

The local elections are over – what happens now?

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The elections in Wandsworth are well and truly over. The results have seen quite a lot of significant changes at Wandsworth Council, as well as strong continuity. Here are the highlights:

Wandsworth Council elections -- Outcome

- **21 new Councillors elected:** Out of 60 Councillors in all on Wandsworth Council, just over a third of those elected on 22 May are new to the role of being a Wandsworth Councillor. They include 12 new Conservative Councillors and 9 new Labour Councillors. Some existing Councillors were defeated, including John Locker who had chaired the Strategic Planning & Transportation Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- **The new party political balance on Wandsworth Council:** Labour made won six additional seats. The Council now consists of 41 Conservative and 19 Labour.
- **Ravi Govindia re-elected Leader of the Council:** And Cllr. Jonathan Cook has been re-elected Deputy Leader.
- **Cllr Jonathan Cook is the new Cabinet member responsible for Transportation:** Russell King, who over the past four years held this post, did not stand for re-election because he is moving to Australia for personal reasons. We will miss him because he initiated several changes that many of us in Wandsworth Living Streets have welcomed, including adopting the Balham Boulevard idea and enabling whole wards to be considered for a 20mph speed limit. From now on, **Jonathan Cook** will be Cabinet Member responsible for transportation, and his Environment, Culture and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee that will have oversight over his work.

What Wandsworth Living Streets (WLS) is doing in the wake of the elections

- **Tuesday 1 July, 7.30pm, the Alma Pub: Wandsworth Living Streets public meeting for Councillors who are new to Wandsworth Council to give them an opportunity to meet WLS Supporters:** See the details below. **Do please come** since it should be a welcome chance to meet your new Ward Councillors, and to exchange views on practical steps to improve the public streetscape in our borough. It will also be our AGM with a report on the past year by our Chair, Susie Morrow.
- **Meeting the new Cabinet Member responsible for Transportation, Cllr Jonathan Cook:** This is taking place on 30 June and will be a 'get to know each other' meeting for your Wandsworth Living Streets (WLS) Committee and Cllr. Cook. It will be a chance also to

review projects to improve the public streetscape that are already in the works, as well as for WLS to present various ideas that we have been pressing for serious consideration of. These include, for example, the idea of a pedestrian underpass at Putney Bridge -- so that the Thames Path would run continuously at this point along the river and all pedestrians would no longer have to negotiate the complicated and slow road junction at the Bridge.

- **Meeting Transport for London (TfL) about plans to replace the Wandsworth Gyrotory:** On 24 June, your Committee has organized a meeting with the TfL Officer and engineer responsible for these plans. Representatives from the Wandsworth Society and the Wandsworth Cycling Campaign will join us for this meeting which we will report on to you in the next Update.
- **Jane Ellison, M.P. for Battersea, to speak on Active Travel at the October Wandsworth Living Streets public meeting -- Monday 6 October:** She will talk about the health benefits of encouraging us to do more short trips on foot; why Government supports more walking and cycling (in the jargon, 'active travel'); what Government is doing to encourage us to walk more; what Wandsworth Council, along with all local authorities, can do to make the walking experience more attractive and safer; future horizons – what more can be done.
- And what things Councils, including Wandsworth Council, can do to make the public streetscape both safer and more attractive so that local people will want to walk and cycle more. **Please put this date in your Diary.**

What developments look likely in the coming years?

Here are some of the more probable developments that may take place:

- **The Wandsworth Gyrotory – ‘the end is nigh’, but how nigh?** Wandsworth High Street and associated roads will be transformed. TfL is drawing up revised proposals right now. Wandsworth Council says the funding looks like being in place. The first round of public consultation is scheduled for this Autumn; this will be on the general tenor of TfL’s proposals. If local people are broadly in favour, a second round of consultation on the precise details of the new scheme will take place in Autumn 2015. The intention is that the whole scheme will in place by 2019.
- **Nine Elms Lane – reconstruction of:** This road is the spine of the gigantic £15billion Nine Elms & Vauxhall ‘regeneration’. Right now, it is a mess of sprawling dual carriageway, smashed up and reduced width pavements, and clumsy stretches of shared space for pedestrians and cyclists. TfL have drawn up detailed plans for its eventual transformation – trees to give it more of the feel of an avenue; wider pavements; pedestrian-friendly crossing provision; protected cycle lanes; and a distinctive road surface signalling that Londoners are in a new ‘quarter’ of London facing on to the river. But there are two dilemmas. First, how to combine this vision with Nine Elms’ continuing role as a major highway towards Central London. Secondly, can the new road be built during the next ten years of construction (and

risk being damaged by huge construction lorries)? Or will the incoming waves of new residents starting in Spring next year have to wait a decade or more before they get an attractive and more people-friendly road?

