

Answers to Questions on The Public Realm, in committee RPRSC 14 July 2020

Q1. How does Brent work with local businesses to ensure that local town centres are welcoming and thrive? Has the Business Improvement District -BID model been considered? NB most other London LAs have a BID.

The Economic Development team works closely with local businesses in town centres. The small team includes four town centre managers who work specifically on the priority town centres. The business team sends out weekly newsletters to over 7,000 subscribers, runs a programme of events including the 'Meet the Buyer' to support local supply chains; they also facilitate the Brent Business Board. A dedicated brentforbusiness email address is there for businesses to contact the team (responses within 24 hours). Since the start of the pandemic officers have responded to hundreds of requests for advice and support. The team have also been working closely with colleagues in Highways and Licensing on various measures to safely open up the High Streets.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are business led partnerships (rather than local authority led) which are created through a ballot process to deliver additional services to local businesses. A BID is a defined area in which a levy is charged on all business rate payers in addition to the business rates bill. This levy is used to develop projects which will benefit businesses in the local area.

In London they tend to be more prevalent in inner London Boroughs than outer. There are currently no BIDs in Brent. One was established in Park Royal in 2011 but was disbanded soon after by its members. More recently the Park Royal Business Group was established, supported by West London Business (membership organisation covering the West London region of 7 local authorities) and with additional capacity now funded by the OPDC. Membership is over 200 with an aim to reach over 1000 (there are circa 1800 businesses in Park Royal).

In 2017 some feasibility work was done on BIDs, particularly considering the Wembley area's capacity and appetite for one. At the time of the study the business associations were not established or mature enough to establish a BID. The Wembley High Road Business Association is now well developed and considering the benefits of a BID, which if pursued will be a process that will be owned and led by the businesses themselves.

With support from the Town Centre Managers other business associations have been established eg in Ealing Road, Sudbury, Cricklewood, Church End, Neasden, Harlesden, and Kilburn, but need to be more mature in their development before considering a BID that will require business rates contributions, shared objectives, and clear governance to oversee finance and decision making. The Economic Development team will continue to work with these business associations to support the viability of their areas and to develop BIDs if appropriate.

Q2. What are the financial implications resulting from Covid 19 – need to ensure social distance and maximise opportunities for active travel?

The Draft Brent Covid19 Transport Recovery Plan identifies a range of transport improvements that are aimed at supporting safe social distancing and safe travel during the pandemic, whilst also supporting our ambitions for improving road safety, air quality and the health of our residents in the longer-term. The estimated cost of implementing the various measures in the plan was estimated at £1,673,750.

The Council's principal source of funding for the delivery of transport improvements in the borough is the LIP funding allocation from TfL, which comprises a range of formula, discretionary and strategic funding sources. In 2019/20 this totalled circa £2.3m and there was an additional c £0.9m for Bus priority measures. However, owing to the severe funding pressures TfL is currently experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, this funding stream is not currently available. In May 2020 TfL secured £45m emergency funding from the Department for Transport to allocate to boroughs to enable them to deliver high priority transport/ highways improvements as part of their Streetspace programme and the Council has submitted bids on 12th and 19th June totalling circa £1.35m through this programme for implementation by the end of September which included;

- £125,000 for installing a temporary cycle lanes on the Harrow Road (the Triangle to the A406)
- £406,000 for footway widening/town centre measures at 19 locations, includes temporary kerbs and asphalt footways for bus boarders;
- £495,000 for introducing 13 low traffic (liveable) neighbourhoods (includes 2 cycle hangars per LTN);
- £187,000 for implementing 33 school streets;
- £56,000 for implementing bus priority measures;
- £45,000 for delivering a range of cycling 'quick win' measures, 18 schemes;
- £40,000 for reviewing waiting and loading restrictions/disabled parking provision.

TfL have considered applications from boroughs for well over 1,000 schemes worth more than £99m. £30.1m was made available and this has been allocated to boroughs to deliver 859 projects with circa £13.2m for committed costs. Circa £1.5m has been retained for the exploration of some key projects on borough owned central London corridors to connect main line termini to significant attractor areas. TfL have reported that they have a large amount of schemes bid for which they have scored positively, but for which there is simply no budget.

Brent have received funding of £663,976, subject to TfL design approvals, to progress 43 schemes; the Harrow Road cycle lane (£125,000), 33 school streets (£187,000), 9 LTN's (£351, 976). Further funding is likely to be available from October 2020, this will depend on the outcome of negotiations between TfL and the DfT. The team are continuing to develop these schemes and others that were bid for so that they can form part of any future application and be delivered expeditiously should further funding from TfL be made available.

In addition, the Council has recently been awarded £100,000 through Tranche 1 of the DfT's Emergency Active Travel Fund and will be eligible to bid for funding through Tranche 2 later this year. We have also been awarded £295,907 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHLG) as part of its £50m Reopening High Streets Safely Fund. Officers are developing plans for measures to support the economic recovery of priority town centres, to include; social distancing communications, health and safety training for businesses, signage and public realm improvements to provide more space. This funding can be used for temporarily widening the pavement at 15 locations by bus stops in our town centre, which will be delivered within the next few weeks..

