



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 27 July 2011 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor J Moher (Chair), Councillor Powney (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Beswick, Jones and Long

Also present: Councillors Brown, Butt, Cheese, S Choudhary, Harrison, Hossain and HB Patel

1. Petitions

The petition received from residents and businesses of the Fleetway Business Centre requested the following;

“Many companies operating between Neasden and Staples Corner Roundabout have containers and long vehicles visiting due to its industrial environment. The traffic lights, allow safe manoeuvring of such vehicles, without posing a risk to traffic and maintaining road safety.

We request that the traffic lights are not disconnected for the benefit of both the public and surrounding businesses.”

The petition was presented by Ms Tina Cara who spoke on behalf of the local businesses in the centre. Ms Cara stated that the proposal by TfL to remove the traffic lights would make it difficult for the long vehicles to manoeuvre, resulting in poor visibility, traffic disruption and compromising road safety. She added that the argument by TfL that the signals no longer conformed with the regulations of the Department of transport and that the demand for their use was low were not shared by local residents and businesses within the Fleetway Business Centre. Ms Cara urged the committee to ask TfL not to decommission the traffic lights on the North Circular Road.

RESOLVED:

that the petition against the removal of traffic signals on the North Circular Road be noted.

2. Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests

None.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 March 2011**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 March 2011 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. **Matters arising (if any)**

None.

5. **Deputations (if any)**

None.

6. **Response to petition against the removal of traffic signals on the North circular Road**

Members considered a report that informed them about a petition entitled “North Circular Road – Push Button Signal Removal” and outlined officer’s investigations into the matter. The report also described the dialogue between officers and Transport for London (TfL) which had the responsibility for the North Circular Road (NCR) including the operation of the traffic signals.

Tim Jackson, Head of Transportation in setting the background to the decision by TfL informed members that the A406 North Circular Road (NCR) was a red route highway that formed part of Transport for London’s Road Network (TLRN). TfL were the Highway Authority for the road and operated all traffic signals across London and whilst the Council could raise concerns about parts of NCR, it could not take any direct action regarding it. He understood that TfL’s decision was in response to the Mayor of London’s Transport Strategy and direction to look at ways of smoothing traffic flow which would mean less stop-start traffic movement, more predictable journey times and fewer obstacles for pedestrians. The traffic signal in question was one of one hundred and forty five (1 of 145) signals identified across London to be removed on the grounds that the demand for it was low and that it did not conform to the Department of Transport regulations. He reported that works to permanently remove the traffic signal had been suspended pending the outcome of this meeting and updated members on the results of officers’ observations following the petition and the dialogue with TfL on the decommissioning of the traffic lights.

Tim Jackson added that although TfL recognised the concerns expressed by the businesses it appeared they were unwilling to change their decision to remove the signals for reasons that he had amplified above. In view of that he did not consider desirable, further involvement of officers’ time and resources.

Whilst acknowledging that TfL were unlikely to change their minds, Councillor Long requested that safety audit into the proposal be carried out in the winter months when the days were shorter. In addition she requested that TfL be asked to indicate their plans for the North Circular Road/Brentfield Road junction where there could be opportunities to smooth traffic flows. The recommendations in the report were then agreed subject to the comments made by Councillor Long.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the contents of the petition and the issues raised be noted;
- (ii) that the course of action taken by officers in relation to the issue be noted;
- (iii) that having given consideration to the petition and the action taken by officers, the Head of Transportation be instructed to request TfL to undertake a safety audit in the winter months and to also request their future plans for the junction of NCR and Brentfield Road.

7. Response to petition against the proposed increase in residents parking charges

The petition received from Brent Liberal Democratic Group stated as follows;

“As a local resident I oppose the plans by the Labour Executive at Brent Council to increase residents Parking Permit charges by an excessive amount. CPZ’s exist to protect local residents and NOT make money out of us”.

The petition was presented by Councillor Lorber (Group Leader) who stated that that the Executive took a decision to introduce the changes subject to consultation and delegated authority to officers for a final decision. He continued that the decision should have been called in for scrutiny and whilst being scrutinised, the decision could not be implemented. He added that controlled parking schemes (CPZ) were introduced as self-funding schemes aimed at protecting local residents from unauthorised parking in their areas. However, they had now become money making schemes as the Council frequently sought to increase the charges. Councillor Lorber concluded that the substantial increase in charges proposed was not supported by local residents as it undermined democratic process.