- **Pedestrian Crossings:** Two new signals-controlled crossings are being constructed this year. At the Brighton Yard entrance to Clapham Junction Station on St John's Hill, the Council has installed the necessary infrastructure; and we now waiting for TfL to install the lights etc. And by Spring next year, TfL will completely re-engineer Queens Circus on Queenstown Road near Battersea Park. For the first time, there will be signals-controlled pedestrian crossings, and on all four arms of the junction.
- **Balham 'Boulevard':** A couple of prototype projects to transform our local shopping streets are already in the works. The most advanced is the Balham Boulevard idea between Balham and Tooting Bec Stations. This originated with Dave Irwin's proposals for transforming Putney High Street into a much more attractive, pedestrian-friendly, and vibrant shopping and socialising place. Dave is on the Putney Society Executive and Wandsworth Living Streets Committee. Another WLS member, Jon Irwin, adapted Dave's ideas for Balham and Tooting – and Cllr Russell King saw the merits of the proposals. On 7 May this year, Executive Report No. 2 presented to the full Council reported that "The wide stretch of Balham High Road offered an opportunity to provide exemplar street conditions for all road users ... wide enough for the footways to offer greater scope for outdoor activity and a cafe culture, better segregated cycle lanes" The idea is now included in a list of 17 Major Projects in the London Mayor's Roads Task Force Progress Report of March 2014. As a result, TfL is developing initial concept designs. Public consultation is likely in Spring 2015 and the goal for completion is mid 2017.
- **Mitcham Road and Tooting High Street:** TfL is already developing options for the road intersection at Tooting Broadway. Wandsworth Council received a report at its 7 May 2014 meeting that stated that any scheme at Tooting Broadway should consider a 'complementary design for Mitcham Road'. While these ideas are at a less advanced stage than the Balham Boulevard scheme, it is hugely encouraging that the Council has seen the merits for local residents, shoppers and shopkeepers of transforming some of our busiest high streets and town centres.
- **Pedestrian-friendly technology at crossings – an experiment:** TfL is about to experiment in Tooting with a clever technology called *Pedestrian SCOOT*. This detects the number of people on foot waiting to cross a busy road. It then reduces the time they have to wait for the Green Man signal allowing them to cross and lengthens the actual crossing time. If successful, it could be rolled out at busy junctions elsewhere, to the great benefit of pedestrians.
- **Road safety in Wandsworth and a raft of residents' petitions calling for a 20mph speed limit on residential roads piling up for the Council to consider.** The situation remains unacceptable. In 2012 alone, 66 pedestrians and cyclists were seriously injured or

killed in collisions on roads in the Borough. In fact, one-third of all so-called KSIs (Killed or Seriously Injured) were pedestrians. The majority of these tragedies – 71% -- occurred on A Roads, many of which are managed by Transport for London, not Wandsworth Council. That means that we residents have to press both the Council *and TfL* to take more effective action. The good news is that more and more Wandsworth residents are demanding a lower 20mph speed limit as part of the solution. This year alone, Council papers mention residents' petitions for 20mph in Bedford and Furzedown Wards; several roads near Putney Station; the Roehampton area; Wendlesworth Estate in Fairfield Ward; Trinity Crescent, Hearnville Road, Endlesham Road and Chestnut Grove in Balham; Ravenslea Road; and an petition initiated by the Conservative ward councillors for the area around Northcote Road between Wandsworth and Clapham Commons.

- **Additional Ideas to transform Wandsworth's Streetscape:** There are of course other ideas and possibilities that are not yet under active consideration by the Council and that Wandsworth Living Streets is pressing the Council to take seriously. In particular, **the transformation of Putney High Street** that the Putney Society is now advocating. Also the construction of a **pedestrian underpass under Putney Bridge** so that walkers do not have to leave the riverside and negotiate the awful pedestrian street crossings across Putney High Street. And what about **Garratt Lane in the vicinity of Earlsfield Station**? We need to develop ideas for improving this locality too.

Have a happy summer. And let's all of us continue to persuade neighbours and friends, and our local ward councillors, of the win-win opportunities for continuing measures to make Wandsworth streets more pedestrian-friendly, safer, and more vibrant locations for local shopping and socialising.

This note for Wandsworth Living Streets supporters has been prepared by Robert Molteno, Secretary, Wandsworth Living Streets

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