

SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

COUNCIL ASSEMBLY

(ORDINARY MEETING)

WEDNESDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2013

URGENT QUESTION

1. URGENT QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

What is the council doing to improve cycle safety across the borough in light of the recent tragic deaths of six cyclists in London, including Richard Muzira in Camberwell on 18 November?

RESPONSE

The death of Richard Muzira in Camberwell is a terrible tragedy and my thoughts are with his family and friends.

Any death on our roads is a death too many, but with six deaths in two weeks across London, I believe that London-wide we need to look to more radical solutions to make our roads safer. That is why I have proposed a safe cycling hour, where HGVs are banned from London's roads in the morning and evening for an hour and when cyclists know that at those times they will not have to navigate the city's streets with large HGVs.

I have spoken to the Mayor's cycling adviser following Mr Muzira's death and he has committed to look at this suggestion along with other ideas about how we improve cycle safety.

I want Southwark to be the safest borough in London for cyclists and get more people on their bikes. We are already doing this, and are making changes to make cycling safer. Significant improvements are being made in the cycling infrastructure in the Borough, with over £2.2 million spent since 2010. We are the first borough to implement Trixi mirrors to improve safety for cyclists at junctions. Eight junctions have been completed and another five are expected this financial year. I have also asked officers to prioritise the junction where Mr Muzira was killed. In addition we have introduced and are introducing eleven cycle contra flows, one cut through, five cycle superhighway complementary measures and three green links. All of this is being implemented during 2012/13 and 2013/14, this includes Greendale phase 1 and 2.

Cyclists do not stop at the borough's boundaries, which is why we are closely with Transport for London (TfL) and the Mayor's officer on improvements to the strategic network. This includes:

- London grid – seven routes are identified by TfL and currently are being looked at by Southwark
- Quietways – some seven quiet cycle routes have been identified, with plans to make a decision on their suitability and priority early next year

- Working with TfL to deliver new and improved Cycle Superhighways
- Awaiting Mayor's design guidance for cycling infrastructure.

As well as physical changes, we are working to improve training and speed reduction which is key for cyclist safety. This includes:

- Making Southwark a 20 mph borough
- Offering free cyclist training to anyone that lives, works or is educated in the borough (training around 959 children and 731 adults per year). With a target to increase this by 10% by March 2014.
- Signing up to the LCC Safer Lorries Campaign
- Running Safer Urban Driver courses for drivers of HGVs
- Having a programme of HGV/Cyclist awareness days – Exchanging Places
- Having all roads Bikeability assessed – accessible via the council's website
- Being successful with £285,000 bid as part of the Cycling Schools Partnership for junction improvements, Bike it Plus Officer and seed funding in Dulwich area
- Running a programme of Dr Bikes
- Running a 'Park to Park' mass cycle ride for children
- Running a cycle loan scheme for teachers
- Running cycling clubs in schools
- Currently running cycling campaign promoting cycling and cycle safety
- Promoting cycling and cycle safety through the school travel plan process
- Running education/enforcement days with the police
- Looking at the possibility of running HGV events in secondary schools
- Looking at running bike building/maintenance classes for children and adults where participants get to keep their bikes.

As a borough we are taking cycle safety seriously. All of these changes are about improving cycling and safety in the borough. However, I want, London-wide, for us to look at what more can be done and welcome that my idea for a cycle safe hour has sparked a real debate about more radical solutions.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

Thank you Mr Mayor, I thank the Leader for his answer and I share his condolences to Richard Muzira's family and friends and particularly to Cooltan Arts who I know are very struck by this tragedy.

I have got a copy of the council's draft document on cycle lanes and that recommends that no cycle lanes should be provided on 20mph roads, only cycle lanes that cars are allowed on 30mph roads. It also says cycle lanes should be removed from some roads when they are redeveloped and segregated lanes should be ruled out of council plans entirely.

Now that was a draft from August. I just wondered whether the leader intended to proceed with that, in light of recent events and more evidence that has come out about cycle lanes.

RESPONSE

I want to thank Councillor Al-Samerai for her response; I am not sure what document that is, I made it clear a few months ago that the council would be adopting the London Standards on Cycling which are being developed at the present time by the Mayor and

by his cycling commissioner Andrew Gilligan because I knew and understood there was a tension what we were promoting locally or suggesting locally and what was being said London wide, and I certainly don't want Southwark to be seen as being at odds with what is being proposed London wide. We are very keen to continue the work we are trying to do to make Southwark a safe cycling borough, the safest cycling borough in London, and working with the Mayor on this is absolutely critical. At the end of the day the Mayor of London has the largest pot of money to improve cycle safety across our borough; £100 million is going to be spent over the next couple of years on improving cycle super highways, cycle quiet ways and other improvements to make cycling safer, and we want to work with the Mayor to make sure that is delivered. So the document she is relying on I don't think is going to be taken forward. I don't know quite what document it is but it is certainly, as I say, what we are going to be doing in cycling is absolutely in accordance with recommendations which will be coming from the Mayor.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR ANOOD AL-SAMERAI

Thanks Mr Mayor. The document is entitled Cycle Lanes in Carriageways and was released by the council in August. I am sort of encouraged if you say you don't think that is going to be adopted but I would be grateful if you could come back with some certainty about what is actually happening and whether the council will support segregated cycle lanes or not; I would be interested in your personal view about whether they are a good thing or not?

RESPONSE

I think there was a debate; we had a debate a year or so ago about segregated cycle lanes, whether it is realistic that you can deliver segregated cycle lanes on all roads where you might need to. And I think certainly there was a school of thought that if we were making Southwark a 20mph borough, what ideally we wanted to do with our roads is make every road safe for every road user including cyclists, which would mean we would not need to segregate cyclists.

I think we are a long way from that world where that might actually be a reality, and I do think we have got to look much more closely at how you achieve cycling safety through quiet ways, through segregated super highways. I am really heartened by the work that Transport for London has done on Blackfriars Road for instance, a scheme that is coming forward there which is a segregated cycle lane which I think is going to be leading London in terms of its appearance and design and how it will make cyclists safer. And that is the sort of work we need to concentrate on and how – there are issues which flow from that; how do you make sure that cyclists are safe getting from St Georges Circus down to the Elephant Northern Roundabout where we know they will be safe again, because cyclists want the most direct and easy route but we need to ensure they are on a safe route as well.

So there is a lot of thinking still to go, but my personal view is that the hope that every road user can, you know, meander in a blissful sort of Miss Marple type way along our roads in our borough is not going to happen. It is also one of the reasons why I suggested last week, week before last actually, we should have a cycle safe hour in rush hours 8am-9am and 5pm-6pm so that HGVs do not come on to the roads in central London at that time so that cyclists know they have a period of time when they are safe. I don't know whether it is a runner, but it is certainly an idea which is being debated and I think that is where Southwark needs to be, leading this debate on cycle safety.

It is something I really do feel very strongly about, I do want cyclists to be safe in Southwark. It is important that we get more people on to bikes, walking and using healthy forms of transport actually, and so anything we can do to make cyclists safer we will be doing.