

Environment Committee

11 March 2021

	
Title	Social Distancing
Report of	Chairman of the Environment Committee
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	None
Officer Contact Details	Geoff Mee, Executive Director Environment Geoff.Mee@Barnet.gov.uk

Summary

At the Environment Committee of 30 June 2020 a number of Coronavirus pandemic emergency decisions were reported and agreed. These included the submission of bids for Government funding for the implementation of temporary/semi-permanent schemes to support social distancing in the Public Realm and support the transport system. The schemes included social distancing improvements to town centres, support for the re-opening of schools and measures to facilitate cycle lanes and cycling.

Schemes addressing all three of these social distancing threads were implemented under Experimental Traffic Management Orders and are commencing or undergoing consultation. In conjunction with these consultations and with the assistance of additional Government funding the various schemes are undergoing design changes and/or extension to reflect feedback and evolving pandemic impacts.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the Environment Committee notes progress with the development, implementation and monitoring of Social Distancing measures arising from the Coronavirus pandemic.
2. That the Environment Committee notes that subject to the agreement of recommendation 1, future reports will provide a review of the experimental schemes, with recommendations to retain, remove or, subject to additional funding, review longer term options incorporating design changes, to reflect community feedback and lessons learned.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 The Environment Committee of 30 June 2020 agreed a number of Coronavirus pandemic emergency decisions. These included schemes related to Social Distancing, covering 3no threads: cycling and sustainable transport alternatives to public transport, measures to assist the re-opening of schools and measures to assist with the re-opening of town centres.
- 1.2 These measures, undertaken following the offer of emergency funding by the Government have been put in place during the latter half of 2020.
- 1.3 These measures utilised Experimental Traffic Management Orders in order to provide the mechanism to undertake design and implementation within Government imposed short timescales, whilst providing the opportunity for statutory consultation and public feedback on the schemes.
- 1.4 The imposed programme requirements and the consequent sudden impact on daily life for businesses and residents following implementation of these measures is recognised.
- 1.5 Notwithstanding the emergency nature of implementation, all the schemes support the aims and objectives of the Council's Long Term Transport Strategy 2020 to 2041 (adopted 9th September 2020), either specifically or in principle.
- 1.6 This report sets out for information purposes the current position with regard to the three social distancing threads and the schemes within them, as well as the proposed next steps.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Experimental Traffic Management Orders (ETMOs) for the Social Distancing schemes were published between July and September 2020. These last for a maximum of 18 months.
- 2.2 Within this timeframe, the first 6 months comprise the statutory consultation period. If no objections are received in that period, the ETMO can be made permanent or revoked from that point onwards. All affected ward Councillors will be consulted before any final decisions are made.

- 2.3 However, after the first 6 months the statutory consultation period expires and for a maximum further period of 12 months, a scheme can remain under review pending a decision to revoke or make permanent based on the outcome of both positive and negative feedback and full technical assessment of the impact of the measure put in place.
- 2.4 Alterations to the ETMOs beyond the initial 6 month statutory consultation period can be made, with the proviso that those alterations undergo a further 6 month statutory notice period but within the overall 18 month duration of the original ETMO.
- 2.5 In each case, the periods will provide an opportunity for analysis of feedback and survey data and for the scheme to establish properly the benefits that the scheme may provide to the community. Where necessary, for example for the A1000 cycle scheme Phase 1, measures to address specific concerns can be developed and introduced before making an overall decision on whether the scheme should be made permanent with or without modification or revoked.

3. RECOMMENDED OPTIONS

A1000 Phase 1

- 3.1 Tranche 1 emergency funding by the Government (direct and via TfL) provided a total of £314,800 for design and implementation of A1000 Phase 1 (from North Finchley Town Centre southwards to the borough boundary with LB Haringey).
- 3.2 An additional application for Tranche 2 funding was considered in September/October 2020 to address Phase 2 from North Finchley northwards to the Monken Hadley area. However, acknowledging the feedback from Phase 1 officers in consultation with the Chairman of Environment Committee elected to withdraw the application. Instead, following discussions with TfL, on behalf of the Government, it was agreed that further funding amounting to £208,975 be allocated to look to design and implement measures to address concerns raised through feedback.
- 3.3 Officers are in the process of carrying out a review of A1000 Phase 1. During this time the following actions will be taken:
- (i) Utilising available funding, monitoring and data collection will continue, to inform the future decision on retention or removal of the scheme.
 - (ii) Measures will be investigated, developed and introduced to address concerns raised by the local community.
 - (iii) Continued feedback, both positive and negative will be welcomed, reviewed and acted on.

Schools

- 3.4 Funding from Government/TfL totalling £195,695 has been secured since last year. This comprises £92,986 for social distancing work around 9no schools including the introduction of school streets (timed closures to general traffic) at 5no schools; £72,695 to provide camera enforcement at Chalgrove and Holy Trinity schools and £30,000 to address a safety issue on Great Strand around Blessed Dominic and St James schools.

