

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES of the Environment Scrutiny Commission held on Monday 14 October 2024 at 7.00 pm at 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Margy Newens (Chair)
Councillor Graham Neale (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Reginald Popoola
Anna Colligan
Simon Saville
Councillor Sabina Emmanuel
Councillor Hamish McCallum

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor James McAsh, Cabinet Member for Clean Air, Streets & Waste

OFFICER & Temi Lateef, My Choice/ Black Riders Association
PARTNER Tim Long, Team Leader Transport Policy
SUPPORT: Hedley Mellor, Transport Policy Officer
Julie Timbrell, Project Manager , Scrutiny

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Bethan Roberts and Leo Pollak.

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

There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

4. MINUTES

5. TEMI LATEEF, MY CHOICE/ BLACK RIDERS ASSOCIATION

The chair welcomed Temi Lateef and invited him to speak about his work and then invited members to ask questions. The below is a summary of the discussion.

Temi Lateef explained that the Black Riders Association sits under My Choice. The initiative originally started when Temi decided to cycle to Nigeria, to encourage people to participate in social cycle rides. As part of this he realised that there is a lack of black and women cyclists. Temi therefore changed the name to the Black Riders Association, which led to much more diversity. The initial call out generated 800 people signing up for cycle rides integrated with social activities. The rides were social and fun. Bit by bit Temi explained that the rides moved out of the borough along parks and canals. During Covid it was very quiet, and this helped make it safer to go further as there was lower traffic.

More recently Temi has been working with schools and community organisations including cycling organisations. He said he has learnt that if his organisation can identify a sense of belonging in the activities amongst communities and participants, alongside improving access to the outside, generate a sense that barriers are coming down, and include skill sharing, then people want to participate. More recently he has started working with communities with different languages and developed leaders who would organise fun events and conduct low-key easy engagement to find out what people would like to do. There is a process of developing cycling captains and coaching to build capacity.

Temi said he discovered that often people did not know of major sports events because of lack of representation or reach into demographics who are not part of cycling communities.

In response to a question on what more the council can do Temi suggested using the materials and organisations in the borough already. He advised there are existing community social and sports groups in Peckham and Southwark. He observed that there can be a disconnect between the council and local groups - often it takes a while to build connections and realise a shared agenda. He therefore recommended looking for these groups and contacting them to see how the council can help.

Temi said there are range of groups - e.g. Turkish, African, Caribbean, with different cultures. He explained that when he

organises with groups he would first link with leaders from those communities. A starting point might be a sport that is already well liked e.g. Cricket in South Asian community. It is then possible to introduce new activities and start building projects and groups.

Temi was asked what can be done to encourage safe cycling. Temi noted that cycling infrastructure is variable, with some boroughs having a good network of cycle lanes, which will increase safety. However, Temi said that London is a safe place as long as people have the tools and confidence. He works with people including young children and teaches them in a quiet space the skills to enable them to manage traffic. Temi noted that people do not have to cycle everywhere; it is possible to use the train to visit places, or avoid major traffic. He emphasised the importance of about getting on a bike and enjoying the ride.

There was a discussion on the popularity of cycling among young black boys, and why this can drop away as boys become adults. Temi commented that there is a media image that encourages car use when older. It is perceived as culturally acceptable for children and young people to cycle, whereas for adults it can be seen as less acceptable amongst certain communities. Cycling can be perceived as indicative of failure to be economically successful and reaching responsible adulthood. The limited exception to this is wearing Lycra and riding an expensive racing bike, which is associated with professional success, however this type of cycling is not appealing or possible for many people. Temi was asked how cycling can be made more acceptable to a wider demographic. Temi said it is in part about representation in images of cyclists, whether leisure or sporting. It is also about linking this with professional success, social recognition, and economic position – for example linking cycling to sports science, becoming a physiotherapist, a coach, engineer, or entrepreneur.

A member asked about the accessibility of cycling, for example up hills, which could be physically exhausting. Temi said that there are cycling sessions over hills in the Caribbean, as an adventure, however there are lots of social sessions in cities which are much easier, and include fun cycles using trikes and tandem cycles, and so very accessible.

The Commission thanked Temi for his time and input.

6. STREETS FOR PEOPLE: WALING AND CYCLING PLANS

The chair introduced the item by explaining that as part of our Streets for People strategy the council have now agreed plans to

make walking and cycling quicker, easier and safer for everyone in the borough. The purpose of this item is to discuss these plans with reference to the scrutiny review on Environmental Health.

The following officers were invited to provide a summary of the Walking and Cycling Plans:

- Tim Long, Team Leader Transport Policy (online)
- Hedley Mellor, Transport Policy Officer (in person)

The chair then invited questions and the following points were made:

- Members asked how safety can be improved. Officers said design can help. A large proportion of new work on the highways is the responsibility of TFL. Officers talk to TFL about improvements.
- Officers were asked what more can be done to decrease bike theft and increase cycle parking. Officers said that the council had rolled out of thousands of cycle hangers and will be providing more. Officers are expecting more provision for lock ups and storage in transport destinations and around housing.
- Officers were asked about the consultation for Street for People plans. Officers remarked that the council got very high levels of engagement. The consultation asked about problems, which proved a good way of engaging people and got a very high response rate. The information can be used to deliver several improvements. For example a common issue was that speeding is a problem. In addressing this the council can also deliver other priorities, such as greening.
- A member asked what lesson can be learnt from the consultation around Lower Road, where there is a Cycleway provided and high traffic volumes. Officers were asked if there could have been more joined up thinking. Officers said they are presently monitoring traffic with a view to evaluating the scheme and looking for learning.
- Officers were asked about tackling cycling on the pavement, and if there could be more demarcation on shared spaces. Officers said that cyclists should give way to pedestrians. Often cyclists on pavements are the more vulnerable users - younger people and older people. As there is more provision of dedicated cycling lanes this ought to help. Officers gave an example of Peckham Road. Officers worked with TFL on this

cycle route, however unfortunately only a small amount was delivered. The council want to build a change on our streets and encourage TFL to do the same.

- Officers were asked to what extent streetscape schemes delivered by highways can deliver on climate change by reducing flood risk and increasing space for nature. Officers said their priorities are linked to the dis-benefit of car use and impact on population and increasing active travel. For example, car use is lowest in places like Walworth and Peckham, but the air quality is worse, so these may be areas that are priorities for change. Highways land is very complex as many other people want to use this finite amount of land in various ways. Streets for People set out these wants and identified that more space is needed for walking and cycling due to our growing population and to create better facilities for people with protected characteristics. It has also identified that reducing driving and encouraging active travel is the most effective way for Highways to reduce pollution, tackle climate change and improve people's health. Highway's has pioneered a generous approach in our schemes to provide planting on 10% of the space involved.

7. INTERVIEW WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CLEAN AIR, STREETS & WASTE

The chair welcomed Councillor James McAsh, Cabinet Member for Clean Air, Streets & Waste, and invited him to briefly introduce his portfolio. Following this members were invited to ask questions.

The following themes were covered:

- School Streets
- Streets for People- consultation, online portal , visiting streets , school engagement
- Waste and cleaning
- Fly tipping - moving to more proactive practice
- Graffiti
- Food waste
- Air pollution and wood stoves

- EV charging
- Soft lighting
- Cycling hangers
- Equalising parking charges - highways / housing estates / leisure

8. BIODIVERSITY SCRUTINY REVIEW

The revisions agreed to the Biodiversity review are provided as an appendix.

The co-optees , Anna Colligan and Simon Saville, were thanked for their highly valued contribution to the review.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

This was not covered.