

London Borough of Hackney  
Skills Economy & Growth Scrutiny  
Commission Municipal Year: 2021/22  
Date of Meeting: Monday 15<sup>th</sup>  
December 2021

Minutes of the proceedings of  
the Skills Economy and growth  
Scrutiny Commission held  
from Hackney Town Hall, Mare  
Street, London E8 1EA

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Chair	Cllr Polly Billington
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Steve Race, Cllr Richard Lufkin, Cllr Patrick Spence, Cllr Vincent Stops, Cllr Nick Sharman, Cllr Mete Coban (Cabinet Member for Energy, Waste, Transport and Public Realm)
Officers in Attendance	Andy Cunningham, Head of Streetscene;
Other People in Attendance	None
Members of the Public	None
YouTube link	The meeting can be viewed at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H44OImEzACA_43y2trGmk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H44OImEzACA_43y2trGmk</a>
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**Councillor Polly Billington in the Chair**

- 1 Apologies for Absence
  - 1.1 Note: Cllr Sam Pallis & Cllr Gilbert Smyth attended the meeting virtually.
  - 1.2 Cllr Potter sent apologies.

## **2 Urgent Items / Order of Business**

2.1 There were no urgent items of business.

## **3 Declarations of Interest**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

## **4 Skills Economy & Growth Work Programme 2021/2022**

4.1 The work programme was noted.

## **5 Transport for a Cleaner Greener Hackney**

5.1 The chair introduced the item, stating that the coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on traffic levels in the borough. A car-dominated environment to minimise the potential for coronavirus transmission has the potential to vastly increase the number of motor vehicles on our roads, exacerbating air pollution in a borough that already has sixth highest mortality rate out of 418 UK local authorities.

5.2 It was also noted that the Secretary of State for Transport and the Department for Transport have been clear that local authorities are expected to undertake emergency structural measures to encourage active travel and discourage non-essential motor-vehicle use.

5.3 It was stated that as the borough rebuilds and moves toward achieving its net-zero targets, ensuring that clean, green transport policy is in place, and in a way that is attractive and accessible to residents, will be crucial.

5.4 Chair invited the Head of Streetscene to present.

5.5 The Head of Streetscene advised that 70% of residents do not own a car. About 40% of through-trips in the borough do not stop in Hackney, and 30% of the residents cycle at least once a month.

5.6 It was noted that there are some key equality considerations that the borough needs to rely on. Whilst most people don't own a car, it is very clearly that others rely on them for a range of different purposes. Walking and public transport is available to almost everybody. while cycling is a valuable mode of transport, it isn't available to everybody, and we need to

keep on monitoring who does use cycling, particularly those other groups apart from young men.

- 5.7 The council has a fundamental choice in the allocation of street space, and as a council we have moved away from streets for cars to streets for people. This is a key theme of our own transport strategy. A lot of the mayor of London's transport strategy is about traffic reduction through reallocation and road user charging.
- 5.8 In Hackney, we have 84% of trips that are sustainable with a target when we head towards 2041 of this rising to 91%. We also have a range of different targets that come through the strategy and they are in the paper.
- 5.9 It was advised that the mayor's transport strategy has a range of outcomes and among them is more efficient use of streets with less traffic, and we are delivering this for through a range of schemes.
- 5.10 It was advised that the borough is doing a lot in terms of electric vehicle charging, promoting cycle routes, and Hackney also looking at how price is impacted and allowing that to happen, but to try and to ensure it doesn't cause traffic congestion.
- 5.11 It was advised that outcome nine of the mayor's transport strategy talks about the investment of transport investment and how it will unlock the delivery of new homes and jobs. Our transport strategy recognises that, and we are still supporting access to and supporting access to jobs and workers is a key part of our local implementation plan.
- 5.12 It was advised that TFL's research strongly supports the benefits of active travel and shows that investment in walking cycling helps to encourage more London's to travel in a greener and healthier way; it brings significant benefits to the economy.
- 5.13 It was noted that some businesses will overestimate how their customers use the cars and vehicles, but the importance of cars should not be over emphasised.