The report from the Head of Transportation advised the Committee of a petition from residents from across the Borough which opposed proposals to introduce a vehicle emission-based scheme of charges. The report outlined the arrangements that were made for considering representations to the proposals and confirmed that the petition was properly considered before a decision was made. Tim Jackson, Head of Transportation, informed the Committee that after due consideration of all representations received, the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods implemented the decision of the Executive. He added that the Director of Legal and Procurement did not consider the decision to be ultra vires.

In bringing the matter to a close, Councillor Powney, Vice-Chair pointed out that the decision which was made by the Executive in August 2010 was not called in for scrutiny.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the contents of the petition and the issues raised be noted;
- (ii) that the response of officers, to the petition, as set out in the report be noted;

- (iii) that the main petitioner should be advised of the Committees' consideration of this matter.

8. Proposals to introduce pay and display parking controls in Preston Road & Bridge Road

The Committee considered a report that outlined the representations received in relation to the consultation, including statutory consultation associated with the Traffic Order process. In setting the background to the proposals, Tim Jackson, Head of Transportation stated that the report had its origins in a report in December 2010 on fees and charges considered by the Executive Committee that agreed the proposals to "review anomalies for charging for on-street parking spaces on Bridge Road (Wembley), Preston Road and on the Park Royal Industrial Estate". He reminded the Committee that, at their meeting in March 2011 they delegated authority to the Head of Transportation to implement pay and display parking controls at identified sites subject to appropriate consultation arrangements being followed and the identification of funding for implementation. He advised that the report was being presented now because of the significant number of objections to the proposals for Bridge Road and Preston Road.

Tim Jackson drew members' attention to the following pertinent issues:

- (i) They (free short term bays) represented an inconsistency since motorists parking in those bays escaped charges whilst those who parked at similar locations elsewhere in the Borough (outside and within CPZs) were charged.
- (ii) The inconsistency was contrary to the Council's general policy of encouraging the use of more sustainable transport modes and discouraging non-essential car journeys
- (iii) Enforcement of free short term parking for one hour maximum stay was resource intensive and hence undermined the concept of free parking.

To overcome the above issues, proposals introducing pay and display controls in both Preston Road and Bridge Road and side roads where free short term parking bays exist were developed. If introduced, motorists would have to pay to park in these bays from Monday to Saturday between 8am and 6.30pm in Preston Road and side roads and from Monday to Saturday between 9.30am and 4.30pm in Bridge Road and side road. He continued that the officers' responses as set out in his report had carefully analysed the objections and representations to the proposals.

Tim Jackson recommended the Committee to approve implementation of the proposals at both locations. He added that the responses to the consultation identified that an opportunity existed to encourage the use of the Preston Road car park in a way that would not be contrary to the Council's wider strategy on sustainable transport use. In addition, the responses addressed a number of concerns in relation to the vitality and viability of Preston Road as a local centre.

He also recommended that officers work with representatives of the local community on measures to increase awareness and use of the car park and to explore opportunities to adopt a pilot charging regime for the car park that could further support activity in Preston Road and could be considered for introduction in all town centre car parks.

Mr Bill Kemp, Chair of Preston Amenities protection Association (PAPA) stated that the proposal to introduce pay and display as set out in the report would have an adverse impact on local businesses and employment. He added that the present arrangement that allowed free 1 hour parking encouraged motorists to stop and shop, thus adding to the vitality of the area. He urged members to reject the proposals to introduce pay and display in the Preston Road area.

Councillor HB Patel on behalf of Brent North Conservative Association in challenging the three reasons put forward to justify the introduction of pay and display in the Preston Road and Bridge Road areas stated that there were no inconsistencies in the current arrangement which worked perfectly in those areas. He added that the answer to the issue of resource requirement was the recruitment of traffic wardens for enforcement. Councillor HB Patel continued that there was a clear and overwhelming rejection to the proposals by residents and businesses as the scheme was revenue driven and would cause parking displacement. He urged the Committee to reject the proposals.

Mr Robert Dunwell speaking on behalf of QARA submitted that the issues raised as a result of the consultation and the resulting petition which contained in excess of 2,700 signatures had not been fully addressed in the report. He urged the Committee to retain the existing arrangement and not to agree the proposal to introduce pay and display in the Preston Road and Bridge Road as the scheme would be detrimental to the regeneration of Brent.

