

**PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
VIRTUAL, INFORMAL MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY, 22 APRIL 2020**

# **NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

**By virtue of paragraphs 3 & 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.**

**12. NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

Pedestrianisation/post lockdown measures on the City's streets

A Member questioned whether the Committee might potentially consider pedestrianising certain areas of the City given the current, unique situation which would seem to provide an opportunity to do so and to be bold in looking to the future.

The Chair reported that the Director of the Built Environment had already contacted him and the Deputy Chairman to suggest that work should be undertaken to consider what our response will be post-lockdown and how this would impact on the Transport Strategy – whether elements of that could be accelerated and how the response to that and the ability to use the City's streets/highways with social distancing in place should be managed. Another Member had also made the point that, when people were fortunate enough to be back in the City, having crowded pavements will probably not be acceptable for some time. In summary, the Chair reported that Officers were therefore already actively looking at at present.

The Chair went on to remark on Milan and the announcements that they had made recently around not returning to normality. He added that the media interviews that he had given so far had suggested that there would be no radical change because it was anticipated that the City would return to some form of normality, however, the current situation presented an opportunity to make more progress than we would otherwise. Issues relating to road safety, air quality and the like all remained as relevant now and going forward as they had done previously.

Another Member commented that any changes the City Corporation make as lockdown is eased off would presumably need to be made quite quickly. She suggested that it was clear that different cities were likely to take different approaches to this and that it would be good to have a paper to the next meeting of this Committee so that Members could feed into these plans and assess what options were available. She underlined that there had always been a strength of feeling on this Committee to ultimately pedestrianise the whole Square Mile and that Members' responses to this may therefore be quite radical.

A Member, also serving Chairman of the Streets and Walkways Sub Committee reported that they had already started the process because, although it was not yet known when people would return to the City in any numbers, it was highly likely either through regulation or through the wishes of the public (as had been seen in other European cities that people were very hesitant to return to crowded public spaces as a result of the current crisis) that this would need to be addressed very quickly. This would be particularly pertinent in the City where there were very narrow, crowded streets in some parts at certain times of the day and social distancing opportunities would need to be in place very soon for people on our public highways. The Member added that this might mean that we were going to have to consider roads as not necessarily for cars in the future and that he had made this point some months previously at the Living Streets Conference. The City Corporation may be driven to a solution whereby the streets are for people principally and not for vehicles at certain parts of the day, particularly early morning and evening rush hours. If this were not the case and the safety of people using the streets could not be guaranteed, the businesses on which this organisation and employees rely would simply not get their staff returning to work in sufficient numbers. He added that once shops and offices reopened, they would also presumably limit the number of people entering premises at any one time and insist that they remained 2m apart which would also lead to queuing on the City streets.

Another Member supported the previous speaker and stated that one of the quickest ways to achieve these could be to bring forward plans to reduce the level of parking available in the Square Mile and stop people from returning to bad habits in terms of coming into the City using unwanted forms of transport. He added that this could be used as a paradigm shift in the way that people come into the City and bring all sorts of other benefits that would be of benefit to the City Corporation in terms of maintaining the improved air quality that had been seen of late. He added that Lower Thames Street, within his Ward, had traditionally been one of the most polluted places in the City and that it would be interesting to see if and how changes might be sprung off of this particular situation to address this.

A Member also agreed with this approach and commented on the timeframe around this. He added that the opportunity to execute a lot of this work was clear given that the City was relatively empty at present. He added that he would therefore strongly support trying to undertake some of this as soon as possible and not waiting for grand Committees to meet and determine this, by using urgency procedures or Sub Committees where possible.

Another Member urged caution by underlining that the virus would continue to exist once restrictions had been relaxed and would remain very contagious. He added that public transport into the City was an obvious incubator for the ongoing spread of COVID-19 in the short-term and suggested that the City Corporation ought to be aware of this and the fact that driving in to the City would remain a much safer option for some such as NHS workers.

A Member observed that Officers had a very short form method available to them at present, under emergency powers, for closing roads but that this only

lasted for a brief period. He suggested that, to the extent that there was support for doing this, the Committee and Officers should look at this in terms of what needed to be put in place to seamlessly transition from emergency procedures into longer-term solutions.

The Chair agreed that there was some immediacy required here in terms of oversight and that a joined-up approach with the work of Streets and Walkways was also needed. He noted that there was a lot of support from the Committee to act swiftly and boldly on this.

The Director of the Built Environment thanked Members for their helpful contributions and suggestions. She noted the desire to put in place things to maintain certain procedures after emergency powers expire. She added that the point made around key workers driving into the City was very true at present and that this was being done to avoid putting pressures on public transport as well as to protect themselves. It therefore needed to be supported in the short-term but, longer-term, Officers would need to ensure that others did not drive into or through the City. She undertook to bring a paper back to this Committee as soon as possible to balance out some of these points and to outline some of the opportunities available for comment by Members. The paper could also include a small review of what was known to be happening in some other cities.

The Chair thanked the Director but underlined the need for consultation whilst also recognising that time was against the organisation in terms of taking measures in line with a gradual release on lockdown. He requested that a small working party consisting of the Chair and Deputy Chair of this Committee and the Streets and Walkways Sub Committee, together with relevant Officers be set up to discuss this in more detail and to report back, informally, to Members in the coming weeks what the thinking around this is. He underlined that this work could not be seen to be adversely affecting the City and be too radical but, equally, he recognised that this was a unique opportunity to progress some work. He concluded by stating that he suspected that it was most likely that the City Corporation would end up reacting to a gradual release of lockdown on safety grounds for pedestrian movement on the City's streets.

A Member commented that responses to the consultation around the pedestrianisation of St-Mary-Axe had been overwhelmingly positive from the general public and that this might therefore be considered as a useful channel into what was now under discussion.

### Cycling

A Member underlined the need to think about the future. She commented on the number of people in the City currently cycling on pavements despite the roads being relatively empty. She added that, because all cycle docks/parking were situated on the pavements, it seemed to imply that cycling on the pavement was permitted and suggested that something that could be addressed going forward would be to put these in car parking spaces in the roads. She concluded by stating that, if the practice of cycling on pavements

were to continue as people returned to the City and tried to practise social distancing, this would become particularly dangerous.

The Chair commented that Officers would respond to this point formally outside of the meeting. As an aside, the Chair commented that Officers were already actively looking at carriageway space for other uses.

**13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED  
ISSUES REPORT: PUBLIC REALM SECURITY PROGRAMME DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

The Committee considered a late, separately circulated report of the Director of the Built Environment proposing that the Chair and Deputy Chairman receive full and formal confidential briefings on individual proposals within the Public Realm Security Programme rather than just redacted reports, but that the authority to receive & approve those reports is delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman going forward. It is also proposed that this delegation will last for 12 months, after which it will be reviewed to see whether it is appropriate to continue.

Officers clarified that this was about putting in place more effective oversight and engagement process in relation to the security programme. Members will recall a series of reports being put forward to various Committees under the umbrella of the security programme but, because of their sensitivity around specific locations and their vulnerabilities, these had been anonymised using letters of the alphabet. It was recognised that there were limitations to this process and Officers would therefore like to move forward on the basis of using a more streamlined process for the next 12 months initially, that allows those reports to be agreed under delegated authority but with a full briefing with relevant Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen prior to this formal consideration. It was hoped that this would be conducive to more rounded, open discussions around locations with relevant Members. Whilst this had happened informally in the past, this would formalise the approach to make sure that the appropriate level of challenge and informed debate was there which would be particularly important as locations coming forward would involve more choice around what measures were put in place. Members were informed that programme level reports would continue to be put to this Committee as the spending Committee which would be expected at around six-month intervals.

A Member questioned whether Officers could further define how frequently the Committee might receive updates in this work and suggested that quarterly seemed to be appropriate. He went on to question the involvement of individual Ward Members in localised decisions such as these and underlined the knowledgeable input that they would be able to offer here.

Another Member stated that, if the Committee were to support this recommendation, they would be effectively agreeing that all members of this Committee, with the exception of the Chair and Deputy Chairman were to be

trusted less to keep information confidential than, for example, the Clerk who writes the reports. If this were a genuine concern, all Members could be offered the relevant information in an appropriately confidential manner, for example by a private, verbal briefing once normality had resumed as opposed to via email. He added that he was strongly opposed to this recommendation for being contrary to democratic accountability and, in his view, unjustified on security grounds.

In terms of frequency of reports, Officers reported that six monthly intervals would accord well with the programme of works. In terms of Ward Member involvement, Officers had said previously that they would engage with them in terms of the works being carried out but that a steer would need to be given by the Security Director as to their formal involvement.

Officers clarified that the current process was meeting requirements around democratic accountability and was Member approved. Members had approved an approach that Officers were now looking to better define – for example, for some locations it was proportionate to do full security protection, in others it was proportionate to do partial protection and others no protection at all. It was recognised that the process being followed at present had some weaknesses because another level of engagement might be useful, particularly when considering areas where it might be appropriate not to implement security measures to ensure that the correct oversight was given. Officers were essentially looking to implement a better way of working that still met the needs of the security programme and the needs of individual locations but still maintained the anonymity of these locations. To date, this had proved very difficult to do via the Committee process. Finally, Officers clarified that Committee Clerks were also unaware of the identity of specific security locations as they were anonymised throughout the process. Only those Officers closely involved in each project and Counter Terrorism Team within the City Police were aware of the locations at present.

Another Member stated that these reports had been coming to this Committee for many years now on blue, confidential papers and had always been well aware of the need to keep these matters confidential. She agreed with the point already made around the need to involve local Ward Members in some of these matters and stressed that Members were often well aware of locations despite their anonymity within these reports. The Member expressed concerns around a narrowing of oversight and input on these reports should this recommendation be approved.

A Member sought to reassure those Members who had raised concerns, stating that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of both this Committee and the Streets and Walkways Sub-Committee had oversight of these matters. In his experience over the past year, he stated that it was really important that security was maintained and that as few people as necessary had the full details of these works to ensure this. Secondly, he underlined that there was genuine oversight not only from Members here but also from those Officers involved in the works. This was not intended to actively exclude people but to refine the current system of approval for these plans, proposals and works. Those Members being given detailed briefs on these works in particular areas

knew these areas very well between them but were also able to speak with Ward colleagues about any particular problems in these locations should that prove necessary. Equally, Ward Members were able to approach those Members overseeing the works with any relevant concerns around security. He concluded by urging Members to support the proposals.

The Member who had originally raised concerns over democratic accountability should these recommendations be approved spoke again to state that he was not reassured by the last speaker. He reiterated that the fundamental principle was that elected Members were to be trusted less to keep information confidential than, say the report author who was, presumably, not a senior police officer. He added that he saw no logic in this approach and having just four Members consider these matters as opposed to the full Committee. He stated that he failed to understand the issue here. He agreed with the point already made that Members were often already aware of the locations requiring security works and that they should therefore have the benefit of a proper briefing on them and be given the opportunity, each of them, to express their own views rather than hoping that they may or may not be picked up by those four Members making the decisions.

The Chair commented that, to his mind, the current system, whilst working well, was not actually democratically accountable or sufficiently transparent, given that the grand Committee were approving matters with anonymised locations meaning that some could technically be taking a view on these without actually knowing where each location was. He added that, equally, it was important to contain such sensitive information and that this was not a matter of trust but about the promulgation of this information. In practice, he and the Deputy Chairman were already being briefed on these matters in more detail outside of formal meetings and this was an attempt to formalise that and ensure Member accountability. Finally, he referred to Ward Member consultation, and reported that the Chair and Deputy Chair of both this and the Sub-Committee were accountable to all Members and that urgent decisions were made on different matters all the time, ultimately that was part of the process.

A Member spoke to agree that this was not a matter of trust but about process and expediting/making efficient decisions. He added that Members elected amongst themselves, within their respective Committees, Chairs and Deputy Chairs to take these kinds of decisions on their behalf in the most effective way possible. In his view, the recommendations formalised what was currently an informal process and clearly passed responsibility and accountability to designated Members.

Another Member stated that whilst he completely understood the concerns around democratic oversight here, the interventions here are fully informed and based on counter-terrorism assessments and there was not therefore a lot of scope to discuss/debate these matters. The role of Members was not to question the interventions but to ensure that they happened in the right way and at the right time. He agreed that this step would formalise a process that had been in place for the last two years and had been working very well. He clarified that, in addition to the Chair and Deputy Chair of this Committee and

the Streets and Walkways Sub Committee, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Projects Sub Committee were also very much part of this process. His final point was to state that what was being proposed here was completely in line with what you would expect in any organisation around the information management protocols on security in particular and was not a matter of trust.

A Member stated that she understood from Officers that some of these decisions would now involve an element of choice and that the suggestion to involve one or two additional Ward Members in these matters might be worth exploring further. She added that she did endorse this becoming a more formal process and could well see that this was a matter of risk as opposed to trust.

Officers undertook to give this matter further consideration in consultation with the City Corporation's Strategic Security Director. They underlined, however that some of the locations sat across more than one Ward and that many Wards had more than 1 or 2 Members. Officers reminded the Committee that it had been the Corporation's position for some time, and endorsed by various Committees, including this one, that Members would not receive too much detail on these matters and that locations would be anonymised. With this in mind, Officers proposed that appropriate Ward members on deciding Committees rather than all relevant Ward Members be included in future briefings in the interest of limiting the sharing of sensitive information. Officers went on to clarify that part of the briefings offered contained information coming directly from Counter-Terrorism Security Advisers within City Police and so it was extremely important to manage the dissemination of that carefully.

A Member commented that his Ward was involved in at least one of these locations and that some also had residential properties as part of their curtilage. He stated that it was therefore very important that there was dialogue with one or more Ward Members as there was wider concern from the public in terms of wanting to know that these locations were being properly secured. At present, it was very difficult to get adequate information to those concerned to provide them with the confidence they sought.

The Chair summarised by stating that he was hearing a range of different views from the Committee. He underlined that this decision was around changing a convention and was being discussed informally at present. This could, however, be easily revisited at the behest of any Member once the formal meeting cycle of this Committee resumed in the coming months. He asked that Officers look again at some form of appropriate Ward Member engagement as requested. He added that, personally speaking, in terms of accountability, he would make a judgement call in each case as to Ward Member engagement to supplement his own knowledge of specific locations, as necessary. He concluded that he was, however, proposing that these recommendations were approved as set out for the reasons outlined.

He thanked Members for a very useful debate on this item.

**The meeting ended at 3.12 pm**

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Chairman

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