- 5.14 It was acknowledged that people need to get around the borough with larger loads, but the council needs to make sure that we're going forward in a balanced way. In contrast, the importance of walking is often overlooked.
- 5.15 The Head of Streetscene advised that a lot of people will talk loudly about the use of a car, but not so many people talk as loudly about public transport and walking. Even developers recognise the importance of walking in their catchment area in order to provide customers to businesses and jobs to residents. They will usually include something within their planning application as part of their traffic assessment to show and illustrate this. THE HEAD OF STREETSCENE advised that the council's tools to aid this is implementing low traffic neighbourhoods.
- 5.16 The Head of Streetscene advised that the council has been implementing LTN's on experimental traffic orders so the council can study the impacts of them for up to 18 months. The council is looking for evidence about how they work about their impact on traffic, and their impact on air quality, but also looking to see if we can identify things like traffic evaporation. That data is coming out of the council's current studies.
- 5.17 The Head of Streetscene stressed that it is important that we listen to what residents are saying about these schemes, and the council is consulting through listening to people's comments through our commonplace websites.
- 5.18 It was noted that Hackney is also undertaking independent polling to actually find out and make sure that we're getting a true reflection of what people think and are saying about our schemes.
- 5.19 It was noted that Hackney has the largest programme of school streets in the country with 49 schools in operation with the last 11 that were implemented over the summer. Collectively now, that means that over 14,000, children can walk and cycle to school more safely.
- 5.20 The funding for the school streets comes from a number of different budgets. It was advised that unlike some of the other measures, they are a very popular measure among residents.

- 5.21 Hackney has a very ambitious programme for electric vehicle charging points. By the end of this financial year, the borough ought to have about 315 points, but the council is currently tendering for a significant increase.
- 5.22 The Head of Streetscene advised that the tender process is ongoing and should be complete by the summer of next year. We are already engaging businesses through our zero emissions network. This is a free to join network, and Hackney has already got over 2,000 businesses and residents that have joined. It was noted that this is something that gives us direct contact with businesses. It allows the council to talk to them and to listen to their needs.
- 5.23 It was noted that cargo bikes are growing in popularity, and the council is endeavoring to help them. The council has a programme of providing incentives for residents & businesses to purchase them. But the council now has also got a programme for rental schemes. In September of this year, we had the UK-first cargo bike rental scheme introduced with a number of different locations in the borough. Hackney continues to recognise that liaison with businesses is important.
- 5.24 The Head of Streetscene gave evidence of one example of this work the council did with the businesses in Stoke Newington Church Street, where the council undertook a delivery and servicing strategy. The council very clearly needs to keep doing more and keep thinking about new ways of promoting local business centres.
- 5.25 Looking ahead, the council needs to start thinking about the next transport strategy; the current transport strategy runs until 2025, and it will take a while to write consult and get the next transport strategy agreed.
- 5.26 The Head of Streetscene advised that it is likely that the overarching vision will encompass climate change, but the council also needs to focus on supporting local communities, businesses, and also about living & home sustainability.
- 5.27 It was advised that one of the issues that we are going to face is around

TFL's uncertainty of their funding going forward and that this can make a big difference to the funding budgets that the council can access.

- 5.28 Cllr Coban asked to speak and stated that it remains a very big priority for the council that pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users are able to travel around the borough.
- 5.29 It was noted that this is the driving force behind low traffic neighborhood schemes, and what we have seen is that within low traffic neighbourhoods, traffic within both the LTN's and on the boundary roads has been reducing, and this is consistent with what we see across most of the low traffic neighborhood schemes.
- 5.30 Cllr Coban stated that the council is rigorously monitoring air quality data, and what's consistent so far from the from the data that air quality has improved.
- 5.31 It was noted that the council has to continue to monitor all of the other low traffic enabling schemes too. This air quality improvement is also true for Stoke Newington Church Street where we've seen already traffic dissipate, on average, across the whole Stonington area, including the budget roads, by about a third.
- 5.32 It was noted that, looking at school streets, the borough has seen that tailpipe emissions are down by 74% On average, outside of school gates, and 30% more children are walking to school, and 51% more children are cycling or scooting to school as well.
- 5.33 It was noted that there's lots of support for that from residents and also from parents and children, and that's part of the long-term behavioral change that needs to happen if we are to move towards more sustainable methods of transport.
- 5.34 Chair advised that the commission is really interested to know what kind of assessments the council has made about the transport decisions, the transport policy decisions it is making, and the impact they're having on the

