









Scrutiny Review of Net Zero Carbon 2030 – Active Travel

REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

London Borough of Islington

29 July 2024

Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee 2023-24 Membership

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FOREWORD

Islington Council declared a climate emergency on 27 June 2019, committing the council to working towards making Islington net zero carbon by 2030. Carbon emissions for Islington as a borough were 679,589 tonnes, representing a reduction of 42% since 2005 (BEIS – 2018). However, the council has direct control over only 4% of those carbon emissions, with indirect responsibility for another 5% as a landlord to c. 25,000 properties. A 10-year Net Zero Carbon Strategy, 'Vision 2030: Building a Net Zero Carbon Islington by 2030' was adopted by Executive in November 2020. Through this strategy, the council made a wide range of commitments focused on addressing the climate emergency.

However, the Council faces several challenges that present significant risks in responding to the climate emergency. According to climate risk modelling by Mayor of London and Bloomberg, Islington is amongst six boroughs at particularly high risk from the effects of climate change. Continued government austerity and limited funding, and a lack of supportive national policy, provides real challenges and threatens to undermine the progress made towards the Net Zero ambition. Therefore, the Council is committed to promoting policies that help reduce Carbon in the Borough such as Active Travel.

'Active travel' refers to any form of human-powered transportation, such as walking and cycling as opposed to using motorised vehicles. There are several reasons why active travel is important:

- **Environmental Impact:** Active travel produces zero carbon emissions and helps reduce air pollution, noise pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. This is crucial in combating climate change and promoting sustainability and reaching Net Zero Carbon 2030.
- **Health Benefits:** Walking, cycling, and similar activities contribute to physical fitness and overall well-being. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. It also improves mental health by reducing stress and anxiety levels.
- **Urban Congestion:** London faces many issues related to traffic congestion and limited space for vehicles. Active travel reduces traffic congestion, freeing up road space and potentially reducing the need for new vehicle infrastructure.
- **Cost Savings:** Walking and cycling are inexpensive modes of transportation compared to owning and maintaining a car. This can save individuals and communities money on fuel, parking fees, and vehicle maintenance costs.
- **Community and Social Interaction:** Active travel can promote a sense of community by encouraging people to interact with each other more directly. It can enhance neighbourhood cohesion and create safer and more vibrant public spaces.
- **Accessibility and Equity:** Walking and cycling are accessible to almost everyone, regardless of age, income, or physical ability. They provide an affordable transportation option for those who may not have access to private vehicles or public transportation.
- **Quality of Life:** Encouraging active travel can lead to improved quality of life in urban areas by making cities more liveable, attractive, and healthier for residents.

Overall, promoting active travel is beneficial not only for individual health but also for the environment, society, and urban planning efforts aimed at making our borough sustainable and resilient to climate change.

Cllr Tricia Clarke

Chair of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aim:

The aim of this review is to consider how the council is working and can work to take the lead on supporting and enabling people to change to active travel, developing initiatives to widen the uptake of active travel and identifying ways to support residents and businesses to achieve both health benefits and financial resilience through active travel.

The Main Questions the Committee focused on during the review, while receiving evidence from internal and external speakers were:

Evidence:

The Committee commenced the review in October 2023. The Council considered evidence from a number of witnesses, as follows:

- Evidence from Council Officers
 - Presentation on the introduction to Active Travel from the Director of Climate Change and Transport.
 - Presentation from Public Health
 - Discussions within the Special Public Meeting on the Climate Emergency
- Evidence from External speakers
 - Presentation from the Islington Pensioners Forum
 - Presentation from OurBike
 - Presentation from Living Streets
 - Presentation from Wheels for Wellbeing
 - Presentation from JoyRiders
 - Presentation from Transport for London

Summary of Main Findings:

Over the course of the municipal year, the Committee heard evidence from a number of witnesses and council officers on the challenges facing Active Travel in Islington and also scrutinised the processes already in place and how to improve these.

Community engagement has been vital in driving behavioural changes, with projects like "People-Friendly Streets" leading to reduced traffic volumes and increased active travel. The report also points out the importance of inclusive approaches, ensuring support for older residents and those from minority backgrounds through specific programs and infrastructure improvements.

Islington Council should aspire to take a more equal approach to Active Travel and encouraging residents to take a more sustainable approach to travel. These recommendations outline crucial steps for enhancing active travel in Islington. By prioritising pavement maintenance, removing barriers to cycling and walking, fostering inclusivity, collaborating with key partners like TfL, and promoting responsible behaviour, we aim to create a greener, safer, healthier and more accessible community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendations for infrastructure maintenance and keeping the streets safe:

1. In recognition of the importance of walking as a key form of active travel which everyone can engage with and the importance of providing a safe walking environment, it is recommended that the council carries out a review of its programme of footway renewal, repairing pavements that will have the most impact to people that walk and to ensure that priority is given to the very worst pavement in need of repair as well as overhanging hedges and shrubs that block access on pavements.
2. To assist with the prioritisation of repairs, maintenance and keeping our streets safe to use, the Council should also consider how local residents can report issues with the footway and cycling infrastructure, to ensure that reporting mechanisms are accessible and easy to use.
3. To encourage cycling and other forms of active travel it is recommended that all transport projects assess the potential to declutter pavements and cycleways by removing unnecessary signs, and remove any barriers to access for cargo bikes, wheelchairs and adaptive bikes.
4. To further declutter pavements, specifically of hire bikes, it is recommended that the designated parking bay scheme for hire bikes should be accelerated towards boroughwide coverage in order to keep the footways clear and better support pedestrian movement, especially of those with mobility restrictions such as visual impairments or wheelchair users.