3.5 Officers are now looking to:

- (i) To carry out consultation with residents, parents, and local businesses about making the first 5 school streets permanent and moving to camera enforcement of these school streets. This would potentially involve upgrading 4 of these sites to camera enforcement and these schools would go through an informal consultation for 3 weeks commencing on 11th March 2021.
- (ii) Garden Suburb school already has cameras and letters have gone out this to Councillors and residents and the school advising them that we now propose to make the school street permanent unless we receive objections to the scheme by midnight 7th March 2021.
- (iii) To carry out consultation on the additional schools where proposal have been developed for implementation of experimental school streets through the LIP programme, Consultation on these schools is currently scheduled to commence on 11th March 2021. These schools are Wren Academy, St Agnes, Summerside, St. Paul's, Colindale primary, Edgware primary, Annunciation. All of these schools are currently proposed to operate with camera enforcement. Consultation on these school streets is due to commence on 11th March 2021.
- (iv) With regard to Blessed Dominic and St James schools we are developing proposals for presentation to the schools so that we can have a discussion about the merits or otherwise of developing a school street to deal with the traffic situation outside these schools.

Town Centres

3.6 Officers are looking to:

- (i) Further work to reduce the barrier extent that is planned for Watling Avenue in Burnt Oak.
- (ii) Monitor the ongoing need for barriers placed in the vicinity of vaccination sites in support of GPs and pharmacies undertaking COVID-19 vaccination, always in conjunction with that specific site.
- (iii) Review and monitor barrier use and temporary planters in the Town Centres as they begin to emerge from the latest lockdown.

4. PROGRESS ON REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

A1000 Phase 1

- 4.1 Phase 1 of the scheme was completed in November 2020 (though some remedial works by the council's contractor Conway Aecom are still being progressed).
- 4.2 Feedback received to date, as part of the on-going consultation, has, of course been a mixture of support and concern. Primary concerns raised are:

- (i) The impact on businesses from loss of parking in some areas.
- (ii) The impact of the scheme on motor vehicle congestion and traffic queues.
- (iii) The consequent implications for air quality in the immediate vicinity.
- (iv) Cycle uptake.
- (v) A lack of consultation.

4.3 At the same time, positive responses from scheme supporters also include suggestions on how the scheme can be improved.

4.4 Officers are and will continue to address all these concerns and suggestions over the course of the review period.

4.5 In the short term (prior to Christmas 2020), a number of specific business locations were identified through feedback, where loss of parking directly impacted business operations. Mitigations through introduction of alternative loading bays were agreed with business owners in 4no cases and have been implemented. 2no additional locations (a business and a school) are being progressed in discussion with the owner and the school's Principal.

4.6 In addition, officers requested support from and worked with TfL to revise signal timings at junctions along the route to improve efficiency of the junctions and reduce traffic queues and congestion. Monitoring of traffic flows are still in progress to determine the level of success of these changes.

4.7 During the forthcoming review period, using available funding, officers will be developing further measures to reintroduce some parking bays where possible, further ease congestion and address any design issues highlighted in feedback.

4.8 A more thorough and comprehensive monitoring strategy has been developed. This will proceed in time with easing of current lockdown measures, to reflect as closely as possible the performance of the network under 'normal' circumstances. Some surveys have already taken place examining cycle and traffic usage and queueing. The time of year (autumn/winter period) and the changing nature of Government instruction to work from home have had a direct impact on cycling uptake envisaged at the start of the Government's emergency funding response. It is important, therefore, that data collection and analysis continues until a period after easing of lockdown, in order to achieve a more balanced and objective view of the impact of social distancing measures.

Schools

4.9 During the summer of 2020 social distancing measures were completed at 9no schools within the borough ahead of the autumn term starting.

4.10 School street locations comprising timed road closures to general traffic, were implemented at 5no of these schools with the intention of reducing traffic volumes on the

roads the schools were situated in to allow more space for pupils to socially distance, reduce vehicle conflicts with potential pedestrian movement, reduce traffic congestion in the area and encourage more walking, scootering and cycling to and from the school.

