

Council: 28th January 2016 - Opposition Priority Business: Cycle Enfield

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Conservative Group has brought this paper as Opposition Priority Business (OPB) because this issue is one of the most controversial currently facing our borough. As members of both parties on the Council we would not be representing the community properly if we did not have this debate. You've only to read the newspapers and analyse councillors' post and email inboxes to realise the debate going on in the community, and it is therefore right that we discuss this issue here in the council chamber.
- 1.2 Cycle Enfield is a wide ranging programme and our debate this evening is not about scrapping the concept. There are many good points to the programme including free cycle training for adults and children, family bike rides, Dr Bike, tuition on securing bikes to prevent theft, and information on greenways which are used most especially in our parks. The debate tonight is about the specific Mini Holland schemes that form part of the wider Cycle Enfield programme, and how we, as a borough, take this forward.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 2013 the London Borough of Enfield submitted a bid to potentially win £30 million worth of funding to improve cycling and road infrastructure as part of the Mayor of London's Mini Holland Scheme. This was done on a cross party basis primarily because funding of this magnitude is not on offer from either regional or national government very often, and given our borough's high obesity rate it was seen as possible way of aiding in its reduction. Both Labour and Conservative groups supported the bid, although there was obviously no certainty that Enfield would win as we were in competition with others. The submission was also done close to an election so that if Enfield won the bid, any political group could have been charged with implementing the scheme post the election.
- 2.2 The Conservative group was adamant as a condition of support that any resulting schemes must be subject to the fullest public consultation. In the event the bid submitted was actually one of the very few that included the condition of consultation. This was felt to be important given Enfield's low level of cycling, despite the existence of many kilometres of extant cycling provision. Transport for London (TfL) was flexible with this approach especially as just before submission the bid itself had become the subject of some local controversy. The Mayor's Cycling Commissioner had received communications from the Enfield community expressing disquiet about the bid.
- 2.3 The Mayor of London announced in March 2014 that Enfield had been successful in its bid for funding. He made it quite clear however that funding was dependant on real public buy in. Enfield won the full package of funding

on offer. The decision whilst monumental was met with caution from the community. This highlighted that the consultation that was integral to the bid would have to be done in an open, transparent and meaningful manner. It had to be extremely thorough and the public would have to be confident that the consultation outcome truly reflected the public view.

- 2.4 Following the cautious welcome the community had given to the announcement that Enfield had won the bid, prior to the local elections the Conservative Group in April 2014 brought an Opposition Priority Business Paper before Council recommending that for Mini Holland to be successful it had to achieve community buy in from both residents and businesses along with key stakeholder groups such as residents associations, community groups and the Conservation Advisory Group. We were confident given the debate that took place that the Council as whole wanted a meaningful consultation where people's views would be listened to.

3. Post 2014 Local Elections

3.1 Governance Arrangements

After the 2014 Local Election the governance arrangements for Cycle Enfield (Mini Holland had been merged into the wider Cycle Enfield programme by that time) were decided at Cabinet. Representations took place at Cabinet for more groups to be included on the area panels that were to be established, as people felt that those described in the decision paper were not wide ranging enough to accurately reflect all views.

3.2 Area Panels aka local Partnership Boards.

When one of the first area panels met the councillors who attended were shocked to find that there were not any residents groups at the meeting. When investigations took place it was plain that very few were actually invited to these panels and for one Area Panel none of the residents associations in the area were on the guest list. It was only when there was a change of Cabinet Member 6 months after the governance arrangements were agreed, and following direction from the Mayor's Cycling Commissioner, that more key stakeholder groups were allowed to serve on the Area Panels. By then however the key decisions as to the various options for potential schemes had been made with very little resident input. The problems described unsurprisingly led to a lack of confidence in the consultation process from the outset.

4. The Consultation-The A105 - Green Lanes/London Road

- 4.1 It was decided, wrongly in our view, that this most major of traffic consultations in the borough was to be an online one, notwithstanding that it was known that many residents did not have access to online facilities, and that it was completely unprecedented to conduct such an important traffic consultation by this means. Previously, hard copy consultations individually delivered to all relevant addresses had been used for relatively minor

schemes involving quite small capital sums, yet here was a potential £42million (£30m plus a further £12m Local Implementation Plan Funding) spend that seemingly wasn't enough to pay for individual hard copy consultations to be delivered!

