

Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel

1 September 200

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Active & Healthy Travel Response to Covid-19 (Covid Transport Plan)

Lead officer: Chris Lee, Director for Environment & Regeneration

Lead member: Cllr Martin Whelton, Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport

Contact officer: Paul McGarry, Head of Future Merton

Recommendations:

- A. That the Panel note the progress of funding bids to deliver Active & Healthy Travel measures in response to Covid-19.
 - B. That the Panel note the progress of scheme delivery
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Cabinet adopted Merton's Active & Healthy Travel Response to Covid-19 on 15 June 2020.
- 1.2. Merton Council has prepared an emergency transport response to the Coronavirus pandemic and to aid social distancing in the borough. The plan is focused on making changes to roads and pavements to improve road safety, support social distancing and provide more space for walking and cycling.
- 1.3. Since the adoption of the plan on 15th June, The Council has embarked on an unprecedented delivery programme of 45 safety schemes over a three-month period with the potential for more to continue into 2021.
- 1.4. Pavements have been extended into the road, where appropriate and possible, at some of the busiest parts of the borough such as town centres and local shopping parades.
- 1.5. The emergency changes will be followed by longer term work to improve walking and cycling routes throughout the borough. The plans will also look to keep Merton moving safely as travel patterns change and restrictions ease through the promotion of low traffic neighbourhoods and school streets.
- 1.6. The plan sets out the Council's priorities for action, and is a framework for the funding bids that have been submitted to DFT and TFL to deliver the programme.
- 1.7. This report provides members with an update on the progress of funding bids and the implementation of street space measures.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The natural desire in many policy areas may be to seek a return to the status-quo pre-Covid19. Whilst this may be true for health, education and the economy this is not necessarily the case for environment and transport objectives.
- 2.2. Pre-covid-19, our borough, and London as a whole, was suffering from poor air quality and traffic congestion. Objectives across a number of Council strategies are aimed at reducing emissions and promoting active travel;
 - Merton's Air Quality Action Plan
 - Merton's Public Health and Wellbeing Strategy
 - Merton's Climate Emergency Action Plan
 - Merton's Transport Strategy
- 2.3. Whilst the aims and objectives of these strategies remain sound, the context in which the actions sit has changed significantly. The borough has seen an increase in cycling of all age groups during lock-down and there is a heightened desire amongst our communities to reallocate road space to promote more walking and cycling for local trips
- 2.4. Transport for London launched the London Streetspace plan in May 2020 to radically overhaul London's streets to accommodate a possible ten-fold increase in cycling and fivefold increase in walking as lockdown eases.
- 2.5. All London boroughs bid competitively to obtain a share of £45m from TFL to deliver the Mayor's Streetspace for London programme.
- 2.6. The Department for Transport also launched the Emergency Active Travel Fund to deliver the priorities government have now places on local authorities to create emergency, pop-up cycle lanes and footway widening. DFT allocated £100,000 as a first tranche to Merton, though we await confirmation of a second tranche of DFT funding; assessment of the second phase projects is being undertaken by TFL and pending approval.
- 2.7. A copy of the Cabinet report and the adopted Active & Healthy Travel Response to Covid-19 are linked as background papers to this report.
- 2.8. Cabinet agreed a set of priorities and range of measures to be bid for.
- 2.9. The priorities for delivery are:
 - **Short term:** pavement widening to support local business and high streets
 - **Medium term:** supporting schools and developing a range of school streets for September re-opening.
 - **Medium-long term:** developing strategic cycle infrastructure and Low-Traffic Neighbourhood interventions utilising TFL and Government funding.

The adopted Active & Healthy Travel response to covid is attached and Appendix A to this report.