Mr Stephen Dennison representing Wembley Park Traders' Association submitted that the proposal would adversely impact on traders and local residents. He added that there was no evidence to support the claims that the proposal would encourage sustainable transport and resource intensiveness for enforcement of the present arrangement. He continued that the proposal for pay and display failed to consider the impact on businesses in the areas and that its implementation should be considered only after a full consultation. In urging members to reject the proposal, Mr Dennison questioned the consultation process and added that the proposal would contravene the Government's Localism Bill and adversely affect the traders.

Mr Simon Gurevitz in objection to the proposal expressed a view that it would constitute indirect discrimination and adversely impact on the predominantly Jewish population in the Preston Road area whilst they attended the local synagogue and the Learning Tree Centre. He did not think that adequate consultation, full assessment of the diversity impact and the financial implications of the proposed pay and display had been undertaken. Mr Gurevitz did not accept the claim that the current arrangement was resource intensive and urged members to reject the proposed pay and display.

Mr Michael Maurice, a local resident expressed his concerns about the effect that the removal of the free parking bays on Preston Road would have on the local community. He added that within the current economic climate, the shopkeepers

who provided good, friendly services were struggling to keep their businesses viable. He continued that as Preston Road was equidistant from two local supermarkets namely Asda (Wembley Park) and Sainsbury's (Kenton) both of which provided free parking, the proposed pay and display would drive customers away from the Preston Road area to the supermarkets with the resultant loss of local business, employment and revenue (business rates) to the Council.

Mr Maurice added that instead of standardising parking arrangements, the Council should modify its policies to suit local needs and consider the Preston Road area as a secondary shopping parade that required locally suitable parking arrangements. He suggested to the Committee to consider schemes similar to those available in neighbouring boroughs which allowed free parking for up to one hour followed by pay and display, if they were parking for a longer period. For the above reasons, Mr Maurice urged members to re-consider the proposal for pay and display in the Preston Road area.

Mr Prakash Raja speaking in a similar vein added that the proposal would have an adverse impact on the local businesses which were already operating on tight margins. He expressed doubts on the financial implications of the proposal.

Councillor Shafique Choudhary, member for Barnhill ward stated that the retention of the present arrangement for free parking was essential to the viability of the local businesses. He added that the proposal would adversely impact on businesses in the Preston Road and Bridge Road areas. Councillor Choudhary urged members to reject the proposals.

Councillor Harrison, member for Preston ward expressed her concerns about the reasons put forward to support the proposed pay and display in the Preston Road and Bridge Road areas. She expressed doubts about measures to encourage motorists to use the car park in Preston Road. Councillor Harrison considered that the proposal would drive potential customers away from the Preston Road area to Asda (Wembley Park) and Sainsbury's (Kenton) both of which provided free parking to their customers, with serious consequences for the local shops.

Councillor Hossain, Preston ward echoed the sentiments expressed by Councillor Harrison and emphasised the potential serious adverse impact on the local shops.

During members' discussion, Councillors Jones and Beswick asked the Head of Transportation to comment on the views expressed by the objectors to the proposal. Councillor Powney asked the officer to comment on the financial models and whether Preston Road was being treated differently from other shopping centres within the Borough.

In response, the Head of Transportation stated that the Council had a policy of charging uniform rates for parking in pay and display bays throughout the Borough regardless of whether the bays were inside or outside of CPZs. He continued that the consultation process that took place in June 2011 was consistent with the arrangements approved by the Highways Committee and drew members' attention to the responses received from residents and businesses. He advised members that an equality impact assessment had been made and set out in full in the report.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that, having given proper consideration of the matters raised by way of objections and representations summarised in Section 6 and Appendices 2 and 3 and discussed in detail within the report from the Head of Transportation, and in the context of the policy and other reasons set out in the report and the Equality Analysis, approval be given to the introduction of schemes of pay and display parking in Preston Road and Bridge Road (and adjacent side roads), as described in the report;
- (ii) that the proposal to undertake a review of the operation of the scheme(s) no later than 12 months after their implementation and present the outcomes of that review to the Committee upon completion of that review Committee be noted;
- (iii) that the Head of Transportation be instructed to give priority to working with the lead member, ward members, and others representing local residents and businesses, to (i) identifying and introducing measures to improve awareness and use of the Preston Road car park and (ii) to explore opportunities to pilot a charging regime in that car park that would further increase use of the car park and the vitality of businesses in Preston Road and could be considered for introduction in all town centre car parks.