- 4.2 We then discovered that the online consultation was in effect open to anyone and everyone who could access the council's website, irrespective of where they lived. It was not therefore a local consultation limited to residents and businesses within the borough, but was open to all comers regardless of whether they were local stakeholders or not, but in particular, was because of this factor likely to attract support from the cycling fraternity wherever they resided, and regardless of whether they travelled in Enfield or even knew of it!
- 4.3 The result of that consultation was declared on 9 November in a press event attended by the cabinet member, Cllr Anderson and the Mayor's Cycling Commissioner, Andrew Gilligan. With great fanfare we were told that 1646 responses had been received and that there was a significant majority in favour of the proposals. Subsequent Freedom of Information Act requests submitted revealed however that of the 1646 responses, 260 were from people outside of Enfield, of which 43 were outside of London! And further drilling down cast serious doubt on that claim.
- 4.4 While in total 835 supported the proposals, 211 of those were from other London Boroughs or outside London, while 640 respondents were against. It is not difficult to see that if you discount the responses from outside of the borough, there is the slimmest of majorities for the proposals, not enough to justify the claim that Councillor Anderson makes, and certainly not enough to justify expenditure on the scale proposed here. It follows that the administration then has to rely on so called "partially in favour" responses, of which there were 142 to claim real majority support, but officers have acknowledged that they had no basis for adjudging that a response was partially in favour other than the fact that the particular box had been ticked. Such respondents may have simply been in favour of some form of cycling provision but not that on offer. Hardly the basis for a claim by Cllr Anderson of a "clear majority".
- 4.5 Moreover, a separate table showing support for various ideas/ themes, tellingly revealed that "safer cycling" attracted a high priority rating of just 39% which strongly supports the contention that the "partial supporters" should not be used to bolster the "yes" vote in the absence of a proper statistical weighting having been applied, which officers have acknowledged was not done. Put another way, and in a context, we as members are perhaps more familiar with, would any member of the council suggest that their total vote at the election should be bolstered by including the spoiled papers which expressed a vote for more than one candidate on the basis that the voter was expressing partial support for the individual member?

5. David Burrowes Referendum

- 5.1 Because of the widespread public concern expressed over the A105 proposals, Enfield Southgate MP, David Burrowes organised through the summer months three extremely well attended public meetings to debate the proposals. He invited the cabinet member Councillor Daniel Anderson to the meetings, but he failed to attend any of them, but cycling representatives were also invited and were on the platform at these meetings. In December, David Burrowes organised a referendum asking the identical question to Question 1 in the council's consultation i.e. did respondents support the council's proposals for the A105. Some 17000 letters were delivered across the wards covering the A105.
- 5.2 2609 responses were received from people actually on the electoral register for Enfield Southgate of which just 472 (17%) were in favour while 1972 (75%) were against. A separate survey of businesses along the A105 saw 232 letters delivered. The responses from the businesses showed a massive 95% against.
- 5.3 There can only be one conclusion to be drawn from all of this and that is that so far from there being a clear majority in favour of the council's proposals, there is no real support for them; the Enfield public are decidedly against what is proposed.
- 5.4 It is important however to stress that neither the public nor the Conservative Group is against enhanced cycling provision. They simply do not believe that the present proposals are workable or acceptable. That is not say that differently framed proposals would fail to get support.

6. Enfield Town

- 6.1 We know that the current scheme on the table has failed to get business support. Major objections have been submitted from the Enfield Business and Retailers Association, both Palace Exchange and Palace Garden shopping centres, and from the Head of Retail Property at Standard Life, the owner of both Palace Gardens and Palace Exchange. In addition, there are significant objections from The Over 50s Forum, the Old Enfield Charitable Trust, and The Enfield Town Residents Association to name but a few.
- 6.2 Shops in the Town and elsewhere have posters objecting to the scheme and these are given out to customers as well. You could take the view that it is just negativity and they just want to protect their profit margins, but if you listen to them carefully they are not anti-change. They have said they would support Option 4, so businesses are not anti-Cycle Enfield, but they preferred the option that was on display in October 2014 which was the most supported scheme at that consultation event. However the administration chose to ignore this and dismissed it from the final consultation. The public can surely be forgiven for thinking "What was the point of the first consultation?", and does the council really care about public opinion, or was it just a very expensive exercise in non-consultation?

- 6.3 While we await the formal result of this consultation, we know as I've said that pretty well all major stakeholders in Enfield Town have come out publicly, some in very strident terms, against the proposals, while accepting the principle of enhancing cycling provision.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 We simply cannot ignore the strength of feeling on this issue. The Mini Holland part of Cycle Enfield has strong opposition and we have to recognise it. When businesses large and small who are integral to our borough's economy, disability groups, the Over 50+ forum and members of the public voice opposition on this scale, the administration ignores it at its peril. The public are not asking for a few tweaks of the plans, they want fundamental change. It is not bowing down to pressure, it's about listening to our stakeholders. The public, both residents and businesses are our clientele and we must recognise and take on board their views. It is for the council as elected members, but particularly for the administration to show some real political leadership on this issue rather than as has been the case, bowing the knee to unelected bureaucrats and allowing them to dictate what is good for the borough.
- 7.2 We must remember that we are the servants of the public not their masters! The bid was submitted with the good intention of securing funds and putting them to good use.
- 7.3 Enfield's community is plainly dissatisfied and is asking for a different way. We need to show the community that we can stand up for them, that we are not arrogant in our belief that we or our officers always know best, because frankly they don't. We must remember why we are elected! The fundamental point is that the public is the master, we are the servant and this Council needs to change its position.

8. Recommendations

The Conservative Group recommends that the Administration adopts the following recommendations:

- 8.1 Halt work on the Mini Holland part of Cycle Enfield.
- 8.2 Engage properly with our real stakeholders on the design of the schemes.
- 8.3 Produce new plans based on:
- a. Option 4 for Enfield Town.
 - b. A different approach for A105.
 - c. Abandoning the Southbury Road Scheme.
 - d. Revisiting the proposed Cycling Schemes for Edmonton and the Hertford Road.

- 8.4 If a suitable outcome is not achieved, then accept that the schemes which do not have both resident and business support, cannot be implemented, and notify the Mayor of London accordingly.

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Leader of the Conservative Opposition