Recommendations for Equal/Equitable Access to Active Travel and Physical Activity:

5. To enable wider participation, it is recommended that the council's active travel webpages are reviewed to provide better links to cycling and walking groups that can help residents more easily access physical activity offered by the council or third party groups.
6. It is recommended that as part of the work the council is doing with groups such as Joyriders and Cycle Sisters to support women of all ages and backgrounds to take up cycling, the council should consider how to strengthen this partnership work with Adult Social Care and Children's Services, to encourage wider participation in the scheme.
7. The council should ensure the design and infrastructure in the borough is supportive of people wanting to actively travel and should promote the improvements to infrastructure such as Liveable Neighborhoods and cycle lanes as well as storage facilities available for bikes and should explore the creation of a cycle hub to support the work of groups such as Joyriders and Cycle Sisters.
8. It is recommended the council works closely with the Public Health team to connect NHS services and GPs with physical activity opportunities offered by the council or third-party groups (such as family rides organised by LCC).

Recommendations for Working with external partners:

9. Work with TfL and relevant community groups to understand if all crossings in Islington provide sufficient time for people with mobility restrictions to cross at crossings on main roads in the borough.

Recomendations for the relationship between people who walk and people who cycle:

10. It is recommended that the council commissions a study into best practice on interactions between people walking, cycling, using wheelchairs and pushing pushchairs. to encourage safe cycling and reduce conflicts. The findings of the study should inform how we design schemes, and if there are any initiatives the council could undertake to successfully tackle areas of conflict, e.g. pavement cycling.
 11. That the council work with the Police in areas highlighted as experiencing the greatest levels of conflicts between people on pavements. Further, to lobby Transport for London and the Department for Transport/Active Travel England to work with delivery companies and their unions to improve conditions for delivery drivers/riders and with improvements encourage safe use of pavements.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Committee commenced the review on 17 October 2023, with the overall aim to review how the Council is taking the lead on encouraging Active Travel in the borough and how to make this more accessible and equal to residents. The committee wanted to investigate how to best promote the health benefits of active travel, how can the council improve inclusivity and widen participation in the active travel programme it offers, what communities are there in the borough that the council could better connect with to access the active travel services and are there new initiatives that could be created to serve those communities.
- 1.2 The Committee also agreed to the following objectives:
1. Enabling active travel – the council’s programme of projects, initiatives and promotion of different forms of active travel (cycling, walking and wheeling) and making residents aware of the services available to them (e.g. cycle training schemes, working with schools and businesses, cargo bikes, assisted purchase of cycles, secure cycle parking, cycle hire schemes).
 2. Inclusivity and disability – To consider equalities issues relating to active travel, and how the council can successfully challenge inequalities (such as physical and financial) in this area.
 3. Health and wellbeing – an exploration of the contribution of active travel to physical and mental wellbeing.
 4. Overcoming obstacles – a discussion of the key barriers to active travel and solutions available, including working with Transport for London to explore opportunities for joint working on active travel.

2. Main Findings

- 2.1 In a series of meetings from October 2023 to April 2024, the committee deliberated on strategies to promote Active Travel and sustainability within the borough.
- 2.2 The report on Islington's active travel initiatives reveals several key findings that highlight the progress and impact of these efforts on the borough's transportation landscape. Central to Islington's Vision 2030 and Transport Strategy, the initiatives focus on increasing the uptake of walking and cycling while enhancing safety and reducing environmental impact. Key findings include significant increases in cycling levels and improvements in road safety in areas where Low Traffic Neighborhoods (LTNs) and other measures have been implemented.
- 2.3 The initiatives have been successful in promoting behavioral changes, with community engagement playing a crucial role. Projects like "People-Friendly Streets" have demonstrated positive outcomes, such as reduced traffic volumes and increased active travel. The report also highlights the importance of inclusive approaches, with efforts to support older residents and those from minority backgrounds through tailored programs and infrastructure improvements.
- 2.4 Some challenges persist, particularly regarding safety concerns, infrastructure needs, and engaging underrepresented groups. However, ongoing efforts to address these barriers include initiatives like "Try Before You Bike" and inclusive cycling hubs from the various

cycling groups across London, which aim to make active travel more accessible and appealing to all residents.

- 2.5 Overall, the findings suggest that Islington is making meaningful strides towards creating a safer, more sustainable, and inclusive environment but there are still some improvements to be made.

3. 17 October 2023 meeting – Introduction to Active Travel

Summary:

- 3.1 This meeting considered an introductory presentation from the Director of Climate Change and Transport. The presentation highlighted Islington's top ranking among inner-London boroughs for three consecutive years as measured by the annual London Boroughs Healthy Streets Scorecard, and its integration into the Vision 2030 and Transport Strategy. The programme focuses on promoting walking and cycling, ensuring safety, and reducing environmental impact, with a target of 90% of journeys by active travel or public transport by 2041. Key initiatives include community engagement through projects like Liveable Neighbourhoods, secure cycle parking, and partnerships to encourage behavioural change and reduce car reliance.