economy of the borough, adding that the commission knows that the Department of Transport often makes decisions about whether there should be new because they were the basis of traffic movement being an indication of economic growth.

5.35 The chair asked if we are reducing traffic movements in Hackney, how are we sure that we have managed to decouple traffic movement from economic growth so that you can continue to grow economically, even if you've got fewer vehicle movements, particularly private car movements?

5.36 Cllr Coban advised that there's nothing to suggest that more motor vehicles equals more good for our economy, and there's no evidence to suggest that any new transport schemes have had any hinderance or has affected business in any way.

5.37 The Head of Streetscene added that TFL has done studies about the importance of active travel and that there's other statistics about the investment and benefits of cycling, and the rate of returns for that.

5.38 It was noted that if you look at the studies which show the amount of people who actually drive to some of these businesses is actually quite low, and a lot of people will go on its local trips by walking, cycling, public transport; there are a lot of other options for a lot of trips, because it's quite a local economy.

5.39 Cllr Race asked whether the council is monitoring investments and the business perceptions of these investments, and whether we are asking businesses overall whether they think Hackney is a good place to invest, and a good place to create jobs.

5.40 Cllr Coban responded by saying that it's incredibly important that we do measure this perception, but added that it's difficult to quantify in relation to the success to LTN's.

5.41 Cllr Billington observed that the commission will probably factor this into it's recommendations that the council needs to be assessing its own attractiveness in terms of investment and how transport schemes impact

that.

- 5.42 Cllr Coban added One of the things the council is doing is promoting the cargo bike sharing scheme; providing that alternative for businesses to be able to transport goods while reducing their emissions is a really important piece of work.
- 5.43 It was also noted, however, that if residents need to drive, the council does want to encourage them to drive electric vehicles, which is why the council has just announced a rollout of 3000 electric charging points across the borough, which is the biggest rollout of the country.
- 5.44 The Head of Streetscene advised that in terms of measuring business perceptions, that work would be delivered by the regeneration team, and it'd be up to his team to actually speak to them, just to make sure that they are collecting information as to how businesses feel about the transport issues. That is something that he can pick up but it's not something that is being monitored directly at the moment.
- 5.45 Cllr Sharman asked about the relationship between transport and economic development, noting that the council seems to have two policies. One is concerned with job development and regeneration, the other is transport, asking how we are effectively bringing those together, and whether there are conflicts between them?
- 5.46 Cllr Coban responded saying one of the things the council is doing is developing an action Plan which basically looks to bring together a strategic framework across the council's different responsibilities across sustainability. That's including transport and regeneration as well. This should be presented to cabinet by Summer.
- 5.47 It was noted that the council is currently in consultation with the public around the Climate Action Plan. A green recovery event was held, and the team is gearing up to the climate summit that's taking place in February. This is an opportunity to speak with different communities, including the business community about the climate crisis, but also what impact the measures will have on these communities.



