

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 6 July 2022 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH.

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Wingfield (Chair)
Councillor Irina Von Wiese (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Suzanne Abachor
Councillor Victor Chamberlain
Councillor Ellie Cumbo
Councillor Jon Hartley
Councillor Esme Hicks (Reserve)
Councillor Laura Johnson
Councillor Margy Newens
Councillor Jason Ochere
Councillor Leo Pollak
Marcin Jagodzinski (co-opted member)

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Catherine Rose, Cabinet Member for Parks, Streets and Clean Air
Councillor Sandra Rhule

OFFICER SUPPORT: Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny
Allan Wells, Specialist Governance Lawyer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sunny Lambe, and co-opted members Martin Brecknell, Mannah Kargbo and Lynette Murphy-O'Dwyer.

Apologies for lateness were received from Marcin Jagodzinski, co-opted member.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

The chair agreed to accept the following late item of business:

Item 7 – Central London Bus Review.

At this juncture Councillor Victor Chamberlain put forward a motion expressing disappointment that the Mayor for London who had been invited to the meeting to answer questions in relation to the proposals contained in the Central London Bus Review did not attend. The motion was put to the vote and declared lost.

Councillor Jason Ochere, put forward an alternative motion expressing gratitude that TfL had taken time out of their busy schedules on behalf of the Mayor for London to attend the meeting to answer questions of the committee. The motion was put to the vote and declared carried.

RESOLVED:

That the overview and scrutiny committee expresses gratitude to TfL for attending the meeting on behalf of the Mayor for London to answer questions of the committee.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 2 March and 21 May 2022 be approved as correct records.

5. NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

This item was deferred as the Chief Executive was unwell and therefore unable to attend.

Scrutiny Improvement Review

At this juncture the Chair reported that the council had approached the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to undertake a scrutiny improvement review of the council's scrutiny function. The chair advised that an informal meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee would be arranged to discuss ways of working going forward, which would complement the scrutiny improvement review.

6. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMMES 2022-23

The chair and vice-chair of overview and scrutiny committee and the commission chairs went through the proposed initial work programme areas for overview and scrutiny committee and the scrutiny commissions. Other committee members also provided comment on the proposed work programmes. Following discussion the committee agreed the initial work programmes for overview and scrutiny committee and the commissions for the 2022-23 year.

RESOLVED:

1. That the initial overview and scrutiny committee and scrutiny commission work programmes for 2022-23 be as follows:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Annual Budget Setting Process
- Housing Revenue Account
- Climate Emergency Fund (from a budget perspective)
- Council Performance Quarterly monitoring
- Digital strategy & customer access
- Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion framework
- Annual Workforce Strategy
- Regeneration – operations such as on the Old Kent Road, viability benchmarking, etc.
- Cost of Living Emergency
- Central London Bus Review
- Support for Southwark's LGBTQ+ communities

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

- Falling school roles
- Impact on business in the face of the cost of living crisis

Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission

- Housing Repairs
- Safer Neighbourhood Teams
- LGBTQ+ Hate Crime and Phobia
- Empty Homes
- Cost of living Crisis and support to residents
- Engagement Structures - particularly around support to TMOs and support for new TMOs, and how the council engages with housing associations.

Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission

- GP Surgeries Appointments
- Integrated Care Systems - Implementation
- NHS Workforce Scrutiny Review, (continuation from previous year's scrutiny review).

Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission

- Climate Finance
 - Sustainable Freight
 - Planning regulations (how they might restrict the ease with which residents can make carbon saving around their homes)
 - Community Engagement (tbc)
2. That the environment and community engagement scrutiny commission request a progress update on previous scrutiny recommendations in respect of Air Pollution and Air Quality.
 3. That in respect of the Climate Emergency, overview and scrutiny committee request a quarterly update on how the council is doing against the smart targets, and that the relevant cabinet member be invited to the next meeting to provide an update on this.

7. CENTRAL LONDON BUS REVIEW

The committee heard from Transport for London representatives, Charles Baker, Bus Network Development Manager, Claire Alleguen, Community Partnership Specialist, and Ramel Hamilton, Transport Planner.

The committee also heard from Councillor Catherine Rose, Cabinet Member for Parks, Streets and Clean Air, and Dale Foden, Head of Highways.

Charles Baker gave a presentation on the proposed restructuring of the Central London bus network, setting out the background and context, the approach taken by TfL, practicalities around consultation, and proposals relevant to Southwark.

Mr Baker highlighted the following in his presentation:

Context of demand and finances

- Demand for bus usage in Inner and Outer London for the period 2013/14 to 2022/23 which showed that there had been a fall in traffic overall (stronger in Central and Inner London). The three main reasons behind this were 1) The capacity of the rail network over that time had change, making rail network travel more attractive, 2) the role of walking and cycling had particularly changed in Central London, 3) overall on the bus network, bus

speeds had fallen over that time making bus travel less attractive.

