


Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL 29 th September 2021	
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Motion for debate submitted by an Opposition Group	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services
Wards affected	All wards

SUMMARY

1. Council Procedure Rule 11 allows for time at each Ordinary Council meeting for the discussion of one Motion submitted by an Opposition Group. The debate will follow the rules of debate at Council Procedure Rule 13 and will last no more than 30 minutes.
2. The motion submitted is listed overleaf. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, submission of the Opposition Motion for Debate will alternate in sequence between the opposition groups. This Opposition Motion is submitted by the Conservative Group.
3. Motions must be about matters for which the Council or its partners has a direct responsibility. A motion may not be moved which is substantially the same as a motion which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.
4. Notice of any proposed amendments to the Motions must be given to the Monitoring Officer by Noon the day before the meeting.

MOTION

Set out overleaf is the motion that has been submitted.

8 – Opposition Motion by the Conservative Group – Regarding Liveable Streets Reset

Proposer: Cllr Andrew Wood

Seconder: Cllr Peter Golds

This Council notes:

The division caused between different parts of the community by this issue and the way it has been implemented. That we need to find ways of reducing this division.

That in the Weavers ward by election candidates who pledged to change the Liveable Streets programme secured 60.4% of the votes cast. That the Labour Party had held the ward in four previous elections supported Liveable Streets.

Newly elected Councillor Kabir Ahmed called that *“any further proposals must be introduced only through consultation, and by consent, of residents and small business.”*

That despite warnings at Council and Cabinet meetings the consultation exercise across the borough has been seriously flawed not least by being overly reliant on online consultation methods which may not produce a representative sample of opinions.

That even before the Weavers by election the proposed Whitechapel programme was delayed until after the 2022 elections because the Labour ward councillors were concerned about the proposals.

That Mayor John Biggs on Friday 27th August 2021 announced:

“We will be briefly pausing and where necessary changing the Liveable Streets programme. This might mean changes to existing schemes but mostly means looking at our future plans. The programme has brought many positive and welcome changes but is not popular with some of those less directly benefiting and who face inconvenience. We will where needed change the programme to make sure we are balancing those concerns, but we remain committed to safer streets and an improved environment. More detail will follow shortly.

“It is right that we consider and reflect on our priorities from time to time, and it is important that we listen to local people, which we have done.”

And on Friday 10th September the Mayor announced more detail but was still not making clear whether this was a re-branding exercise, a pause, or a genuine change. But his tweet on the 12th September where he said.

“But to be clear liveable streets was my proposal and there are no plans to scrap it in Bow, Bethnal Green or the other 5 areas. Brick lane closures are a tiny and time limited part of a bigger scheme that we are not reversing.”

Makes it unclear whether there will be changes to existing schemes, if that is what residents want.

The Mayors 2018 manifesto included sections like these (our underline):

We recognise that many residents need their cars - for work, for family – but we recognise too that levels of congestion and poor air quality mean that something must change.

Electric and lower emissions cars will help, although for many those are not easy to afford, and Government must help through a scrappage scheme or other measures. We will recognise the many essential reasons residents and businesses have for driving in our borough, including for family and employment reasons, and will respect and facilitate these.

We will make cycling, walking and using public transport the best ways to travel in Tower Hamlets. We want to make it harder for commuters to use our borough as a car park, while letting local people go about their lives, recognising that for many carers and workers, a car or other vehicle is a necessary part of life.

Through-traffic should by and large stick to these main roads but many of our residential neighbourhoods have seen huge increases in rat-running traffic, making them more dangerous, noisy and polluted. We will create low traffic neighbourhoods, keeping through-traffic to main roads, in any residential area where residents want them

It is not clear that some of what was implemented was actually supported by the manifesto.

This Council further notes:

- That other Labour councils, including the London Boroughs of Ealing, Greenwich and Harrow are removing, revising, and simply not going ahead with schemes.
- Ealing Council has now said it will remove seven of the nine LTNs it set up during the pandemic following the results of a Commonplace map-based consultation on each individual change. A survey of residents living in roads covered by the schemes found between 58 and 82 per cent opposed them. Overall people living in streets on the boundaries of all of the LTNs were most against them, with between 50 and 93 per cent saying they would like to see them removed. Around 22,000 people responded to its consultation.
- That the London Fire Brigade informed the council that the road closures would give “no access” to areas of the Jesus Green Estate and severe delays to others.
- The Metropolitan Police Commissioner has warned that “it’s harder for our officers to get down streets which they could previously get too faster”
- The Ambulance service has expressed concerns after an ambulance was unable to mount a pavement and attend to an emergency in Pondersons Gardens. An official stated “Tower Hamlets Council traffic teams sometimes struggle to understand the needs of the emergency services.”
- Residents in Arnold Circus have raised their concerns at the blockage to emergency vehicles.
- A wheelchair user in Baxendale Street finds that her regular journey to the Royal London Hospital for treatment takes five times as long.
- There are 1,900 electric vehicles currently registered in Tower Hamlets (versus 14,000 diesel) a number forecast to increase to 3,300 EVs by 2025 but as of summer 2021 there are only 99 street based electric vehicle chargers installed on streets due in part to government grants.

