school healthier and safer, and to give our children the chance to travel independently?

Response to Question 18:

The premise of the question is incorrect, the Council funds a wide-ranging School Travel Plan programme.

19) Question from Carolyn Heitmeyer:

The School Streets review notes that "a number of methods" were used to evaluate the temporary school streets. The review also refers to a survey of parents in Hayes. What external (i.e. from outside the borough) evidence did Bromley Council review?

Response to Question 19:

I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.

20) Question from Jen McArthur:

The decision 'Review of School Streets' (21st June), recommends that School Streets are not actively rolled out due to resource implications. Why does Bromley Council choose not to use its sound financial position for the benefit of the borough's children, since School Streets are an efficient way to reduce air pollution and road danger?

Response to Question 20:

I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.

21) Question from Jamie Devine:

The World Health Organisation (WHO) informs us that children and babies are more vulnerable to air pollutants from combustion vehicles than adults because 'They inhale more air per unit of bodyweight' and 'Their brains are still developing, and neurotoxic compounds in air pollution can affect children's cognitive development.' Why won't the Council introduce this reasonable measure (School Streets) to protect its most vulnerable residents?

Reference: <https://www.who.int/news-room/spotlight/how-air-pollution-is-destroying-our-health/children-and-air-pollution>

Response to Question 21:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

22)Question from Valerie Crowdy:

ANPR camera enforcement is used for all School Streets in Islington (where 49% of schools have School Streets), Hackney (45%) and Bromley's neighbour, Lewisham. Bromley hasn't trialled ANPR for School Streets, on the grounds of cost, but elsewhere ANPR cameras generate revenue. Will Bromley Council now trial ANPR for School Streets.?

Response to Question 22:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)

23)Question from Judith Ralphs:

I would like to ask the committee what robust evidence they have that more local residents do not want school streets rather than they support them? As a resident of Bromley can you tell me what factors they take into account and take particular heed of when balancing improved air quality, safety of children, encouragement of healthy lifestyles such as walking with the inconvenience for drivers and cost to council when looking at the impact of school streets. What data do they use for this decision? Have some sort of impact assessment been undertaken be it environmental, health or financial or a balance of all these, if so please share with the meeting?

Response to Question 23:

[I refer you to the statement I made at the meeting which is included in the reply to Anne-Marie Conneally above.](#)