Evidence:

- 3.2 The Council's Active Travel Programme was an integral part of the council's overarching strategy, which included the Vision 2030 strategy and the Transport Strategy. These strategies were developed in tandem, underwent consultation, and were adopted in 2020. Active travel and public health promotion were central elements of these strategies. The program revolved around eight objectives, with a strong focus on making walking and cycling the top choices for local journeys, ensuring safety, reducing road danger, and minimising the environmental and air quality impact of travel.
- 3.3 To gauge progress and performance, the council conducts monitoring reports every two years, against the Transport Strategy's objectives. Key aspects related to active travel included increasing the percentage of journeys taken by walking, cycling, or public transport, with a target of 90% by 2041.
- 3.4 The presentation also highlighted various teams within the council, which collaborated to promote active travel. Other areas of focus included promoting bus priority measures and offering cycle training. Additionally, the council sought to provide secure cycle parking, promote the use of cargo bikes, and encourage the adoption of active travel through bike hire and incentive programs.
- 3.5 The council actively engaged with the community to create "People-Friendly Streets," including Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and Liveable Neighbourhoods. These initiatives demonstrated positive results, with reduced road danger and increased cycling levels in the areas where they were implemented. Efforts were made to motivate and incentivise residents to embrace active travel, including initiatives like school travel plans, festivals, and partnerships with various groups, such as Joyriders, Positive Spin, and Silver Cyclists. The ultimate goal was to encourage physical activity through active travel while creating a safe and accessible environment for all Islington residents. The council remained committed to making active travel a practical and preferred choice for all members of the community.

- 3.6 In response to questions from the committee, The Director of Climate Change and Transport explained, while emergency services response times does vary in areas of the borough with new infrastructure such as Liveable neighbourhoods, it is overall generally good and there are detailed monitored reports for each low traffic neighbourhood with information on this. Additionally, it was clarified that potential alterations suggested by the government at the time to 20mph roads are not anticipated to affect highly urbanised areas like Islington.
- 3.7 Regarding inquiries concerning bike hangars and cycling initiatives, the Director explained that the selection of their locations was contingent upon the demand and wait lists. Where there exists a clustering of demand, these facilities would be strategically placed in easily accessible locations. Furthermore, they conveyed that the team is actively exploring methods to reduce the associated costs, with the possibility of costs decreasing as more individuals make use of these amenities. Behavioural change was identified as a pivotal factor in encouraging people to adopt active travel. This transformation can be facilitated through more effective communication with residents and resident associations and for example, by encouraging residents of housing estates to reduce their reliance on cars. Furthermore, the council was committed to empowering minority groups to engage in active travel, and this will involve engaging with various organisations, including Joyriders, Cycle Sisters, and Transport for All. The Director also expressed willingness to receive suggestions on how to empower diverse groups to embark on more sustainable travel options.

4. 17 October 2023 meeting – ACTIVE TRAVEL EVIDENCE SESSION - ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

Summary

- 4.1 This session was used to provide an overview of the improvements that could be made to help improve accessibility for older people in the borough and encourage them to walk or cycle more.
- 4.2 The presentation highlighted the lack of preparation and support for ageing individuals compared to the comprehensive guidance available for the young, emphasising the need for better information and resources to help older people feel confident walking and cycling. Addressing these challenges includes increasing social awareness about the behaviour of cyclists, improving infrastructure like pavements, and providing mobility equipment and services such as "taxi cards" and more benches. Encouraging older individuals to seek help, raising awareness about their needs among the younger generation, and making urban planning adjustments to enhance safety and accessibility are essential steps to improve the quality of life for older residents.
- 4.3 The committee recognised the unique challenges faced by older people and implementing solutions that promote their safety and mobility is crucial, and it requires a comprehensive and socially aware approach.

Evidence

- 4.4 Dot Gibson from the Islington Pensioners Forum gave a presentation to the committee on active travel for pensioners in the borough. Dot Gibson explained that while ample preparation and support are typically available for young individuals, the same cannot be said for those who are ageing. There is a noticeable lack of guidance and information provided about the ageing process, unlike the comprehensive guidance offered to school-age children as they grow up. This gap in preparation for ageing is a critical issue that needs addressing to help older people feel confident walking and cycling.

- 4.5 One crucial aspect of addressing these challenges is increasing social awareness. For example, there are concerns about the behaviour of cyclists who may sometimes move too swiftly without being fully aware of pedestrians, potentially leading to accidents. Uneven pavements can cause difficulties faced by older individuals. Therefore, providing social mobility equipment becomes significantly important in enhancing the quality of life for older people.
- 4.6 There was a notable obstacle is the reluctance of older individuals to seek help, as they may fear appearing old and frail. Encouragement and awareness about the available support systems are essential to change this perception and promote the idea that seeking assistance is a positive step.
- 4.7 Moreover, older people often suffer from age-related hearing impairment, which makes it challenging to hear traffic and signals. To address this, it would be beneficial to raise awareness in schools and among young people so that they are more informed about the specific needs of the elderly and can contribute to a safer environment for them.
- 4.8 In terms of urban planning and infrastructure, shared paths should consider the inclusion of appropriate signage to alert users to the presence of older individuals and pedestrians. Implementing services like a "taxi card" can also enhance mobility for older residents. Additionally, installing more benches in the borough so people can sit down and have a break on longer routes they take.
- 4.9 Creating people-friendly streets is another essential aspect of ensuring pedestrian safety, especially for older individuals. This can involve adjusting crossing lights to remain on for longer durations to accommodate the slower pace of older pedestrians.

