

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 3 November 2022

Motion by Councillor Burgess - Sciennes Primary playground on Sciennes Road

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive 15 – Southside/Newington
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Transport and Environment Committee is asked to note:
 - 1.1.1 The actions taken in response to the Motion and, in particular, that the statutory process to promote a Traffic Regulation Order to close the section of Sciennes Road outside Sciennes Primary School permanently to motor vehicles has commenced;
 - 1.1.2 The independent legal advice commissioned by the Council, which concluded that any attempt to prohibit the use of this section of Sciennes Road to cyclists and pedestrians under current Roads or Planning legislation would carry a significant risk of legal challenge;
 - 1.1.3 That there is no current national or local funding available to deliver an expansion of the playground at Sciennes Primary School. However, a survey will be carried out over the next year, so that a list of similar issues across the school estate can be identified and prioritised should funding become available in the future;
 - 1.1.4 That this report concludes the action taken in response to the motion of 27 January 2022; and
 - 1.1.5 That a Business Bulletin update will be prepared for Education, Children and Families Committee to provide a link to this report.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Daisy Narayanan, Head of Placemaking and Mobility



Report

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2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides information on actions taken in response to an Emergency Motion approved by the Transport and Environment Committee on [27 January 2022](#).

3. Background

- 3.1 On 27 January 2022, Transport and Environment Committee approved an Emergency Motion relating to Sciennes Primary School playground and Sciennes Road.
- 3.2 The motion requested that officers bring forward a report on closing Sciennes Road to traffic, in front of Sciennes Primary School, on a permanent basis, to provide adequate playground space for the school in the long term, using the most appropriate mechanism such as a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), Stopping Up Order or Redetermination Order (RSO).
- 3.3 It also requested that, while a permanent closure is investigated, all practical measures should be taken to make the current temporary, partial closure safe and secure for children, including signage and road painting, and that closing the road to pedestrians and cyclists during school times should be explored.
- 3.4 Finally, the motion requested that appropriate Council officers meet with ward Councillors and Parent Council representatives as soon as possible to progress the matter and that a Members' Briefing be provided to Committee and ward Councillors by the end of March. This meeting took place on 23 February 2022 and a briefing was provided to Committee and ward Councillors in March 2022.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The section of Sciennes Road immediately outside the school remains closed to motor traffic under a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO).

- 4.2 At the meeting on 23 February 2022, various actions were agreed to improve the operation of the temporary closure outside the school.

Road Closure

- 4.3 A review of the school's Travel Plan is nearing completion and the new Plan is expected to be formally signed off by the school and the Parent Council this month. Work has recently commenced to promote a TRO to close this section of road permanently to motor vehicles and to introduce further traffic restrictions arising from the review. Existing part-time School Streets restrictions, which prohibit access for most motor vehicles at the start and end of the school day, will continue to operate on adjoining sections of Sciennes Road.
- 4.4 Subject to the successful conclusion of the statutory process for the TRO to close the section of road immediately outside the school permanently to motor vehicles, suitable measures to introduce the permanent road closure will be designed and implemented.

Playground Extension

- 4.5 The Parent Council has a longer-term aspiration for at least some of the road space outside the school to be repurposed to provide a secure extension to the school playground, with no access to this space for the general public.
- 4.6 Council officers have investigated the potential to prohibit the use of this section of Sciennes Road to cyclists and pedestrians, both on a temporary and permanent basis.
- 4.7 Independent legal advice was commissioned, which concluded that any attempt to prohibit the use of this section of Sciennes Road to cyclists and pedestrians under current Roads or Planning legislation would carry a significant risk of legal challenge. This advice has been shared with ward Councillors and the Parent Council.
- 4.8 Repurposing road space to provide a secure extension to the school playground is not something that could be prioritised for delivery as part of the Council's Road Safety programme.
- 4.9 However, while the challenge presented by the size of the playground at Sciennes Primary School is recognised and documented, the size of a school's playground is considered a 'suitability' issue. Suitability is a measure of whether a school is fit for the purpose for delivering the education curriculum. The school estate (Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Special Schools) consists of a wide range of buildings and sites from various periods that present a variety of suitability issues.
- 4.10 Currently, funding available both nationally and locally is focused on ensuring the condition and sufficiency of the school estate. There is no funding available to address suitability issues which are considered a lower priority. However, a suitability survey will be carried out over the next year, so that a list of suitability issues across the school estate can be formed and prioritised should funding become available in the future.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Subject to the successful conclusion of the statutory process for the TRO, the Road a permanent closure of the section of road immediately outside the school to motor vehicles will be designed and implemented.
- 5.2 The Learning Estates team will undertake a survey over the next year, so that a list of suitability issues across the school estate can be formed and prioritised should funding for such issues become available in the future.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There is no direct financial impact arising from this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 A meeting between officers, the (then) Convener and Vice Convener of Transport and Environment, ward Councillors and Parent Council representatives took place on 23 February 2022 in response to the Motion. Officers from the Council's Learning Estate, Legal Services and Road Safety and Active Travel teams were in attendance.
- 7.2 Officers from the Road Safety team have subsequently met with Parent Council representatives as part of the School Travel Plan Review process and will continue to engage with them throughout the delivery of the permanent road closure and the other measures identified through the Review process.
- 7.3 The delivery of these measures supports the Council's commitments to encourage active travel, reduce vehicle dependency and lower carbon emissions. Safety and accessibility for people walking, wheeling and cycling will also be improved.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 None

9. Appendices

None