

Agenda Item 8

AGENDA ITEM 8 - Petition - "Make Portsmouth Street Safe"

Administration's response:

Can I first put on record my thanks to Dr Jonathan Lake for presenting the petition here today and for all those involved in the campaign. It has been good to talk with Dr Lake, and other members of the Pompey Street Space campaign to understand the specific requests they have and to look to addressing these issues as well as those mentioned in the petition.

From the beginning, can I say that the administration here at the City Council agrees with the overall aim of the campaign and looks forward to working constructively with like minded people to achieve the aims.

Air pollution is a real problem here in Portsmouth. There are debates about the levels of air pollution, and we will see a report soon that says that in most parts of the city air quality improved in 2019, whilst many thought it would get worse. But we have a real issue here, and we have real hotspots that exceed Government targets. But even if we did not we should be taking action to reduce air pollution. The City Council has some power to do this, the Government much more, but there are some things that are probably out of either the Council's or the Government's control. But we need to do the things we can to help improve air quality, and we will.

Secondly the petition talks about making our city safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Again this is an aim that the administration here at the City Council agrees with and supports. If we can encourage more journeys to be taken in the city on foot, bike or bus this reduces congestion, improves road safety and reduces air pollution.

The City Council has made significant strides to achieve the objectives of this petition already.

For example:

- The closures of Castle Road to cars to encourage safe shopping.
- The closure to vehicles of the Somers Rd North bridge across the railway to make cycling along Sydenham Terrace and Canal Walk safer
- The closure to vehicles of two sections of the seafront road to allow for social distancing by pedestrians and cyclists.
- Creation of social distancing spaces outside pubs and restaurants by removing some parking spaces
- Closing Isambard Brunel Rd and Guildhall Walk to cars to allow for social distancing of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Consulting with retailers and residents about the closure of Palmerston Rd South to vehicles to support these retailers and support social distancing.
- Writing to all Head Teachers to ask them if they would like to work with the City Council in creating Schools Streets outside their schools.
- Creating the first Play Street in Portsmouth on Francis Avenue
- The inclusion of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in the LTP4 programme, and in effect has already created one in Central Southsea.

I have met with Dr Lake and others from the Pompey Street Space Campaign and with Rachel Hudson from Portsmouth Friends of the Earth. I'm really pleased to have had these discussions and to have heard specific requests from them. They are:

1. To establish a cross-party working group to agree a citywide healthy transport strategy that can survive our yearly electoral cycles. This group should engage with our largest city employers to build healthy travel into the everyday lives of people who work in the city.
2. To build joined up strategic cycle routes that are physically divided from cars, well maintained and linked to safe cycle storage. These routes need to be so safe that a competent 12-year-old child will be happy to use them alone and their parents won't have to worry about them.
3. The implementation of a programme similar to School Streets for each of our primary city schools. Our children's drop off and pick up time needs to be safe not only for social distancing but from air pollution and road danger.
4. To look at creating Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in the city.
5. Look at creating 20mph zones in shopping streets to make pedestrians and cyclists feel safer.

I am happy to support each of these five requests, we will need to look at the practicalities of all of these. Having physically separated cycle lanes will be more expensive than the current model, and the City Council will be able to do fewer cycle lanes if we do this, but the ones put in may be more popular and therefore more successful. I think the cross party group is a good idea, and to show the level of support for this from the Administration at the City Council I will volunteer to serve on this so that we can have a whole council view of how to implement things, not just from one department. There are existing plans around transport planning and many other things, and the creation of these will need to proceed as normal so the City Council can access Government funding.

Unfortunately the City Council does not have the legal powers London councils have to enforce things like School Streets, and we hope our local MPs will be able to change this to give the City Council powers in this area.

So My Lord Mayor, I'd like to welcome the petition, welcome the idea that this campaign will move to be a cross party campaign, and welcome the changes in the city that we will all work to achieve.

Proposed by (Name) Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson

Seconded by (Name) Councillor Lynne Stagg