5. 23 November 2023 meeting – ACTIVE TRAVEL EVIDENCE SESSION - PUBLIC HEALTH

Summary

- 5.1 The committee received presentations from Public Health.
- 5.2 Sam Rigby from Public Health highlighted the significant health benefits of active travel, noting its potential to reduce the risk of various health conditions and serve as an incremental way for inactive individuals to become more active. They emphasised the importance of addressing barriers to physical activity faced by certain groups, such as persons from minority ethnic backgrounds, women, individuals with long-term conditions, and those with lower incomes, by improving infrastructure and promoting initiatives like People-Friendly Streets. Additionally, they discussed the broader benefits of active travel, including reducing air pollution and social isolation, and stressed the need for collaborative efforts to enhance infrastructure and community engagement to support active lifestyles.

Evidence

- 5.3 Sam Rigby from Public Health presented the key health considerations related to public health and active travel. They discussed how physical activity could reduce the risk of various health conditions. They noted that even small increases in activity could yield significant health benefits, and active travel served as an incremental way for inactive individuals to become more active. Highlighting concerns about unequal access to physical activity, they addressed barriers faced by certain groups, such as those from minority ethnic backgrounds,

women, young girls, individuals with long-term conditions, the elderly, and those with lower incomes. Active travel was presented as a solution to address these barriers, providing opportunities not only for health benefits but also for increased social connections.

- 5.4 There were many barriers' people faced regarding physical activity, such as lack of time, access, affordability, safety concerns, and environmental accessibility. Active travel was seen as a solution to these barriers, with examples given of how changes in the built environment, like the People-Friendly Streets initiative, could lead to increased physical activity.
- 5.5 There was a recognised need for adaptations to be accessible to those with sensory and mobility impairments. There was an emphasis on the importance of public health interventions in supporting motivation for active travel, raising awareness of its benefits, and providing targeted support to those at higher risk.
- 5.6 Moreover, the broader benefits of active travel were highlighted, including reducing air pollution, carbon emissions, and noise pollution, the potential positive impact on health outcomes and the environment.
- 5.7 A primary focus was on active travel initiatives, particularly the positive impact of removing barriers to physical activity. Pavement improvement and collaboration with other departments emerged as a critical consideration. The unevenness of surfaces was identified as a significant barrier, stressing the importance of collaborative efforts to address this issue and enhance overall infrastructure. The collaborative efforts with communities, as evidenced by studies from other Local Authorities, demonstrated a significant increase in walking (14/15%) when implemented.
- 5.8 The observation of a temporary dip in activity after initial physical changes suggested a need for behavioural adjustments. This dip was attributed to the community's familiarisation with new spaces and infrastructure, and the time required to build confidence in engaging with these changes. The broader issues of social isolation and income inequality were acknowledged as interconnected with physical inactivity. Recognising the correlation between social isolation and inactive lifestyles, proposed strategies aimed to address these issues and promote inclusivity. The strategy of motivational conversations, particularly through the "Every Movement Counts" campaign, was emphasised. Community engagement efforts, including physical activity opportunities on the Islington website and a "Get Active" service pilot through GP practices, were highlighted to encourage tailored solutions for increased activity.
- 5.9 There were concerns about the seemingly low percentage (7%) of deaths related to pollution. Clarification highlighted that each Local Authority estimates mortality figures, considering various diseases linked to air pollution, notably heart diseases and cancer. The need for a more nuanced understanding of the specific diseases and their prevalence was acknowledged.

6. 23 November 2023 meeting – ACTIVE TRAVEL EVIDENCE SESSION - OURBIKE

Summary

- 6.1 The committee received presentations from OurBike. They presented the "Try Before You Buy" scheme, which allows users to hire and potentially purchase bikes, likening it to car-sharing services like Zipcar. The initiative, aimed at improving air quality and promoting sustainability, offers affordable cargo bike usage, with local businesses managing the bikes and advertising on them. Despite challenges in engaging specific groups and areas of

deprivation, efforts are underway to secure grants, explore diverse funding models, and potentially expand the initiative to schools and youth centers.

Evidence

- 6.2 Alper Muduroglu from OurBike gave a presentation to the committee. They discussed the "Try Before You Buy" scheme, a subscription model allowing users to hire a bike and potentially own it if they like it. The "OurBike" initiative was likened to car-sharing services like Zipcar, where users can reserve and use cargo bikes subsidised by the Council for £3 per hour.
- 6.3 The purpose of "OurBike" was to improve air quality, combat climate change, and promote sustainability. Each bike is associated with a local business (host) within the borough, responsible for managing the batteries. The bikes are named after the host who can advertise on them for free. There would also be training provided to get people comfortable using these bikes.
- 6.4 Affordability was a key focus, with "OurBike" providing an affordable option for cargo bike usage compared to other services. Monthly reporting to the Council includes details on kilometres travelled, number of trips, hours, and member information. Feedback from users and hosts, showcasing positive experiences and diverse applications, is collected and shared with the Council.
- 6.5 Overall, the initiative aims to make cargo bikes accessible, promote sustainable transportation, and integrate the service into the community to make more people travel sustainably and actively.
- 6.6 There was a suggestion to locate a cargo bike on Holloway Road near the Northern Health Centre. A question was raised about why none of the hosts are schools or youth centres, especially given concerns about young people's activity. OurBike clarified that hosts are identified by the local economies department at Islington Council. OurBike are actively seeking a grant to fund two bikes in local areas that were considered more deprived and in need of their services, and were exploring models to support hosts, including potential sponsorship.
- 6.7 The discussion touched on the challenge of engaging with certain groups, such as faith groups, in areas of high deprivation. The speaker acknowledged the need for different criteria to engage with these groups effectively. There were ongoing efforts involve exploring diverse funding models, seeking grants for bikes in deprived areas, and considering a mixed model that combines sponsorship, fees, and potential ongoing funding to sustain and expand the initiative.

