

Geoff Raw
Chief Executive Office
Brighton and Hove City Council
Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove, BN3 3BQ

10 June 2020

LETTER TO ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT & SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

School Streets to enable safe reopening of primary schools

Dear Geoff;

In accordance with the procedure rules for meetings of Full Council, Committees, and Sub-committees, rule 23.3 I request that the following letter is included in the agenda for the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee meeting of 23 June 2020.

At the November 2019 meeting of this committee, members whole-heartedly agreed to support trialling the School Streets scheme modelled on the Hackney Toolkit. As members will recall, School Streets operate a timed closure of the streets to motor vehicles in the vicinity of the school entrances to help facilitate safe, active travel to school by children and parents. In prioritising people over vehicles, it is a simple concept that makes a huge difference to health and well being, road safety and in promoting transport modal shift. By helping tackle the “school run”, School Streets in turn reduce congestion, improve air quality and support decarbonised travel, all to the benefit of the wider community.

Members will also recall that Full Council in October last year received a petition for debate with 1300 signatories and unanimously supported a notice of motion proposed by Cllr Nield both calling for the creation of Safe School Walking Zones. More recently, at the first meeting of the P&R Recovery Sub-committee members agreed our amendment asking that the council consider school streets as part of urgency road reallocation measures to be introduced by 15th June.

In March the Government closed all schools in response to Covid-19 and is seeking ways to re-open primary schools again for all children. While the pandemic persists the Council has rightly advised local schools that the timing to reopen is not yet right, and the Government has now also reduced its ambition on this which gives us more opportunity to better prepare.

In order to facilitate the wider re-opening of shops and services, the Government and Council recognise that more space has to be provided outside premises to support social distancing for customers queuing while pedestrians get by. Emergency funding has been offered to support this through measures including widening pavements and timed closures.

The situation at schools will be no different to shops, in fact the arrival and departure of large numbers of children and parents together presents both the challenge of maintaining social distancing on the approach to school and particularly at the school gate. It will therefore be vital to ensure any school reopening has a School Street scheme in place first.

We have asked officers and the administration to support this, and while they suggest they will look to set up a trial, there is currently no plan to support School Streets for all our primaries at this time.

School Streets can be implemented either by using marshalls with cones or using number plate technology. Working with the schools and parents we suggest the council could and should now be establishing and running volunteer assisted schemes for all primary schools. It is certainly not rocket science, and it doesn't need to await trials, it just needs to be done.

Children, parents, and school staff need to feel confident that when they return to school everything has been done that can be done to make it safe. School Streets have a key part to play in achieving that. Will the administration commit to now rolling out School Streets this summer ahead of the autumn term restart?

Yours Sincerely,

Cllrs Pete West & Steve Davis