- 4.11 Four of these schools (Chalgrove, Deansbrook, Holy Trinity, St Catherines) used mobile barriers to maintain the school street closure while one school (Garden Suburb) used camera enforcement via ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) cameras.
- 4.12 Over time it has proved difficult for schools to maintain a group of enthusiastic volunteers, usually staff, to operate the manual barriers and there also appear to be some additional potential safety risks associated with the operation of the manual barriers. Consequently, funding was successfully sought to introduce cameras at Chalgrove and Holy Trinity schools.
- 4.13 As a result of the number of requests received, officers bid for a further £241,730 funding from TFL for establishing four additional School Streets, however, there was no available funding and this bid was unsuccessful.
- 4.14 These four school streets are now being included in the LIP programme for implementation, in addition LIP monies are being allocated to introduce camera enforcement at Deansbrook and St Catherines schools also, subject to successful consultation with residents and parents etc. The LIP programme also includes proposals for new school streets at Wren Academy, Blessed Dominic / St James, St Agnes, Summerside, St. Paul's, Colindale primary, Edgware primary, Annunciation.
- 4.15 In all, within one year the council will have gone from having no school streets to implementing potentially up to 14 such schemes across the borough which is a large programme and a significant achievement. At present work is ongoing around preparing for resident consultation on the implementation of the LIP programme of school streets and residents and parent's views on making the first round of temporary school streets permanent.

Town Centres

- 4.16 During 2020, there was a need for social distancing within six of the main town centres, (Edgware, Finchley Centre, Finchley North, Burnt Oak, Chipping Barnet and Golders Green). Queues were expected and subsequently found to be particularly prevalent at banks and post offices as well as supermarkets, food stores and pharmacies, with other shops, opticians and mobile phone stores generating queues to a lesser degree. Some businesses that traded in part on the street (greengrocers in particular) also generated numbers of people on the footway who would interact with pedestrians passing in a hard to socially distance way.

- 4.17 In order to mitigate this situation, some parking and carriageway capacity was given up to enhance the usable space for pedestrians. Using this reallocated space, the main social distancing measures implemented were the use of water fillable barriers in red and white which were placed on the carriageway to enhance the usable space for pedestrians.
- 4.18 Generally these barriers were supported either by parking suspensions that had been put in place or were on yellow line markings. Ramps have been put in place to help people access this space due to the height difference with the kerb. As far as was possible, any removed blue badge holder bays and loading bays were re-provided and in the case of blue badge bays spaces were kept as near as was practicable to original locations.
- 4.19 Based on operational experience, some of the barrier extents have been reduced, with priority of released space being given to loading and disabled badge holder use.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 5.1 Immediate removal of the various schemes is an option. However, the potential consequences, both financially and reputationally, as evidenced by the removal of the cycling measures in Kensington are deemed considerable. In relation to school streets discussions with the schools suggest that the schemes have generally worked well. Officers therefore proposed to consult on making these schools streets permanent.
- 5.2 Simple removal would be at odds with the vision set out in the Council's Long Term Transport Strategy. This looks to encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling, to improve air quality, reduce car dependency and to promote the Healthy Street Approach to create better quality environments. Such themes in turn support the Council's Health and Wellbeing priorities.
- 5.3 Removal prior to the completion of a review period will negate the benefits of data collection and the 'bedding in' of the schemes (assisted, where necessary, by design improvements). The Council would be seen to have lost the opportunity of fully trialling a number of innovative ideas that reflect the Long Term Transport Strategy. This lost opportunity may then have a detrimental impact on future design and consultation, as well as funding opportunities for wider sustainable travel, local environmental and well-being initiatives.

6. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

A1000 Phase 1

- 6.1 From April 2021 the following activities will progress:
- (i) The development and implementation of further design alterations to compensate for parking loss, to ease congestion and to seek other improvements to the scheme to benefit all users. Proposals will be brought before and discussed with ward members prior to presentation to residents and businesses along the route on a site by site basis.
 - (ii) The collection of monitoring data including cycle and motorised traffic usage, traffic queueing, the impact on side roads and air quality.

- (iii) Increased engagement with the community through a more proactive use of the Council's web-based tools, specifically the Engage Hub.

School Streets

- 6.2 To carry out consultation with residents, parents and local businesses about making the first 5 school streets permanent and moving to camera enforcement of these school streets. This would involve upgrading 4 of these sites to camera enforcement (This consultation is currently due to commence on 11th March 2021).
- 6.3 Garden Suburb school already has cameras and so for this particular school the question solely relates to whether to make the scheme permanent. Letters have been sent to relevant councillors and residents etc seeking to get their views on this prior to the end of the 6 month experimental period which concludes on 7th March 2021. If no objections are received then the decision on whether to make this scheme permanent can be made via a Chief Officer Decision pursuant to the Executive Director for Environment Scheme of Delegation (updated 9th November 2020).
- 6.4 To carry out consultation on the additional schools where proposal have been developed for implementation of experimental school streets through the LIP programme, Consultation on these schools is currently scheduled to commence on 11th March 2021. These schools are Wren Academy, St Agnes, Summerside, St. Paul's, Colindale primary, Edgware primary, Annunciation.
- 6.5 For Blessed Dominic and St James schools in Colindale options for dealing with the schools traffic and safety issues are currently being investigated and will be put before the education service and the schools for consideration prior to any consultation taking place.