- 5.48 Cllr Sharman clarified his question, asking whether the council has got a methodology in terms of our planning and understanding of the economy and are there conflicts?
- 5.49 Cllr Coban answered, stating that works two ways. Partly the launch that has enabled schemes is a trial, and as part of that trial, you measure lots of the things. Noting that lots of different things that are happening across society right now that impact data, notably the pandemic and related lockdowns.
- 5.50 What we can do from the transport perspective is measure things such as number of cyclists, the car usage, and quality and all those different factors. It was noted again that there's nothing to suggest lower road usage has an adverse effect on our economy. It was noted that what you see around the world, or other parts of the UK, is where you do have more pedestrianization, or more improvements to road safety, us that this leads to more people shopping locally. It was noted what we don't want is people from Hackney leaving Hackney to do their shopping, we wanted to make it easier for them to go in and join the neighbourhoods.
- 5.51 The Head of Streetscene added there is an officer group, as part of a regeneration board, which is chaired by the chief executive which actually looks at all the schemes, the planning & policy work, and ensures that they're linked. There's also a strategic transport group but has the mayor and a number of Cabinet members on it.
- 5.52 Cllr Stops asked how the council will improve bus services in terms of connectivity to more areas and generally improve them.
- 5.53 Cllr Coban responded by saying that TFL is currently negotiating their deal with the government and that will have huge implications on the bus service, especially in Hackney; it is known that lots of residents in Hackney depend on the bus to get around the borough. It was noted that this is something that both Cllr Coban and the mayor have been raising quite for a number of weeks now to make sure that Hackney is protected, highlighting the decline of bus frequency over the past year or two.

- 5.54 The Head of Streetscene added that a number of bus priority schemes are looking to be delivered, acknowledging that the council needs to do more. The council is talking to senior people within TFL & the GLA about bus issues. It was noted that last week his team met with TTL to try and understand and get more information data from them about bus journey times where the delays are, and his team is trying to push them toward larger and improved schemes.
- 5.55 Cllr Stops stated that in the Labour Group paper counsellors received, it said bus schemes do not cost much money, and that he'd like to see a tangible programme rather than ideas about bus improvements.
- 5.56 Chair stated that, in terms of COVID recovery, the prioritising of bus routes and providing the support for buses will be something that the commission will want to see from the executive committee.
- 5.57 Cllr Spence asked how the council measures congestion. Well, I think one of the ways we should be doing that is through observational studies, asking whether officers accept congestion is going to have an economic impact on businesses.
- 5.58 Cllr Coban advised that this depends on the type of businesses being looked at, and that the situation is nuanced and that the monitoring is taking place on a scheme-by-scheme basis.
- 5.59 The Head of Streetscene advised that looking at the traffic levels and congestion on the main roads is really important. As part of this, the council has put in about 20 new continuous traffic counters so that we can actually understand the issue better. The council gets delay and congestion maps from Transport for London on a fairly regular basis.
- 5.60 Congestion and delays on the main road network reflect the fact that about 40% of the traffic in the borough is through-traffic, it doesn't stop in the borough. Going forward, if we're going to look after businesses in the borough, and allow people to move around more freely, we need to actually start looking at addressing that level of through-traffic.

- 5.61 Cllr Spence asked for something more specific about the measurements.
- 5.62 The Head of Streetscene responded by saying the council does look at ensuring that we've got access to some of the TFL data. The Head of Streetscene agreed that a lot of the data that we have put out into the public domain is 24-hour traffic flows, and with our traffic counts, we do need to continue to look at what is happening during the various peaks.
- 5.63 It was noted that the council needs to continue monitoring against our LTNs, but added that it's very difficult to isolate what is happening in one particular road.
- 5.64 Cllr Billington stated that when data comes back that doesn't reflect what residents experience, it feels like the council is not listening, adding that there's a value to finding some way of measuring something which at least chimes with people's experience and will therefore acknowledge the necessity to adjust things over time.
- 5.65 Cllr Coban advised that the reason why the council conducts consultation is to provide the opportunity for residents, businesses, and people who are in and out of the area to tell us live how the scheme has impacted them.
- 5.66 Cllr Pallis asked how other boroughs that have got LTN schemes measure the impact upon businesses, and whether they are looking at footfall, also asking what the council can do to incentivize businesses to invest in cargo bikes, or electric charging vehicles.
- 5.67 Cllr Coban responded by stating that it is very difficult to monitor footfall and impact on businesses as a result of the LTN schemes in a quantifiable way. Cllr Coban advised that he was happy to come back to the Commission at some point on this issue.
- 5.68 In relation to the incentivizing for electric vehicles it was noted that it's a difficult issue as electric vehicles aren't currently affordable for most Hackney residents, or for businesses, because they are quite expensive, and they're not available secondhand in significant numbers.