- That some parts of Tower Hamlets continue to have very poor air quality while others appear to now be within WHO air quality targets. That TfL forecast that ULEZ due to expand to cover Tower Hamlets from the 25th October 2021 will reduce air pollution by a further 30%.
- That in the 2019 residents survey – 5% of respondents said they cycle frequently (weekly/daily) and 12% cycled less often. 83% did not cycle. That the 2021 residents survey did not ask this question.
- That the Mid pandemic residents' survey 2021 listed the top concerns of residents, this year residents were slightly more worried about traffic congestion than about air quality, but both are far behind the top concerns held by residents which are.

1st highest concern Crime and ASB held by 47% of respondents

2nd highest concern Affordable Housing 36%

3rd highest concern Litter/dirt in the streets 25%

4th highest concern Number of homeless people 20%

5th highest concern Level of council tax 19%

6th highest concern Not enough being done for young people 19%

7th highest concern Traffic congestion 17%

8th highest concern Air quality 16%

It is unclear why Liveable Streets should remain one of the top spending priorities of the Council when the residents suggest that it is not in their top 5 list of concerns.

This Council resolves:

- To reject the council's woefully inadequate 'pause' which runs the risk of the return of Liveable Streets after next May's elections if voters are fooled into giving Labour another term and Labour are freed from the fear of the voters for another four years.
- Instead of a pause, Liveable Streets should be cancelled, and the council should go back to the drawing board to design a new scheme through consultation with all the differing perspectives among Tower Hamlets' diverse residents and businesses affected by these policies.

This Council therefore recommends:

1. To halt road closures including ANPR gates – the Council should finish and collate the responses to any consultations underway under way when the pause was announced and to complete any contractually agreed works which might incur a financial penalty if cancelled but to otherwise halt the roll out of any street closures, we note planters are easily moved (other works like improvements to pavements, new pedestrian crossings or other safety related work should continue)
2. That in Weavers ward that the planters be removed given the clear electoral mandate for change, and a new consultation started. That elsewhere the removal of planters be subject to consultation.
3. That all future consultation efforts are led by Council staff not by external consultants, that consultants only be used to work up the detail of any resident agreed scheme.
4. That we emulate Ealing in consulting local residents on schemes which have already been implemented, that if they have majority support that they continue, if not they are removed, this should be done at a detailed level via maps in case some changes have support and others not.

5. But that wherever possible consultations are not done just online but directly with affected residents on the doorstep, over the phone or on the affected street. Online consultations are disproportionately filled in by those with clear views on road changes.
6. To ask the Met Police Borough Commander for Tower Hamlets, the Fire Brigade Commander for Tower Hamlets, and their equivalent in the Ambulance Service that after consulting their operational staff to:
 - a. To clarify their views on existing schemes – do they hinder or not their ability to serve the public, should they be retained or replaced by other mechanisms? If so, replaced by what?
 - b. Their views on what lessons can be learnt for future schemes
 - c. That these be published by the Council
7. That consultations and Equality Impact Assessments include all residents likely to be impacted by any scheme and not just those inside specific areas, for example if traffic is likely to be displaced to another street that adjoining residents are consulted.
8. That all equality impact assessments are written by Council staff and not staff responsible for managing the implementation of a scheme to ensure objectivity.
9. The council should appoint an established independent organisation such as MORI or MR UK with experience in this field to recruit a representative resident's group to debate etc (aka a Citizen Panel) to discuss, debate and make recommendations to the Mayor on common issues including but not limited to:
 - a. How to encourage residents to be more active and to walk, cycle and use public transport.
 - b. Who should be allowed to drive through ANPR bus gates including but not limited to:
 - i. Local residents (based on postcodes within the area)
 - ii. Blue badge holders
 - iii. Royal Mail vehicles
 - iv. Taxis (based on TfL rules about which taxis can use TfL bus lanes)
 - v. All buses including school buses
 - c. Should we restrict at peak times or all-day vehicles from outside of the Borough to the main through routes? Should we do this with permanent roadblocks or ANPR cameras?
 - d. Should local residents be able to drive in their immediate area without hindrance or not? Or should they be actively discouraged from doing so?
 - e. Parking rules for those in car free accommodation
10. Escooters – that LBTH should fully join the TfL trial of escooters to fully learn lessons
11. EV chargers – to roll out more chargers to quicken the transition to electric vehicles
12. Scrappage scheme – to work with the Mayor of London to perhaps fund a local diesel scrappage scheme based on income from bus gates to help transition to electric vehicles
13. Air quality mitigation – that those areas with really bad air quality (western exit to the Limehouse Link tunnel and eastern end of Poplar High street (already subject to something called the Healthy Neighbourhoods by Sustran) for example) have air quality mitigation added i.e. green moss walls to absorb pollutants or other forms of roadside air quality mitigation.