Town Centres

- 6.6 To monitor the performance of the barrier system and any temporary planters as the Town Centres emerge from the latest lockdown.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

7.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 7.1.1 The Council's Transport Strategy

7.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 7.2.1 Finance & Value for Money

Current available funding and sources comprise:

Social Distancing Thread	Govt Direct Funding	Govt (via TfL Funding)	LIP Funding
A1000			
Phase 1 – LB Haringey to Tally Ho Corner	£ 51,000	£ 263,800	
Phase 1 - review and mitigation measures		£ 208,975	

Schools			
Distancing & school streets at 9no. schools	£ 15,000	£ 77,986	
ANPR Enforcement at 2no schools		£ 72,965	
Safety issues on Grand Strand		£ 30,000	
Additional school streets programme in the LIP			£ 435,000
Town Centres			
Government emergency funding	£ 33,600		
Re-opening High Streets Safety Fund	£ 352,546		
Totals	£ 452,146	£ 653,726	£ 435,000

7.2.2 Procurement

This section does not apply to this report.

7.2.3 Staffing

The design will encompass staff from Re, assisted by Third Party companies providing surveys and data analysis. Construction resource will be through a combination of the current contractor (Conway Aecom) addressing outstanding remedial and ongoing short-term measures and the proposed replacement contractor, Tarmac Kier for ongoing mitigation implementation.

7.2.4 IT

This section does not apply to this report.

7.2.5 Property

This section does not apply to this report.

7.2.6 Sustainability

As well as addressing the short term needs of the Coronavirus pandemic, the schemes support the council's plans for a sustainable Transport Network as outlined in the Long Term Transport Strategy

7.3 Social Value

7.3.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. In the short term, the schemes directly support Government policies to mitigate the Coronavirus pandemic.

7.4 Legal and Constitutional References

7.4.1 The Traffic Management Act 2004 places obligations on highway authorities to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on their road network. Authorities are required to make

arrangements as they consider appropriate for planning and carrying out the action to be taken in performing the duty.

7.4.2 The Council as the Highway Authority has the necessary legal powers to introduce or amend Experimental Traffic Management Orders under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and subsidiary regulations made under that Act.

7.4.3 The terms of reference for the Environment Committee under Article 7 of the Council's Constitution includes responsibility for all borough-wide or cross-constituency matters relating to the street scene including, parking, road safety, lighting, street cleaning, transport, waste, waterways, refuse, recycling, allotments, parks, trees, crematoria and mortuary, trading standards and environmental health.

7.5 **Risk Management**

7.5.1 The Council, as Highway Authority, has various responsibilities and duties. To address these responsibilities and duties the council has established policies, systems and processes that are regularly audited, reviewed and amended where necessary to reflect current good practice and guidance.

7.5.2 The social distancing schemes look to introduce measures to reduce the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the health and well-being of the local population.

7.6 **Equalities and Diversity**

7.6.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires organisations exercising public functions to demonstrate that due regard has been paid to equalities in:

- Elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advancement of equality of opportunity between people from different groups.
- Fostering of good relations between people from different groups.

7.6.2 The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

7.6.3 To assist in meeting the duty the council will:

- Try to understand the diversity of our customers to improve our services.
- Consider the impact of our decisions on different groups to ensure they are fair.
- Mainstream equalities into business and financial planning and integrating equalities into everything we do.
- Learn more about Barnet's diverse communities by engaging with them.

7.6.4 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day to day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and delivery of services.

7.6.5 Good roads should provide facilities for all road users and will have a positive impact on the quality of life for those who travel along them, or live and carry out business on the.

7.6.6 Similarly, measures to support the prime function of a road or sections of a road eg Town

Centres and School Streets reflect better the needs of the users, again promoting well-being.

7.7 Corporate Parenting

7.7.1 In line with the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in decision-making across the council. There are no implications for Corporate Parenting in relation to this report.

7.8 Consultation and Engagement

7.8.1 The programme imposed by the Government to design and implement measures proposed during 2020 did not allow as comprehensive a consultation and engagement as would normally take place. Officers recognise this. Notwithstanding the statutory consultation periods set out by the ETMOs, officers will look to engage with Ward Members and residents and businesses directly affected by further proposed measures, including mitigation measures to reflect feedback received to date.

7.8.2 Officers are aware of the TfL appeal against the findings of the High Court in the A10 Bishopsgate Corridor court case. No date has yet been set for this appeal and Officers are consequently in the process of seeking guidance from TfL in this matter

7.8.3 Officers are also aware of the potential impact of the mayoral election on up-coming consultation and engagement.

7.9 Insight

7.9.1 This section does not apply to this report.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 Environment Committee Report 30 June 2020.

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s59138/Covid%2019%20Decisions.pdf>