- 5.69 It was noted that by 2030, the manufacturing of any petrol diesel cars will be stopped, as per the UK Government, which means that by the end of the decade, we'll see an acceleration of electric vehicles being manufactured, which should see the reduction of the cost.
- 5.70 As we get more supply of EV's, and obviously more secondhand availability, the council can make sure the infrastructure is there ready for people to make that switch. It was explained that this is why the electric vehicle charging points target is an ambitious but important step to make sure that people can make that switch when they're ready.
- 5.71 Cllr Smyth asked in regards to the problem of safety with scooters on the streets on the pavements, is there anything that can do to help get scooters off the pavements.
- 5.72 Cllr Coban responded, stating that it's a difficult issue because enforcement encourages the police to pursue and stop scooters which can disproportionately affect some communities.
- 5.73 Cllr Coban added that he wanted the commission to be assured that the executive is pushing back against cuts, adding that it is his opinion that this government is playing politics with the future of London.
- 5.74 Chair asked whether the council is seeing new trends in the way that people are getting around the borough, particularly around people's retreat to car usage because of anxieties around COVID contact and the fall in use of public transport. It was asked what kind of analysis has taken place to ensure better decisions are made to support economic growth, and enable the council to achieve its social and environmental goals.
- 5.75 Cllr Coban responded saying it's something that's very difficult to a quantified assessment in terms of, but suggested that residents are starting to value their local communities more as spending more time in their local areas. There has been a marked increase of people in Hackney either walking, cycling or taking public transport, and only a third of households own a car.

- 5.76 Cllr Stops asked whether the council is making the case that improving bus service performance will be financially beneficial for TFL, and ultimately, everybody.
- 5.77 The Head of Streetscene advised that TFL is not looking at the issue from the perspective of how you can actually get more people on the buses, they're looking to actually reduce the overall cost to them for doing so. It was stated that there is a strand of work required around improving bus priority, improving bus times, and improving customer liability, so that people feel happier and more people will use them.
- 5.78 The Head of Streetscene noted that the numbers of people using buses at the moment suggest that the usage isn't sufficient to warrant maintaining all of those bus services. It is possible that in the longer term, improving the bus reliability and times will encourage more people to use them and set out a case for providing more busses, but at the moment, they are very separate.
- 5.79 Cllr Race asked what are the plans that the council has to encourage better uses of the street as opposed to mere reductions.
- 5.80 Cllr Coban responded saying that the green infrastructure strategy, which is going to be coming to full cabinet for in the new year, will help answer this, and that the council needs to look at the connectivity of low traffic neighborhood zones, especially in places like Church Street where there are that can provide alfresco dining for example.
- 5.81 Cllr Pallis asked whether we are committed to maintaining the current bus lanes that we have, and asked about the accessibility improvements intended for overground stations
- 5.82 The Head of Streetscene advised that We haven't got a date for when the stations will be fully accessible. The council is reliant on funding bids being made through TFL, and the council is regularly pushing for further improvements to the, notably at Hackney Downs and at Stamford Hill, adding that its quite a long process.

- 5.83 He added, referring to the bus lanes, that there is no commitment as such to maintain them all. The team will continue to look at extending the hours of bus lanes.
- 5.84 Cllr Billington summarized, observing that the importance of combining the economic and social benefits of transport policy is crucial so that we can see how the transport decisions are being made to drive economic growth and for us to effectively monetize or financially assess the impact on benefits, social benefits of activity to the use of data.
- 5.85 A review of the support for busses post-pandemic recovery is something that the commission will probably be looking to make some recommendations on, and further to understand from the council the conversations it's having with TFL on the decisions that they make when it comes to supporting public transport in the borough, and its impact on the economy, congestion and how we measure it, and capturing the impact of congestion on businesses and the economy, assessing the impact via footfall and other data.

## **6 Any Other Business**

- 6.1 Cllr Smyth asked for an update on the gyrator, an action from a former meeting, the scrutiny officer advised they would pursue this with the relevant officer offline.