We are also exploring the use of developer contributions as part of existing S106 agreements to deliver cycling and walking infrastructure and remove barriers to cycling and walking. The COVID-19 Transport Recovery Plan / Active travel programme is designed to be flexible and will be reviewed to address emerging issues as restrictions are eased.

Objective	Category	Target	Base Year	Target Year
Increase the uptake of sustainable modes, in particular active modes	Cycling	Increase mode share to 3% from 1%	2013	2021
		Increase the number of cyclists from currently underrepresented groups by 200 by 2021 as indicated by the London Travel Demand Survey	2014	2021
		Increase the number of cycle parking spaces by 1000 by 2021	2014	2021
		Increase number of adults accessing cycle training by 50 adults per year up to 2021	2014	2021
		Increase the number of children accessing cycle training by 50 children per year up to 2021	2014	2021
	Walking	90% of schools having an active travel plan by 2020 of which 30% are gold	2015	2025
		93% of schools having an active travel plan by 2025 of which 30% are gold		
		5% increase in pedestrian mode share	2015	2030
	Public Transport	30% mode share for private vehicles	2013	2030
	Reduce conventional vehicular trips on the network, particularly at peak times	Car Clubs	20% increase in car club vehicles available to residents	2015

Q3. Please could you highlight measurable targets Brent has adopted to demonstrate success in improving use of active travel and reducing car use ?

The Council has adopted a number of targets to improve use of active travel and reduce car use. These include:

Brent Third Local Implementation Plan (LIP3): 2019 - 2041

- To increase mode share of trips in Brent made by active, sustainable modes (public transport, cycling, walking) from 62% (2013/14 – 2015/16 baseline) to 78% by 2041.
- To increase the proportion of London residents doing at least 2x10 minutes of active travel a day from 30% (2014/15 – 2016/17 baseline) to 70% by 2041.
- To reduce overall traffic levels by 10-15% from 854m vehicle kms/year (2015 baseline) to 811m vehicle kms/year by 2041.
- To reduce car ownership from 101,247 (2016 baseline) to 91,300 by 2041

Brent Long-Term Transport Strategy 2015-2035

Q4. What engagement has there been with the local NHS and Public Health re using the updated travel strategy to maximise opportunities for physical exercise, and to limit pollution ?

The COVID-19 Transport Recovery Plan sets out the approach for communication and engagement in delivering the Brent Active Travel programme. Officers are also developing a Community Engagement and Publicity for the delivery of the Brent Active Travel programme. This will include a review of the information on our website and making improvements to promote active travel, responding to the climate emergency and improving air quality in the borough.

Officers in the department continue to engage with our Public Health team to explore opportunities to make information on the benefits of active travel available through the NHS locally as well as through GPs surgeries.

Q5. Please could you provide a brief summary of what the council has done to the physical public realm of Brent to adapt to the “new normal” in the wake of the COVID19 public health crisis, eg distancing in parks, widening pavements etc.

Officers in Community Protection, Environment Enforcement and Regulatory Services have been working closer together to support the education and enforcement of COVID19 restrictions. Hot spots have been identified using CCTV, reports of social distancing issues and intelligence from officers including Neighbourhood and Town Centre managers. Days of action working in partnership with the police and other external partners have already and continue to take place, targeting areas where there are frequent reports of social distancing issues, particularly in Harlesden, Wembley, Kilburn and Kingsbury town centres.

To enable social distancing, the Council have provided temporary footway widening at 19 locations in the borough, including our priority town centres, using temporary barriers and providing COVID-19 Social distancing signage. Lamp column banners have also been provided at priority locations. We have plans to provide temporary kerbs and asphalt footway extensions at 15 locations where there are bus stops to enable level access. This work should take place in the coming weeks.

Officers have also engaged with schools to support their plans to fully reopen and enable safe social distancing. The initial focus was to contact our 65 primary schools, we provided information on the support that can be provided through the Headteachers weekly bulletin. Measures have included using temporary barriers to widen pavements near entrances and provide social distancing signage and pavement markings at entrances, typically on school keep clear markings. Social distancing banners have been delivered to 101 schools, pavement widening has been provided at 6 schools, markings have been provided at 40

schools, and 33 emergency school street locations have also been identified for implementation before September.

In parks, we have undertaken joint patrols and days of action with the police to oversee social distancing compliance and applied signage at strategic points such as narrow entrances. There have been no changes to the physical infrastructure but gyms and play areas have remained closed throughout the lockdown period.

Q6. Please provide an overview understanding of these steps, and how these have worked, and what have been the benefits and if they will stay for the longer term.

Officers continue to monitor locations where footway widening has taken place and make amendments as necessary.

The Council recently launched the Commonplace platform to make it easier for residents to identify problem areas and request interventions in the borough.

Officers will consider these requests and develop plans to address emerging issues, an example is the recent temporary closure of St Johns road junction on Wembley High Road due to queuing outside Primark near a bus stop and Barclays bank.

Where pavements have been widened using temporary barriers or temporary asphalt, it is envisaged that generally they will be removed when the risk reduces. However, there may be some locations where permanent widening would be beneficial and this can be considered subject to funding availability.