

DECEMBER 27, 2022

# CAMPAIGN UPDATE

save  
our  
safer  
streets

## Reflecting on 2022

Our campaign only started six months ago, but it feels a lot longer, as so much has happened and not happened since then. We thought it would be good to reflect on our successes and learnings so far, as we prepare for what 2023 might bring. As always, we are very grateful for everyone's efforts. Tower Hamlets deserves much better than what the council is proposing to do to our streets. Let's keep being a force for safer, friendlier, healthier streets for all.



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## Successes

- The council has significantly delayed its initial plans to rush through all the “reopening the roads” proposals. They initially intended to decide in September and begin implementation in October but here we are in late December with no decision yet taken regarding the Bethnal Green and Brick Lane schemes. Through all the different ways of getting our message across, thousands of people made it clear to the mayor that he shouldn’t rush through this decision.
- The council has kept the Wapping Bus Gate, with the mayor referencing how this was in response to public opinion expressed through the surveys.
- Major stakeholders, including TfL and Bart’s Health Trust have publicised their support for the current street layouts and have sought clarity from the mayor on how his proposals will be good for public transport and public health.
- 3,094 people who live, work or study in Tower Hamlets signed our petition within six weeks. This is the most signatures for a roads-related petition ever on the council’s website by quite a margin.
- Simon, Jane and Shaheena presented the petition brilliantly at the council meeting in October (3 minutes of inspirational viewing), while safer streets supporters protested outside town hall.
- 250 people have donated £17,360 to our legal campaign crowdfunder. If the council proceeds to make a decision which we have reason to believe is unlawful, then we’re in a great position to respond robustly with expert legal input from lawyers.
- Many FOI requests have been submitted, which have enabled us to undertake research and publish analysis about the impact of the schemes and the likely impact of the mayor’s proposals. By separating fact from fiction, we are able to challenge the mayor, his councillors and the people who support reopening roads when they make un evidenced claims and statements.
- The combination of grassroots activity and actions of key stakeholders has generated significant press coverage in the local and national media.



# Learnings

## **People from all walks of life support the current layouts or keeping and improving them.**

The council may not have published the summer public consultation results, even after FIVE MONTHS, however we know from canvassing and from the stories people have shared online that support for the current street layouts includes people from throughout our diverse community. Many people want to make this a class or ethnicity or religion issue. It really is much more complicated than “us versus them” and we’ll keep emphasising this point.

## **Despite the campaigning, the mayor has given no indication he has changed his mind or is open to listen to or meet with campaigners.**

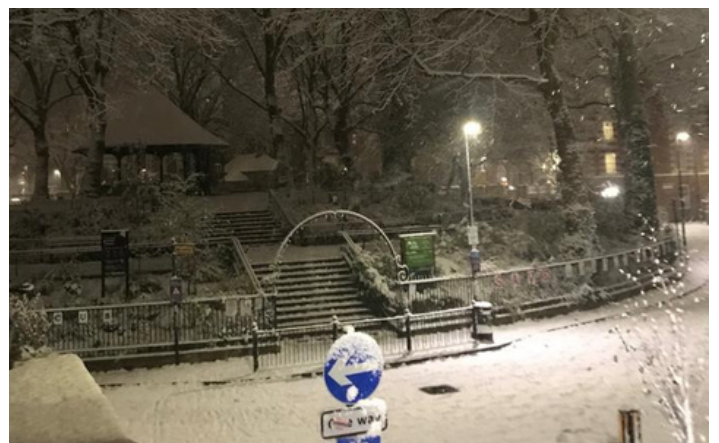
“Liveable Streets review” is on the council’s forward plan for a decision at 25 January 2023 cabinet and all indications are that the mayor will make the decision that he’s signalled for many months. He has made no public announcements about a change of approach, despite all of the information at the council's disposal (including unpublished survey results and the explicit request from the Police to keep the layouts). The mayor and his office have ignored repeated requests for a meeting with the lead “save our safer streets” petitioners. Every opportunity for a reappraisal has been ignored.

## **The timetable for an announcement is unclear.**

The mayor promised an update on the liveable streets proposals “in due course” in late September and then his officers said a mayoral announcement was “very soon” in mid-December in an email exchange with our lead petitioners. Given the continually slipping timetable, we do not wait with bated breath.

## **The mayor is ideologically committed to car-friendly policies, regardless of their impact on road safety, air quality and the day-to-day lives of residents.**

At a cabinet meeting in November, the council increased the area in which permit-holders can park and created one-hour free parking near street markets, even though Tower Hamlets has the lowest rate of access to a car in London and therefore the majority of the borough will be negatively affected by policies which encourage more car use. Therefore even with the delay in decision-making, there's no reason to think the removal of Liveable Streets isn't next.



# What's next?

Once again we would like to thank everyone who is contributing to our campaign. We will respond as quickly as possible to any updates from the council in the New Year.

If you are interested in getting more involved with the campaign, then please reach out to one of the admins in our WhatsApp groups or email us at [SOSSBethnalGreen@gmail.com](mailto:SOSSBethnalGreen@gmail.com).

There are always ways for people to help - both as one off contributions or in a more ongoing way. It's likely we will have to step up a gear with campaigning when the mayor's next announcement comes and having a few more hands on deck in preparation for that would be incredibly helpful. Community campaigning is tough but a lot less so when there are more people involved!

## More ways you can help the campaign:



- Stay posted with what's happening through our WhatsApp channels, [our website](#) or on social media.
- Please do keep pointing people towards the [CrowdJustice page](#) if they want to show their support for keeping and improving, rather than removing, the new street layouts in Tower Hamlets.
- Write to your councillor to ask for consultation results to be published and to reiterate your support for the schemes. Here's [an advice document](#) to help.

**Thank you for your continued support!**

*Follow us and join the discussion on:*

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