Progress of Funding Bids

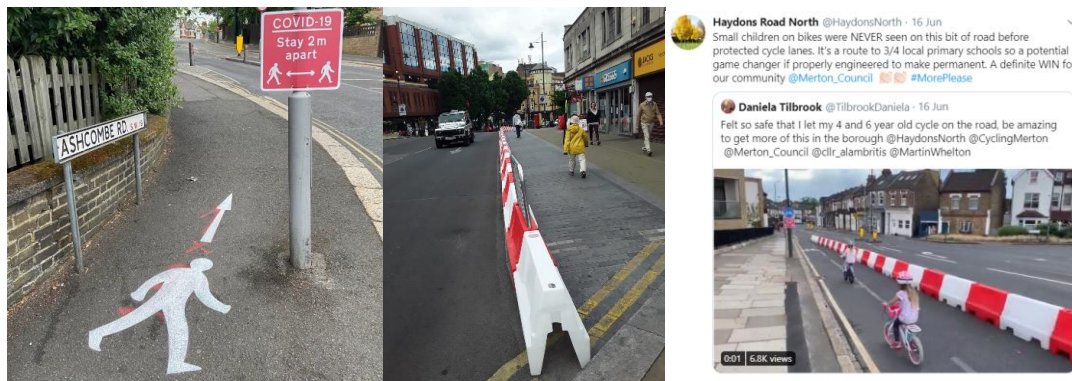
- 2.10. At the time of publication of this report, the Council has bid for
- 2.11. **£ 1,390,680 to TFL**
- 2.12. **£ 105,000 to DFT**
- 2.1. The total value of bids put forward by Merton Council is £1,495,680. The total received so far is £440,740; with the DFT second tranche announcement expected mid-September.
- 2.2. On 10th of June, Councils were asked to submit expressions of interest to MHCLG for shovel-ready capital projects that could be delivered in 18 months.
- 2.3. On 18th June, Merton put forward a proposal for cycling and public realm improvements in Wimbledon town centre to support a green economic recovery. The proposals are largely drawn from our earlier 'Mini-Hollands' cycling bid with updated costings and set within the context of the Future Wimbledon masterplan.
- 2.4. For reference, the expression of interest to MHCLG's Cities and Local Growth Unit is attached as Appendix B to this report.
- 2.5. This bid was received by MHCLG and passed to the London LEP for consideration amongst other priorities for London and was not successful.

Progress on Scheme Delivery

- 2.6. Short term measures delivered:
- Mitcham Fair Green (Footway widening)
 - Merton High Street (Footway widening)
 - Ashcombe Rd Bridge (One-way footways)
 - Wimbledon Bridge (Footway widening)
 - Haydons Rd Bridge (Cycle lanes)
 - Worple Rd o/s Elys Sainsburys (Footway widening)

Short-term cycling schemes implemented

- London Road, Mitcham (Cycle/Bus lanes)
- Wimbledon Village High Street West (part-time road closure)
- CS7 Colliers Wood High Street (TFL) cycle lane defenders
- Raleigh Gardens Mitcham, cycle lane defenders.
- Merton High Street (protected cycle lanes – by end September)
- Plough Lane West (mandatory cycle lanes – lane defenders by end of September)



Ashcombe Rd, Wimbledon Bridge, Haydons Road

School Streets

- 2.7. To help children to be safe from traffic and high levels of air pollution, we plan to expand the school streets programme.
- 2.8. School streets restrict access to vehicles at drop-off and pick up times and allow children to safely walk, cycle and scoot into school. Reducing vehicle journeys is important for improving air quality, climate change and will help to support a green recovery following restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.9. There are 3 school streets in operation in Merton and utilising our successful funding bids to TFL, we will roll-out a further 25 in September 2020.
- 2.10. The Council's website has been updated for the school streets programme, all details can be found at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/traffic-management/school-streets-programme>
- 2.11. Our School Streets Guide is available online at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/SCHOOL%20STREETS%20-%20Guide.pdf> and as Appendix C to this report
- 2.12. In July and August we have worked with schools to prepare for school streets. From September 2020 the statutory consultation will start as vehicle restrictions at drop off and pick up times are put in place. The scale of the school streets programme requires over 340 signs to be manufactured and installed which will take time for contractors to complete. The work will take all of September to complete. In addition, work is underway with Parking Services to manage the resident's exemption process.
- 2.13. The School streets project covers 53 streets and the Council will also be working to process between 5000-8000 exemption applications. To allow time for this; the full project will not be complete until October half-term.
- 2.14. The statutory consultation will be for a period of between 6 to 12 months. By the 18th month, a final decision will be taken about which school streets will be made permanent and their final design.

- 2.15. The Cabinet Member decision notice for all school street traffic orders is available online at <https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/School%20streets%20decisions.pdf>
- 2.16. A map of the proposed school streets and affected streets is in Appendix D of this report and available online at https://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/Z80-100-00B_GA-SCHOOL%20STREETS.pdf
- 2.17. The list of proposed school streets is in Appendix E of this report.
- 2.18. **Low traffic Neighbourhoods**
- 2.19. A low traffic neighbourhood is a residential area, bordered by main roads (the places where buses, lorries, non-local traffic should be), where “through” motor vehicle traffic is discouraged or removed. Strategic road closures (like bollards or planters) prevent through traffic. Every street is still accessible by vehicle.
- 2.20. There are many ways to design a low traffic neighbourhood, but the main principle is that every resident can drive onto their street, get deliveries etc., but it’s harder or impossible to drive straight through from one main road to the next.
- 2.21. The aims of LTNs include:
- deterring traffic from diverting from crowded main roads to residential streets as rat runs
 - making it safer for pedestrians to social distance, for instance by walking in the street where pavements are narrower than the recommended two metres
 - encouraging people to use bikes where possible by reducing traffic that many find intimidating and off-putting for cycle journeys, especially short, local trips
 - encouraging people to walk for short journeys such as local shopping trips rather than taking the car
 - securing gains made during lockdown, such as cleaner air, neighbourliness and reduced noise.
 - Reducing traffic on residential streets, creating low-traffic corridors across Merton so more people can walk and cycle as part of their daily routine
- 2.22. Becoming a LTN means residents retain motor vehicle access, as do delivery vehicles, visitors and emergency and waste services. The goal is to deter drive-through access by those trying to avoid the main roads.

