

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 16TH MAY, 2023** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Councillors Awale Olad (Chair), Camron Aref-Adib, Nina De Ayala Parker, Sharon Hardwick, Matthew Kirk, Rishi Madlani and Stephen Stark

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Councillors Izzy Lenga

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors Anna Burrage, Matt Cooper, Linda Chung and Adam Harrison (Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden).

The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. GUIDANCE ON HYBRID MEETINGS

RESOLVED –

THAT the guidance on hybrid meetings be agreed.

2. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Izzy Lenga.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Cameron Aref-Adib and Nina De Ayala Parker.

3. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA

There were none.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)

Due to issues with the technology the meeting was not webcast.

5. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)

The Chair advised that two deputations and a written submission had been accepted, copies of the deputation statements and written submission had been included in the supplementary agenda.

The written submission and one of the accepted deputations related to Agenda Item 8 Dockless Parking Bike Hire Management and would be taken when that item was reached on the agenda. The written submission was from Hamish Birchell who was unable to attend to give a deputation due to work commitments. The deputation was from Paul Braithwaite

The other deputation related to safety concerns around Primrose Hill Park and the need for a coordinated response from the authorities responsible for the area.

Primrose Hill Park

The deputation was presented by:

- Eleanor Sturdy (Chair of Primrose Hill Safer Neighbourhood Panel)
- Councillor Anna Burrage Primrose Hill Ward Councillor
- Councillor Matt Cooper Primrose Hill Ward Councillor

The following responses were given by the deputees to Members questions:

- Eleanor Sturdy had not been allowed to attend Safer Park's Panel meetings as it was closed to the public. Getting regular crime statistics on Primrose Hill was difficult and the Panel did not appear to take into consideration local residents concerns regarding safety and the ongoing issues.
- The Safer Parks Panel did not appear to be interested in Primrose Hill matters.
- The Department of Culture appeared to be the ultimate arbitrary of who had responsibility for Primrose Hill Park.
- The Park was policed by the Royal Parks Police who were stretched across all the London Parks and were not equipped to manage Primrose Hill Park. This was because the level of Parks Policing was reduced in 2015 from 24-hour cover to up to 11pm. At bank holidays and major events, the Parks Police were often deployed elsewhere, reducing coverage of the park.
- The park would be better served if it were to be managed by the Council.

Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 16th May, 2023

- Each organisation had their own system for capturing and reporting information, there was little consistent sharing of information about risks to the public. It appears information was only circulated/shared when those with the information remembered to share it.
- There needed to be a system in place to collate all the information so the responsible authorities were aware of all the issues and problems generating a fuller picture of crime and anti-social behaviour in the area.
- The problems with crime and anti-social behaviour had increased since 2015 and appeared to coincide with Police cuts.
- The issues had been escalated to local ward Councillors who had made representations to Royal Parks.
- Royal Parks had indicated that the problems would diminish, the summer of 2020 the situation was quite bad, in recent months the drug problem in the area appeared to have gotten worse with drug dealers being attracted to the surrounding area.
- With regards to information sharing, different parts of the Metropolitan Police could share information between each other, the barrier was with sharing the information with the Council Community Safety team. There were similar problems at Hampstead Heath with City of London Police sharing information with Community Safety teams.
- There were 11 entry points to the park, when the gates to the park were temporarily closed it helped and served as a deterrent. However the hardware used to lock the gates was not secure enough to prevent entry to those determined to enter the park to cause anti-social behaviour.
- The use of warning signs was an interesting suggestion but this would be unlikely to deter criminals.
- It would be interesting to know what the outcome of the consultation with residents was regarding closing the park at night.
- The local Member of Parliament had been contacted who had been really supportive.

In response, Jamie Akinola (Director of Public Safety) Environment and Sustainability) and Chief Inspector Nicholas Hackett-Peacock (Metropolitan Police), made the following comments:

- There was the need to hear from Royal Parks on the outcome of survey of residents about closing the park gates at night.
- The Council was prepared to obtain a clear commitment from Royal Parks that actions would be taken to address the issue raised in the consultation and issues highlighted by local residents.
- The Council would consult with other partners and stakeholders to look at a way of effectively communicating the reporting process for crime and anti-social behaviour in the area.
- The issue relating to intelligence sharing would need to be looked at in more detail. Responsible authorities would need to investigate having a bespoke information sharing protocol amongst themselves and provide some reassurance to the community that it was in place.