7. 23 November 2023 meeting – ACTIVE TRAVEL EVIDENCE SESSION – LIVING STREETS

Summary

- 7.1 The committee received presentations from Living Streets. David Harrison and Kathe Jacob from Living Streets praised the council's People Friendly Streets initiative, emphasising the importance of physical infrastructure and equitable access to promote walking, particularly in

a borough like Islington where walking is the primary mode of transport. They highlighted successful projects like Dover Court and King Henry's Walk and suggested new ideas such as green corridors and placing trees in the carriageway to preserve pavements. The presentation also covered the significance of vision and leadership, the need for behaviour change, and maintaining well-kept pedestrian areas to improve public health, while councillors expressed interest in these proposals and discussed related safety and maintenance issues.

Evidence

- 7.2 David Harrison and Kathe Jacob from Living Streets presented to the committee. They commended the council and officers for their outstanding work, particularly praising the success of the People Friendly Streets initiative. They acknowledged the evidence gathered through research and emphasised the need for physical infrastructure to promote walking. A study of outer London boroughs demonstrated a significant increase in time people spend walking, emphasising the achievement and importance of such initiatives.
- 7.3 They highlighted the equity aspect of promoting walking, especially in a borough like Islington where walking is the main mode of transport. They applauded the creation of spaces for all, including those who don't or can't drive. The success of transforming Dover Court into a great walking route was cited as a world-class example with potential for further implementation in other areas.
- 7.4 Liveable neighbourhoods were praised for their success, particularly mentioning improvements to King Henry's Walk. The potential for green corridors and a new green link as a TfL Leisure Walk were discussed. The importance of addressing the economy and supporting local businesses, specifically in Cross Street, to enhance the walking environment was emphasised.
- 7.5 Digital mapping of footways was presented as a successful initiative, with millions of views for the central London map. They urged the council to use and build upon the work already done, including I-Spy walks and maps to engage children in walking.
- 7.6 They discussed the significance of vision and leadership, citing the Executive Member's commitment and vocal support for active travel. The involvement of multiple council teams and the integration of sustainable transport into the local plan were highlighted as crucial factors. The need for behaviour change was stressed.
- 7.7 Lambeth's kerbside strategy was praised, highlighting an interesting proposal to place trees in the carriageway instead of on pavements. This approach involves build-outs into the carriageway to preserve pavements and reduce the risk of tree damage to properties. The suggestion was offered as a consideration for Islington's People Friendly Streets initiative.
- 7.8 They further commented on Islington's commitment to reclaiming space for walking and wheeling, reducing isolation, and promoting public health. The importance of well-maintained pedestrian areas, addressing street clutter, and the positive impact on mental health were underlined.

- 7.9 Councillors expressed interest in the concept of building out and placing trees in the carriageway to improve safety and prevent slippery pavements. They inquired whether there was evidence or if it was still in the planning stage. The response highlighted the practical benefits and the need for careful consideration in planting trees to avoid future issues with footways.
- 7.10 A Councillor suggested incorporating art walks into the active travel initiatives, especially in areas without extensive green space these could emphasise the interesting architectural features along the route.

8. 25 January 2024 meeting – ACTIVE TRAVEL EVIDENCE SESSION – WHEELS FOR WELLBEING, JOYRIDERS, TFL

Summary

- 8.1 The committee received presentations from Wheels for Wellbeing, JoyRiders and Transport For London
- 8.2 Wheels for Wellbeing is a charity that supports disabled people to enjoy the benefits of cycling. Their evidence emphasized the significant transportation disparities faced by disabled individuals, advocating for equitable access to cycling and highlighting successful inclusive cycling hubs.
- 8.3 JoyRiders seek to empower women and girls to take up cycling. Their evidence showcased their expansion into major cycling initiatives promoting inclusivity and accessibility, stressing the importance of collaboration with local authorities to address infrastructure barriers.
- 8.4 Transport for London reported a notable increase in cycling journeys, with a strategic plan to expand the cycleway network and overcome barriers such as road safety concerns, cost, and accessibility, aiming to foster a more inclusive cycling environment.

Evidence

- 8.5 Wheels for Wellbeing
- 8.51 A small charity led by disabled individuals, was established in 2007. Initially, their focus was on providing access to cycling for disabled individuals in South London through three inclusive cycling hubs. Over time, their efforts expanded beyond this, evolving into a campaigning and policy-influencing. The organisation began offering training, consultancy services, and publishing materials to advocate for increased mobility justice. Their central aim was redirecting resources towards those with the least access to transport, particularly emphasising the needs of disabled individuals.
- 8.52 The organisation highlighted that 22% of the UK population identified as disabled, with disabled individuals being 50% more likely to live in poverty compared to the non-disabled population. Moreover, disparities in access to transportation were stark, with 28% of disabled adults living in households without cars, compared to 15% of non-disabled adults. Regarding public transport, 40% of UK stations were inaccessible, a figure that is even higher in certain areas like Islington. Furthermore, only 10% of people with mobility impairments had access to aids enabling a one-kilometre journey, showing the challenges faced by disabled people to even be able to make short

journeys. Surveys revealed that among disabled individuals who cycled, 53% cited infrastructure as the main barrier, followed by inadequate parking/storage facilities and cost concerns. Abuse incidents while cycling were reported by 24% of respondents, showing safety issues also ranked highly as a barrier. Despite these obstacles, there was a desire among disabled individuals to cycle, with 33% expressing interest despite not currently cycling. Notably, 60% of current disabled cyclists used standard two-wheelers, challenging stereotypes about cycling accessibility.

8.53 With the concept of equity in active travel, it was emphasised the distinction between equality and equity. While equality seeks uniformity in provision, equity aims to provide tailored support based on individual needs, ensuring fair access for all. By focusing on equitable access to mobility, the benefits extend far beyond individual modes of transportation, enriching communities as a whole. In Islington, positive initiatives were already underway, including inclusive cycling hubs like Pedal Power. Collaborations with organisations like Bike Works aimed to enhance accessibility further, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity. Wheels for Wellbeing asserted that, by prioritising the needs of the most marginalised, society as a whole stands to gain in numerous ways, from improved health outcomes to enhanced independence.

8.6 JoyRiders

8.61 A ride leader and cycling instructor at JoyRiders, shared their experience of cycling and teaching their children to cycle in London, and their work in supporting women and girls to take up active travel. It was commented that one of the key factors contributing to their success, especially in the early days, was the support received from local authorities, particularly in providing infrastructure and resources. For instance, the provision of cycle hubs, maintained by the council, has been invaluable not only to JoyRiders but also to various other cycling groups in the community.

8.62 Over the past year, their initiatives have expanded to encompass social bikeways for women across 10 London boroughs and other cities. JoyRiders has also become a Bikeability provider and launched the Right to Ride programme, focusing on marginalised and ethnic minority communities. Outreach remains a cornerstone of their approach, ensuring that cycling is accessible to everyone.

8.63 However, the organisation had also encountered challenges, notably in the realm of bike parking. Limited and insecure cycle storage poses a significant barrier, particularly for families and residents in social housing. Addressing this issue requires collaboration between local authorities, community organisations, and developers to provide safe and convenient cycling infrastructure for all.

8.64 The work of JoyRiders goes beyond simply promoting cycling; the organisation explained that it's about creating inclusive and safe spaces where everyone, regardless of background or ability, can enjoy the benefits of cycling. It's about empowering individuals, fostering community connections, and advocating for systemic changes to make cycling a viable option for all. As the organisation continues to grow and evolve, their goal remains to make cycling accessible, enjoyable, and safe for everyone.

8.7 Transport for London (TfL)

- 8.71 Cycling levels in London have been steadily increasing, with cycling emerging as the fastest-growing mode of transportation. Despite starting from a relatively low base, TfL had witnessed a notable rise in cycling, even during periods of reduced travel demand overall. This growth has been particularly evident in areas where new cycle routes have been introduced.
- 8.72 In 2023, there were 1.26 million cycling journeys, marking a 6% increase from 2022 and a 20% surge compared to pre-pandemic levels. This sustained growth indicates a fundamental shift in transportation preferences, with cycling becoming an increasingly popular choice for Londoners. TfL estimate that up to two-thirds of car trips in London could potentially be replaced by cycling, presenting a significant opportunity to reduce reliance on cars and align with the Mayor's Transport Strategy goals.
- 8.73 While commuting has been a primary driver of cycling growth, TfL recognise the need to diversify cycling demographics. It's essential to ensure that cycling is accessible to all Londoners for various purposes, including commuting, running errands, and leisure activities. TfL aims to see greater representation from women, older adults, disabled individuals, children, and diverse ethnic groups among cyclists, reflecting the diversity of London's population.
- 8.74 Despite progress, TfL highlighted that significant barriers to cycling persist, particularly concerning road safety concerns. Road danger remains a top concern for potential cyclists, with women, parents, and older Londoners citing safety fears as a deterrent. Addressing these safety concerns is crucial to fostering a more inclusive cycling environment.
- 8.75 Additionally, various other barriers, including cost, practicality, social factors, and personal preferences, hinder cycling uptake among underrepresented groups. Efforts to overcome these barriers require a multifaceted approach, including infrastructure improvements, targeted outreach, and community engagement.
- 8.76 Over the years, TfL had made significant strides in expanding cycling infrastructure, tripling the size of the cycleway network from 2016 to 2023. Our strategic cycle network plan aims to ensure that 40% of Londoners live within 400 meters of the cycleway network by 2030, it is at about 22% today. This comprehensive approach involves developing orbital routes, enhancing cycle parking facilities, expanding cycle hire schemes, and providing cycle training initiatives.
- 8.77 Furthermore, initiatives like low-traffic neighbourhoods have proven effective in promoting cycling uptake while enhancing road safety and reducing traffic congestion and also associated with a 50% reduction in road casualties. By prioritising investment in cycling infrastructure and implementing supportive policies, TfL aims to create a more cycling-friendly environment that encourages diverse participation and improves overall mobility in London.
- 8.8 Considering the above evidence, the Committee discussed the importance of promoting cycling as a mode of transportation and addressing barriers to its adoption. One key point emphasised was the significant health benefits of cycling, there was a need to raise

awareness about these health advantages and invest in better cycling infrastructure, taking inspiration from countries like the Netherlands where cycling is more prevalent among women. It was also noted that many disabled individuals start cycling for its health benefits and become highly engaged once they begin. Challenges such as traffic lights favouring vehicular traffic, persuading suburban residents to cycle, and adverse weather conditions were acknowledged. Developing cycling groups further was suggested as a way to encourage cycling in all weather conditions and shift cultural attitudes towards cycling. Questions were raised about the utilisation of provided bikes and the accessibility of cycling equipment for disabled cyclists, especially those living in flats. Suggestions were made for boroughs to prioritise addressing these issues and making access to cycles more affordable. In terms of planning, concerns were raised about the timeline for the strategic network plan, with suggestions for expedited implementation. It was suggested that political will and funding could accelerate the process, especially with the increasing prevalence of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) facilitating easier implementations. Overall, the discussion showed the multifaceted benefits of cycling and the importance of addressing various barriers to promote cycling as an accessible and sustainable mode of transportation.

9. 11 March 2024 – Special public meeting on reaching our 2030 net zero carbon target.

- 9.1 Every year the Council holds a special public meeting for external stakeholders to come and discuss the declared climate emergency. This year's meeting focused on 3 main areas: Climate action and resilience in the public realm, Supporting Climate Action and Resilience in Our Buildings, Creating a Sustainable and Climate Resilient Local Economy. While not all of these discussions focused on Active Travel, there were some key takeaways from the discussions to help shape the scrutiny review.

Key Takeaways

- 9.2 Climate Action and Resilience in the Public Realm: Active travel initiatives like creating people-friendly streets, organizing play streets, and developing heat escape corridors and pocket parks were highlighted as essential strategies to combat climate impacts in dense urban areas like Islington. These initiatives aim to enhance the public realm by reducing the dominance of roads and incorporating green spaces, shade, and better infrastructure to support active travel and community well-being.
- 9.3 Supporting Climate Action and Resilience in Our Buildings: Although primarily focused on buildings, this discussion highlighted the importance of considering overheating risks and ensuring climate-resilient infrastructure, which indirectly supports active travel by creating more comfortable and safer outdoor environments.
- 9.4 Overall Climate Action Strategy: Across the discussions, there was a strong emphasis on integrating climate impact considerations with public health and active travel. Initiatives like tree planting, sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs), and promoting parks for health were seen as vital to encouraging walking and cycling.

10. 16 April 2024 meeting – ACTIVE TRAVEL CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

- 10.1 The Committee drafted the recommendations set out at the beginning of the report and highlighted key areas the Council should focus on to encourage active travel:
- Street Maintenance and keeping the streets safe.
 - Equal/Equitable Access to Active Travel and Physical Activity.
 - Working with external partners.
 - The relationship between people who walk and people who cycle.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 In conclusion, Islington's ongoing commitment to sustainable practices and encouraging people to Actively Travel demonstrates its proactive approach to addressing pressing environmental challenges. Through a series of well-informed meetings, the council has laid out a comprehensive roadmap for improving the streets of Islington, making active travel more accessible and helping foster the relationship between people that walk and people that cycle. These discussions reflect an earnest desire to create a more environmentally friendly and liveable community, that allows people to feel safe in wanting to participate in a more active and sustainable lifestyle.
- 11.2 Through initiatives like Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and the Active Travel Programme, the borough has successfully promoted walking and cycling as preferred modes of transport. The integration of these efforts aligned with Vision 2030 and the Transport Strategy underscores Islington's commitment to sustainability and public health, aiming for 90% of journeys to be made by active travel or public transport by 2041.
- 11.3 Community engagement has been instrumental, with initiatives such as "People-Friendly Streets" yielding tangible benefits like reduced traffic and increased safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Moreover, targeted programmes have addressed the needs of diverse groups, including older residents and those from minority backgrounds, ensuring inclusivity in transportation planning and implementation.
- 11.4 Challenges remain, particularly around enhancing safety perceptions and accessibility for all. However, with the help of external partners and groups, particularly those focused on cycling and improving streets for walking, Islington continues to pave the way in delivering a more equitable and sustainable transportation landscape. By prioritising community input and leveraging partnerships, the borough is not only improving infrastructure but also encouraging a culture where active travel is embraced as a cornerstone of a healthier, more connected community.
- 11.5 As Islington continues to push for change and sustainability, it sets an example for other communities looking to address climate change and environmental risks while simultaneously building a thriving borough that benefits both present and future generations.
- 11.6 The Committee would like to thank witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the scrutiny review.
- 11.7 The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2023/24

Councillors:

Councillor Tricia Clarke (Chair)
Councillor Clare Jeapes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Fin Craig
Councillor Mick Gilgunn
Councillor Ruth Hayes
Councillor Caroline Russell
Councillor Angelo Weekes
Councillor Claire Zammit

Substitute Members:

Councillor Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong
Councillor Praful Nargund
Councillor Jason Jackson
Councillor Toby North
Councillor Heather Staff
Councillor Flora Williamson

Other Councillors:

Councillor Rowena Champion

Officer Support:

Emma Taylor – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Martijn Cooijmans - Director of Climate Change and Transport
Eshwyn Prabhu – Head of Transport Strategy & Air Quality
David Shannon – Active Travel Manager
Sarah Hitchcock – Head of Climate Action
Sara-Jane Little – Climate Action Performance Officer

SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)
Title of review: Net Zero Carbon 2030 - Active Travel in Islington
Scrutiny Committee: Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Director leading the review: Martijn Cooijmans, Director of Climate Change and Transport
Lead officers: Eshwyn Prabhu, Head of Transport Strategy and Air Quality; David Shannon, Active Travel Team Leader
<p>Overall aim of the review:</p> <p>We all need safer, cleaner streets and at least 20 minutes a day of physical activity to keep healthy. Active travel is the most accessible way to do this - not just by walking and cycling, but also by taking journeys on public transport, since these will usually include periods of walking. Active travel is all about making journeys by physically active means such as walking, wheeling, running or cycling. More often than not these journeys are relatively short such as the school run, trips to local shops, cycling to local workplaces or to the train station where a commuting journey continues.</p> <p>The aim of this review is to consider how the council is working and can work to take the lead on supporting and enabling people to change to active travel, developing initiatives to widen the uptake of active travel and identifying ways to support residents and businesses to achieve both health benefits and financial resilience through active travel.</p>
<p>Objectives of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enabling active travel – the council’s programme of projects, initiatives and promotion of different forms of active travel (cycling, walking and wheeling) and making residents aware of the services available to them (e.g. cycle training schemes, working with schools and businesses, cargo bikes, assisted purchase of cycles, secure cycle parking, cycle hire schemes). ▪ Inclusivity and disability – To consider equalities issues relating to active travel, and how the council can successfully challenge inequalities (such as physical and financial) in this area. ▪ Health and wellbeing – an exploration of the contribution of active travel to physical and mental wellbeing. ▪ Overcoming obstacles – a discussion of the key barriers to active travel and solutions available, including working with Transport for London to explore opportunities for joint working on active travel.
<p>How does this review contribute to the Council’s priorities?</p> <p>This review will contribute to the following priorities in the Islington Together 2023 Plan:</p> <p>Fairer Together: Everyone in Islington who needs extra help can access the right support for them at the right time and in the right place.</p>

Greener, Healthier Islington: Communities in Islington can access, and enjoy London's greenest, cleanest, and healthiest neighbourhoods and are able to live healthy, fulfilling and independent lives.

Scope of the review and evidence to be received:

The review will focus on...

1. Enabling Active Travel

- What is active travel?
- What services does the council provide to support active travel?
- How does the council enable active travel and what services are available to residents?

2. Health and wellbeing

- A focus on the positive contribution active travel can have on mental and physical health.
- Expert witnesses from the health sector to discuss benefits, and

3. Inclusivity and disability

- Council initiatives that enable active travel for disability groups.
- An examination of the services offered to broaden participation in active travel, with presentations from expert witnesses.
- The financial benefits of active travel.
- Are all communities able to access services equally, what information, advice and support is available to support them?

Q&A panel discussion to follow.

4. Overcoming obstacles

- Expert witnesses and personal testimony to outline the obstacles to active travel.

Q&A panel discussion to follow.

The Committee will receive the following evidence:

Meeting – 17 October 2023

- Introduction by Martijn Cooijmans, Director of Climate Change & Transport
- Discussion topic – Islington Pensioners Forum attending.

Meeting – 23 November 2023

- Discussion topic – Enabling active travel (Presentations from Ourbike, Living Streets)
- Discussion topic – Health and Wellbeing (Presentation from Islington Public Health)
- A Q&A panel of the experts to answer questions from the committee

Meeting – 25 January 2024

- Discussion topic – Inclusivity and disability (Presentation from Wheels for Wellbeing)
- Discussion topic – Overcoming obstacles (Presentations from Transport for London and Cycle Sisters)

- A Q&A panel of the experts to answer questions from the committee

Additionally, at a separate date to be agreed, the Active Travel Team will offer an in-person **showcase of the active travel programme's highlights**, eg Dr Bike, cycle skills training, bike hangar and parking for hire bikes site visits.

Questions for consideration by the committee:

- What comments does the committee have on how to best promote the health benefits of active travel?
- How can the council improve inclusivity and widen participation in the active travel programme it offers?
- What communities are there in the borough that the council could better connect with to access the active travel services and are there new initiatives that could be created to serve those communities?

Review timetable (list specific meeting dates if possible)

1. SID to be agreed: 17 October 2023
2. Witness evidence to be received: 17 October 2023 – 25 January 2024
3. Draft recommendations to be considered: 7 March 2024
4. Report to be approved: 13 June 2024
5. Report to be submitted to Executive: July 2024 (Date TBC)
6. Provisional date for Executive response: September 2024 (Date TBC)
7. Provisional date for 12-month update report back to the Committee: October 2024 (Date TBC)

Additional information:

In carrying out the review the committee will consider equalities implications and resident impacts identified by witnesses. The Executive is required to have due regard to these, and any other relevant implications, when responding to the review recommendations.