9. Local Implementation Plan (LIP) 2011-14

Members received a report from the Head of Transportation which summarised the background and content of the LIP as amended following the consultation on the draft and sought Committee approval to submit the final LIP to Transport for London (TfL). In introducing the report, Adrian Pigott (Policy Manager) informed members that the draft LIP adhered to the TfL guidance and was informed by Brent's Corporate Strategy and local and sub-regional transport needs and priorities. The approved draft LIP and its' accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) went out for consultation with the public, partners and TfL in order that a final LIP could subsequently be approved and submitted to TfL in accordance with their requirements.

The Policy Manager referred to the respective sections of the LIP together with comments and resulting amendments made as set out in the report. The LIP thus reflected the outcome of the consultation process and TfL's comments. He assured members that officers had been in frequent communication with TfL throughout 2011 to ensure that the final LIP was robust and were confident about its approval by the London Mayor's office, if submitted in its' current form.

He continued that once approved by TfL/The Mayor, the LIP would become a statutory document spanning the period 2011-2014 and would provide the framework against which TfL would allocate funding to the Council through the LIP process. Members noted that the submission of a LIP that can be approved by TfL would enable the Council to meet its legal obligations at the same time as enabling it to maximise opportunities for inward investment in Brent's infrastructure from TfL and others.

Mr Robert Dunwell in addressing the Committee enquired as whether the transport impact had been addressed in detail and also whether approval of LIP by the Mayor of London and TfL would guarantee funding for A5 Edgware Road and Kilburn High Road improvements.

In responding to the above, the Policy Manager drew members' attention to the appendix to the report that set out Brent Council's in-principle support for the regeneration of the Brent Cross area and highlighted the concerns about the potential transport impact.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) that the work undertaken to communicate the Local (Transport) Implementation Plan process with stakeholders, statutory consultees and the wider community and to engage people in contributing to the final document be noted;
- (ii) that the requirement to prepare and consult on a Local (Transport) Implementation Plan and to submit an approved Plan to Transport for London by the end of July 2011 be noted;
- (iii) that the submission of the final Local (Transport) Implementation Plan to Transport for London (TfL), as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

10. Harlesden Town Centre Major Schemes

Members received a report from the Head of Transportation which informed them of the current progress on the Harlesden Town Centre "Major Scheme". The scheme was Transport for London's (TfL) funding regime which would provide an opportunity for the Council to develop and implement schemes aimed at improving the operation, appearance, vibrancy and vitality of those town centres.

The Head of Transportation informed members that the Harlesden Town Centre Project, anticipated to be funded primarily from TfL, would improve Harlesden Town Centre by making changes to the traffic and parking arrangements so as to reduce congestion and improve road safety. In addition, the project would increase pedestrian space and improve the quality and layout of the public space (road surface, footways, street furniture etc.). He also drew members' attention to the following key elements of the Station Road Project: increased pavement widths, new high quality paving and street furniture, a new Zebra Crossing, the relocation of the gated road closure on Honeywood Road to create an enlarged pedestrian space and the planting of 18 new trees. It was anticipated that these changes would improve the "look and feel" of Harlesden and contribute to improving its vitality and sustainability as a local town centre.

Members noted that funding had been secured from TfL to implement improvements to Station Road, as a precursor to the main town centre scheme, during the current (2011/12) financial year. It was also noted that a "one off" allocation made by TfL of £340,000 through the Major Scheme's Programme would

predominantly fund the Station Road scheme and would be partly match funded with £90,000 of developer (Section 106) contributions. Tim Jackson continued that public consultation on the scheme which would include a dedicated website (www.brent.gov.uk/harlesdentown), promotion in Brent Magazine and on-street advertising to enhance awareness, would take place during November 2011.

Members welcomed the report in particular the key elements of the project. Councillor Long noted that illegal pavement trading was still taking place in parts of Harlesden Town Centre and called for increased enforcement in order to regularise the use of the pavement and realise the full benefits of the scheme.

RESOLVED:-

that the report on Harlesden Town Centre Major Scheme be noted.

11. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 18 October 2011.

12. Any Other Urgent Business

None at this meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

J MOHER
Chair