- Bus network traffic was now in the region of 85%, compared to pre-pandemic levels.
- Reduction in trip rates associated with work (commuter travel) has affected travel in Central London more than Outer London.
- The publishing of Transport for London's Financial Sustainability Plan in January 2021, required as part of the governments interim funding arrangements. This document signalled a 4% reduction in the overall size of the bus network as a proportionate response to the circumstances (less demand and tighter finances), and that the reduction would fall more heavily in Central London for the reasons highlighted in the presentation.

Approach of the TfL Planning team over the last few months

- Monitoring of capacity and demand on routes entering Central London (49 monitoring points). This approach identified points considered to have spare capacity and where changes could possibly be made on the bus network.
- Proposals have been designed in light of the demand trends seen prior to the Covid 19 Pandemic.
- The proposals provide capacity to meet pre-pandemic levels of demand and are therefore considered robust in terms of the further recovery that might be seen over the coming months.
- Proposed changes are to Central London Bus Network, which is generally high frequency, and on most corridors there were multiple routes, so where changes are made, including the withdrawal of routes, there would still remain a high frequency network with multiple routes on each corridor. It was stressed that there would be a few exceptions.
- It would mean longer waiting times due to there being fewer buses on those corridors, and journeys which were possible by a direct bus could in future require an interchange to complete journeys. It was recognised that this would be harder for some people more than for others.
- Interchange was going to be one of the biggest impacts on people using the network and TfL have tried to mitigate this as much as possible through the design of the proposals.
- 16 routes withdrawn and 45 routes changed. The changes were made to mitigate the route withdrawals as much as possible.

- Where route links are broken, same bus stop interchange is provided (but not in all cases).

Consultation process

- Feedback through consultation on the proposals, genuinely valued by TfL and will inform subsequent decision making.
- Response so far has been unprecedented in terms of scale and consultation deadline has been extended.
- Will take time to process, absorb and understand the feedback so unlikely that TfL will respond to the consultation until mid/late autumn. Need to therefore consider timing of coming back to overview and scrutiny committee around this process.
- TfL looking to hear from individuals/groups beyond the usual people who respond to these types of consultations and seeking suggestions about particular groups or communities to involve or speak to directly.

Charles Baker highlighted proposals that were likely to affect Southwark most (see presentation slides for visual representation). These were:

Coldharbour Lane Neighbourhood

- Route 45 is withdrawn where capacity is not needed on Walworth Road.
- Route 59 is rerouted at the South Circular along Streatham Place to Clapham Park to replace that section of route 45.

London Bridge and Tower Bridge Neighbourhood

- Route 43 is withdrawn between London Bridge and Moorgate and extended to Liverpool Street station.
- Route 47 is withdrawn between Shoreditch and London Bridge.
- Route 78 is withdrawn.
- Route 388 is extended from London Bridge to Peckham bus station via Tooley Street and the route 78 routeing to maintain links on routes 47 and 78.
- Route 343 is withdrawn between Aldgate and Tower Gateway and route 15 is re-routed at Aldgate to improve interchange.

Walworth Road Neighbourhood

- Route 12 is withdrawn.
- Route 148 is extended from Camberwell Green to Dulwich Library to replace route 12 connections on that section. It is also cut back to Shepherd's Bush from White City to maintain reliable operation.
- For destinations north of Parliament Square previously served by route 12, there is same stop interchange on Westminster Bridge between the extended route 148 and routes 159 and 453.

Waterloo Neighbourhood

- Route 521 is withdrawn, with changes to the 59 and 133 replacing some important links.
- Route 59 is rerouted at Holborn Station to run via High Holborn and Newgate Street to terminate at St Pauls Station, near the rear entrance to St Bartholomew's Hospital.
- Route 133 is rerouted at Monument to run via King William Street, Cheapside, and Newgate Street to terminate at St Bartholomew's Hospital.
- Route 53 is cut back (where capacity is no longer required) from County Hall to Elephant and Castle, Lambeth Road. Route 171 stand at Elephant and Castle is moved from Lambeth Road to Gaunt Street, to allow the 53 to use the Lambeth Road stand.

At the end of the presentation, questions, discussion and comment took place along the following lines:

- Figures presented, not reflecting latest data.
- Borough overly reliant on bus network, less access to tubes and trains compared to some other boroughs.
- Bus network used to access healthcare facilities – five hospitals will be impacted by bus network reduction.
- Disproportionate impact of proposed bus reductions on Southwark.
- Impact on economic recovery and recovery more generally from Covid.
- Impact on tackling climate emergency.
- Night bus reduction, interchange changes and waiting times will impact on most vulnerable and poorest residents, women, LGBTQ+ communities and residents with poor mobility.
- Query over whether other types of transport provision available in the borough had been taken into account when considering reorganisation of bus network provision.