- 2.23. Merton Council has secured funding for 5-8 Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. These have been assessed and approved by TFL. Officers have engaged local members where LTNs are proposed for their wards.
- 2.24. Officers have also created a Councillors Guide to Low Traffic Neighbourhoods; attached as Appendix F to this report.
- 2.25. The Council's website will be updated soon with details of the LTNs; though the school streets roll-out currently takes priority.
- 2.26. The first phase of LTNs are proposed for;
- Seeley Rd – point closure
 - Links Rd – point closure
 - Commonsides East / Grove Rd – point closure
 - Sandy lane – point closure
 - Botsford Rd – Banned turn.
- 2.27. Newsletters will be delivered by 27th August.
- 2.28. The advert will be published on 27th August 2020 and the Order will come into effect on 7th September
- 2.29. The works are programmed with Conway due to start 7th September – but they should all be finished by 25th September 2020
- 2.30. Other LTN bids have been re-submitted to TFL for further consideration. Announcements are expected in mid-September and include
- Haydons Park Road- point-closures
 - Merton Park – Church Road banned turns
 - Gorrington Park Avenue / St James Rd - point closures
- The council will consider the use of CIL to add to the LTN programme.
- 2.31. Details will be made available in September on the Council's web page: <https://www.merton.gov.uk/streets-parking-transport/traffic-management>

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. Road safety and active travel measures are normally funded via TFL LIP which has now been suspended by TFL for 2020/21.
- 3.2. This plan sets out a strategy to maximise funding opportunities to deliver on measures that will support social distancing and mitigate the impact of covid19 on local transport services. The plan drastically accelerates a number of road-safety measures. Since the adoption of the plan on 15th June, The Council has embarked on an unprecedented programme of 45 projects in a three month period.

- 3.3. The alternative of not providing social distancing or active travel measures to alleviate pressure on public transport could lead to failure in mitigating the spread of Covid-19.
- 3.4. The alternative to not seeking external funding would lead to a greater call on Merton's revenue budgets as local authorities have been tasked with delivering these measures.
- 3.5. To supplement the success of the external funding bids, officers are preparing bids to allocate Community Infrastructure Levy to deliver schemes that were not approved by TFL and to provide resource for enforcement of measures.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. Details of community engagement that led to the covid transport plan are contained in section 4 of the 15 June Cabinet report.
<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/s32625/Covid%20Transport%20Cabinet%2015%20June%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>
- 4.2. Officers have engaged with ward members on projects in their ward which have received funding. The Council will also undertake the necessary consultations required for Temporary Traffic Orders and to keep residents updated of works via the Council's website and social media channels.
- 4.3. Officers have engaged schools and the council's communications team regarding the school streets programme.
- 4.4. Officers have engaged with local groups and residents via the collaborative forum established by the Merton Transport Residents Group.
- 4.5. Statutory consultation on individual schemes will commence when the Experimental Traffic Orders are live. A web-portal is being developed for residents to provide feedback to the Council throughout the experiments.

5 TIMETABLE

- **School Streets:** September-October 2020 roll-out
- **Low Traffic Neighbourhoods:** September – November roll-out
- **Strategic cycling links and future phases of LTNs:** There is no programme yet, pending funding announcements from TFL in mid-September. These schemes, if successful, will roll out into 2021

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The Council set aside £80,000 from existing Highway budgets for immediate pavement widening schemes. This has now been offset by funding received from TFL and DFT and may also be supplemented by the use of CIL to protect the Council's revenue position. (CIL allocations will be subject to Cabinet decisions in September/October 2020)

- 7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**
- 7.1. None for the purpose of this report
- 8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**
- 8.1. None for the purpose of this update – see Cabinet report.
- 9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1. None for the purpose of this update – see Cabinet report
- 10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**
- 10.1. None for the purpose of this update – see Cabinet report
- 11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**
- A. Covid Transport Strategy
 - B. Wimbledon Cycle EOI to MHCLG
 - C. School Streets Guide
 - D. School Streets Map
 - E. School Streets List
 - F. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods Guide
- 12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 12.1. Cabinet Report. 15 June 2020.
Merton’s Active & Healthy Travel Response to Covid-19
<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MId=3689&Ver=4>