- It was a reasonable request that all the responsible organisations and groups attending the Safer Parks Panel and Primrose Hill Safer Neighbourhood Panel work closer together. The local authority had limited authority to influence but would put these points to the Panels when they next met.
- There was a broader question for the Borough Command Unit (BCU) whether the Park gates should be closed on an ongoing basis. This was also an issue for the Royal Parks Constabulary to consider.
- The Safer Parks Panel consisted of key partners and was a closed group because of the nature of the intelligence gathered and shared. It also appeared to be managing broader issues without a clear direction.
- The Council would need to look at all the legal avenues available as to which possible steps it could take.
- Council Officers would be meeting with Royal Parks later on this week and raise the various issues raised.
- In relation to the number of on-the-spot fines issued by Royal Parks for crime and anti-social behaviour. The Director of Public Safety agreed to find out this information from Royal Parks.

Action By: Director of Public Safety

The majority of the Committee supported the recommendations put forward by the deputies in their statement with one Committee member disagreeing with the recommendations.

The Committee thanked the deputies for attending and for their deputation.

RESOLVED –

THAT

Royal Parks are invited to its next meeting on 10th July to respond to the issues raised in the deputation, and in particular to provide

- The outcome of the consultation/survey on closing the park
- How Royal Parks can/should effectively communicate the reporting process of incidents/crimes occurring in the park/surrounding area
- To provide a plan of action in dealing with the issues raised

Action By: Director of Public Safety

6. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT

There was none.

7. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 20th February 2023 be signed as an accurate record.

8. DOCKLESS BIKE HIRE PARKING MANAGEMENT

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Environment and Sustainability.

The Committee noted the written submission of Hamish Birchall on sustainability concerns regarding the e-scooter and e-bike hire trial and listened to Paul Braithwaite's deputation.

Councillor Linda Chung with the agreement of the chair also addressed the Committee informing the Committee that she objected to the contemptuous way in which the dockless bikes were dumped with an apparent lack of impunity. There appeared to be a lack of enforcement and there was nothing in the officer or contractors report on firm plans for enforcement.

The following responses were given by the depute to Members questions:

- Other boroughs such as Wandsworth and Westminster Councils had taken further action to enforce parking of dockless bikes in parking bays by insisting that the user continued to pay until the bike was returned to a bay.
- It was disappointing that Lime had proposed using the existing cycle racks which would deprive cyclists of precious spaces.
- The statement that lime bikes replaced car journeys by 1 in 4 appeared to be very exaggerated and it would be good to see Lime's evidence of this.
- It was a failure on the part of the Council to manage the Lime operation, the Santander operation was a well-run alternative.
- A lot of secondary school children had great fun in trying to hack the bikes and it was a great nuisance for visually impaired and disabled people in how the bikes were dumped aimlessly.
- He was not a therapist or a doctor and could not say for certain that the bikes had health benefits.

The Head of Transport Strategy and Projects made the following comments in response to the deputations and members questions:

- The Dockless Bike Hire Scheme (DBH) was in line with the Council's policy objectives which aimed to develop and implement a range of initiatives that promoted and provided attractive and safe alternatives to private cars and other forms of motor traffic.

Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 16th May, 2023

- As part of the Council's Transport Strategy it also aimed to support, promote and expand cycle hire systems.
- Cycle hire systems, both docked and dockless were an important part of the Council's mix of high quality, sustainable travel options that provided alternatives to overcrowded public transport systems and private motor vehicles.
- The increased use of these systems indicated the popularity amongst users, both residents and visitors to the borough.
- There was evidence that more and more boroughs were beginning to adopt a similar cycle hire systems approach as Camden.
- The Council was aware of poor bike parking compliance and was in regular discussions, working with the operator to resolve the issues.
- The Council was proposing to create 18 new DBH parking bays and extend 4 existing DBH parking bays at various locations across the borough. The Council was also planning to increase the number of DBH parking bays in the borough to 280 by Spring 2025.
- The contracts the Council had entered to with the bike operators had provided significant financial benefits to the Council and provided funding for other resources to maintain the public realm.
- The formal contracts with the operators allowed for parking compliance to be monitored which would provide the Council with more control compared to the previous memorandum of understanding.
- Officers would monitor the impact of the mitigations and would be keen to return to the Committee at a future date to provide an update on progress on the mitigation measures and monitoring data.

Harry Stevenson and Manish Karel (Lime) provided the following responses to members questions.

- Lime had its own in-house specific fleet of vehicles which transported the bikes. The fleet was transitioning to a fully electric fleet.
- The operator was having bi-weekly meetings with the Council to discuss issues relating to a whole range of data that was being monitored including improving bike parking enforcement.
- To improve DBH parking enforcement, Lime had a fining and banning system in place.
- If a person incurred 5 fines they would be permanently banned from using the bikes.
- All users were now required to take a photo of how they manually parked the bike.
- If the system detected that the bike was left parked incorrectly the person would be fined.
- The key performance indicator (KPI) for the operator required a minimum of 90% of bikes parked properly within bays. Any bike parked on the pavement was non-compliant.
- With regards to the build and design of the bikes, the company was updating the way the bikes were built and designed. There was active discussion

ongoing with the hardware team about the accessibility and construction of the bike for both men and women.

- The distance between bays, the density of bays was 1 bay per 200 meters based on 190 bays. The projection was that there would be 270 parking bays in the borough by 2027.
 - Camden was taking the lead in delivering a dense network of bays, there was considerable work ongoing between the operator and Camden officers.
 - Lime apologised for the anti-social behaviour and bike vandalism issues that residents were facing. This was an industry wide issue, Lime had implemented a retrofit to the back wheels of its bikes.
 - Lime was working to protect the wiring and were pursuing convictions where persons were found to damage and hack into bikes.
 - Lime were also working to engage with local schools to warn of the risk and dangers of tampering and hacking into the bikes mechanisms.
- The Dockless Bays were being funded with a notional contribution from Lime and increased with TfL funding. Future bays would be funded as part of the financial contract.
- The life cycle of the bike was 5 years. The technology on e-scooters was much better than on the bikes.
 - The bikes were being worked on to ensure they were carbon neutral

The Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden commented that it was important that the operator ensured that the dockless bikes were not blocking the pavements and were parked properly in the bays provided. He noted that e-bikes were introduced without any supporting legislative powers and any talk of banning them was not possible. E-scooters on the other hand were not legal but the government had allowed them to be used on a trial basis. He was of the view that all boroughs needed to agree on a byelaw and hoped that the government would give local authorities the powers/options similar to TfL.

Answering further Committee members questions Harry Stevenson and Manish Karel (Lime) commented that

- Lime was working hard to combat the issue of bikes being dumped on the pavement, including educating a wider section of the community on the issues this was causing for residents.
- Lime had a team of 100 people across London who could retrieve any bike dumped aimlessly within an hour of being notified.
- There was UK Customer service number on the bike, the sticker was on the inside frame of the bike which people could call.
- Lime was aware that the situation with bikes being dumped on the pavement was not up to the standard required and the situation needed to be improved.
- Lime had identified the steps required to be put in place to improve the situation with bikes obstructing the pavement and the safety hazards this was causing.
- With regards to the inappropriateness of 'Granny's watching you' campaign comments would be feedback to the organisers of the campaign.

Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 16th May, 2023

- Lime's charging for bike hire was not more expensive than other providers in terms of a pay as you go metric.
- The reference to Camden children hacking the bikes was based on the time of day and location of the bikes outside Camden schools when being hacked. Lime was not looking to blame without evidence.
- Lime was committed to fixing the problems with its bikes being hacked and was open to going on a walkabout during school hours to review this.

A Committee member queried when the bike technology was going to be improved to match the e-scooter technology, noting that in Kentish Town over half the bikes were being hacked and a proactive approach was required to deal with the hacking of the bikes. The member was of the view that the operator was some way off from finding a solution to this problem. The Committee member congratulated officers for negotiating a Dockless Bike Hire contract with more than one firm and looked forward to seeing how both companies performed.

The Committee was of the view that the Council could and should be doing a lot more to deal with inappropriately dumped bikes. Commenting that the Council should be fining Lime for dumping bikes on the pavement. The Committee was of the view that the companies should be able to install an in-application navigation feature which would re-route bikes to the nearest parking bay. Consideration should also be given to setting up no go zones in the borough. If an attempt to cycle into a no-go zone was made the bike would automatically shut down.

Action By: Lime Operator/Head of Transport Strategy and Projects

Officers provided the following further responses to members questions:

- The new financial mechanisms in the contract relating to fines and penalties would help the Council to monitor the operator's performance in dealing with compliance issues.
- The proposal around using bike racks was proposed by Lime as a temporary measure but not one that the Council supported or allowed.
- The Council was funding cycle bay infrastructure.
- The procurement exercise and awarding of the contracts was carried out in line with the Council's Constitution. The decision regarding the awarding of the contract was made and posted on-line on the Council's website.
- The reasoning behind the Council's Transport Strategy was also fully set out and Camden was the only borough that did its consultation on-line and provided a further report when the Dockless Bike Hire Scheme was extended.
- The Council's Climate Action Plan was consulted on with the Citizens Assembly making 17 recommendations one of which was enabling electronic transport with infrastructure and incentives, officers were of the view that this scheme complied with that recommendation.

The Committee expressed the view that it expected better standards asking that the two operators of the Dockless Bike Hire Scheme improve its operation in the borough particularly, in relation to how it managed parking of the bikes in the

appropriate parking bays and asked that an update be brought back to Committee in 6 months' time.

RESOLVED –

THAT a report on the Dockless Bike Hire Parking Management be brought back to Committee in 6 months' time.

Action By: Head of Transport Strategy and Projects/ Lime/Human Forest

9. WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Supporting Communities.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was none.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm.

CHAIR

Contact Officer: Sola Odusina

Telephone No: 0207 974 6884

E-Mail: sola.odusina@camden.gov.uk

MINUTES END