- Consideration given to small improvements that can be made to current routes in light of review of bus network (expanding route 63 so that it joins up with Honor Oak Park Station cited as an example).
- Why not 4% reduction across the board.
- Impact of route changes on accessibility to hospitals, particularly in light of parking charges and accessibility problems. Request for consideration of an impact assessment on access for local residents in Southwark to hospitals.
- Suggested groups to speak to: Southwark Pensioners Action Group, Southwark Youth Parliament, Schools with larger catchment areas,
- Feeling of lack of equitable approach to overall Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTAL) – interplay of different modes of transport should be included in consultation materials TfL bring forward.
- Equality Impact Assessment - Lack of granularity around income levels of people who use buses and modal shift.
- How bus usage is monitored across route corridors.
- Impact of interchange and withdrawal of night buses (N12 cited as example) – concerns around passenger safety, particularly for women and people with disabilities.
- Whether distinction made by TfL between commuter journeys and more localised journeys, particularly in relation to prediction of future demand for localised journey.
- Impact bus reductions will have on car use and policy objective to reduce people's dependency on cars.
- Suggestion that TfL work with all non-catchment schools on what more can be done to get people travelling by bus, and routes to be considered in light of that demand (Dulwich area cited as example).
- The degree to which the advent of services such as Uber has been taken into account as a reason for reduction in passenger usage. Bus reductions will increase usage of mini cab type services, which will see increase in cars on streets.
- Financial sustainability Plan – the degree to which this is being driven by conditions that central government placed on the financial settlement with TfL.
- Whether there was scope to extend the consultation further.

Following the discussion, the committee heard from Councillor Catherine Rose, Cabinet Member for Parks Streets and Clean Air.

Councillor Rose informed the committee that there was ongoing conversation and dialogue between the council, and TfL and London Councils in relation to this issue throughout the consultation period and would continue whilst the consideration of the responses is underway.

In relation to work being done corporately as a council, Councillor Rose advised that there was an ongoing piece of analysis. The proposals were being put through the council's equity framework that was used in relation to the development of the Council's Movement Plan. A campaign had also been

launched to assist with the understanding of the engagement process, the impact on a neighbourhood basis that is more relevant to residents locally, allowing them to be informed ahead of engaging with TfL process. The council was also encouraging people to email TfL directly and to copy in local ward councillors and MPs.

The council was also engaging with third party agencies and organisations in the borough and was also looking to engage with major employer groups and small business groups, the education sector and the NHS, and picking up representatives from those communities that the council had concern around, and people with particular protected characteristics in relation to this issue.

Councillor Rose acknowledged that TfL would never have wanted to be engaging in a process that saw a contraction of public transport provision in London, having to do so in order to fulfil funding conditions placed on them by the government.

Councillor Rose highlighted in the context of the climate emergency, and other aspirations around cleaner, greener, safer streets, that the discussion should be around strategies to encourage and expand usage and ridership first and foremost. Councillor Rose mentioned that it had been reported that bus ridership levels in Manchester had returned to pre Covid Pandemic levels, and that Berlin had introduced a nine euro monthly public transport pass which had seen an automatic uplift of at least 10% in terms of increase in usage of public transport. It was this type of direction she wished TfL were discussing and consulting on.

Councillor Rose highlighted that the council was working with TfL on bus lane prioritisation and relieving congestion across the borough. Councillor Rose felt that a conversation around an overall 4% reduction to bus services to accommodate the contraction in central London was regressive and stressed that there was a disproportionate negative impact on residents in communities that could least withstand it. Councillor Rose also felt that the mitigation proposals did not adequately reflect the conditions as lived on the ground or reflect the requirements and needs of people with protected characteristics that use the buses.

Councillor Rose highlighted challenges around interchange, and access to rail in the borough and stressed that for many people the bus was the only accessible form of transport into central London and for the opportunities of work, recreation, leisure, culture, worship and other aspects of their lives.

Councillor Rose informed the committee that there was a technical case that the council was working on which would inform the council's position in challenging the data and consideration of alternatives that TfL should be directing their energies and resources into finding the required savings.

The committee also heard from Dale Foden, Head of Highways. Dale advised the committee that the council was working with people with protected characteristics, it was looking at the direct effects in Southwark, such as on hospitals, schools, impact of bus cuts in regeneration areas, as well as long term effects. Dale

welcomed the extension of the consultation as it provided the opportunity to really get the views of residents and to also really analyse what the effect will be on specific areas of Southwark.

At the rise of Councillor Rose's address, questions, comment and discussion took place around the following:

- Incorporation of independent expert analysis, and engagement with members / ward councillors to participate into the council's response to the consultation.
- Engagement with residents
- Problems with treasury analysis
- Impact of proposed changes on safety.
- Request for focus on bigger picture as changes will impact on Southern central inner London much more than on Northern central inner London

The chair reported that the committee would be revisiting this matter at the next meeting scheduled for 12 October, but acknowledged that TfL may not have reached their final conclusions by then.

Councillor Rose indicated that it would be possible to request the latest data on ridership numbers, and that the council would have a clearer understanding of any adjustments in TfL's position by October. She also advised that, based on the current programme timescales, that after TfL come back in the autumn with their response to the consultation, there would then be a phased introduction of cuts over the following 12 months to the end of 2023.

The meeting ended at 9.35pm

CHAIR:

DATED: