

	<p style="text-align: center;">Executive 17 November 2008</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Director of Environment and Culture</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Wards Affected: ALL</p>	
<p>Council Travel Plan</p>	

Forward Plan Ref: E&C-06/07-051

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 Brent Council first adopted a Council Travel Plan in 2000. The Plan has been subject to amendment over the years to reflect changing circumstances and priorities. The Plan has now been subject to a fundamental review and a draft revised plan has been made available for consultation to all staff, managers and Members over the summer of this year.
- 1.2 This report summarises the responses received on the draft Plan through the consultation and presents a proposed final version of the Plan. The Plan has been slightly amended in response to the comments received. Comments received from both Unison and the GMB have also been taken into account.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members agree to adopt the Council Travel Plan (attached as Appendix A)
- 2.2 Agree the proposals at paragraphs 4.3-4.6 for using the proceeds of workplace parking charges and savings from not paying for commercial parking places.
- 2.3 Agree the recommendations over other issues at paragraphs 3.7.1-3.7.6.
- 2.4 Note the future programme of work and next steps as set out in paragraph 3.8 and to note that there will be further reports to the Executive where decisions are required.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 Brent Council has had a Travel Plan since 2000. Its principal aim was to reduce employees' reliance on single-occupancy car journeys for commuting and business use. This was encouraged by offering alternative, more sustainable modes of travel, including walking, cycling, public transport, car-sharing, the use of pool vehicles, and other initiatives.
- 3.1.2 There has been some progress in implementing the previous Plan and a number of reviews, but overall progress has been slow. The most notable success has been the reduction since 2006 in the use of single occupancy cars for commuting to work from 61.8% of staff to 52.0% with a doubling of staff walking to work and a 3% increase in the use of public transport. However, a number of corporate issues have now arisen which mean we need to step up a gear in our approach.
- 3.1.3 The Council adopted sustainability as a key theme for the Council to 2010 and beyond, building on the Corporate Strategy commitments 'to promote environmentally sustainable practices ... and develop new policies to address climate change' and 'make Brent Council an exemplar of environmental practice and performance on sustainability issues.'
- 3.1.4 The Council has adopted a Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan which commits the Council to a 20% reduction in its own carbon emissions over a four year period. This cannot be achieved without reducing emissions from staff travel.
- 3.1.5 Reflecting the widespread concern over climate change, and the recognition of the part local authorities need to play in responding to it, the government have introduced three National Indicators relating to climate change.
- ◆ NI 185 measuring the CO₂ emissions from the local authority's own estate and operations;
 - ◆ NI 186 measuring CO₂ emissions per head of resident population; and
 - ◆ NI 188 relating to adapting to future climate change.
- 3.1.6 NI 185 and NI 188 are both included in the Council's Local Area Agreement for 2008-2011. There are likely to be challenging targets for NI 185 which go beyond those in the Council's Carbon Management Strategy. These will also require emission reductions from travel.
- 3.1.7 These factors gave rise to an increasing recognition that more radical steps needed to be taken to make the Council's Travel Plan more effective and to make a real difference. That is why the draft Plan, issued for consultation, proposed to introduce more radical changes with particular emphasis on practical means of reducing both carbon emissions and road traffic congestion. The draft Plan also proposed financial incentives and disincentives to encourage changes in behaviour particularly in relation to workplace parking

3.1.8 The Council's current arrangements in relation to workplace parking are inconsistent, inequitable and unsustainable. Where unrestricted workplace parking is provided as at the Town Hall, places are occupied on a first come, first served basis unrelated to the business needs of the Council. Where free parking is provided but in restricted numbers as at Brent House, the allocation of passes is historically based rather than being related to an overall assessment of personal or business need. Where parking spaces in commercial car parks are provided for staff the provision of this substantial subsidy is not guided by a strategic cross-Council approach. The Travel Plan is an opportunity to take a more considered and rational approach ensuring that policy and practice in this area supports good practice and the Council's strategic interests.

3.2 The Draft Travel Plan

- 3.2.1 The present draft of the proposed Travel Plan is attached as Appendix A. The draft reflects the consultation carried out and reported in the next section. Sections 1-4 of the plan set out the background and strategic context, describe the strategy and set some aims objectives and targets. Section 5 describes the package of measures proposed, discussed in more detail below. Section 6 discusses communication, Section 7 contains an Action Plan, Section 8 covers parking management issues and Section 9 covers funding.
- 3.2.2 The first package of measures proposed relates to promoting walking including improved walking routes, better information and overcoming disincentives to walking.
- 3.2.3 The second package relates to cycling including improving routes, improving changing facilities and cycle parking, promotional measures and support for cycle purchase through a salary sacrifice scheme.
- 3.2.4 The key proposal for improving public transport use is to introduce a 5% discount in association with the existing interest free season ticket loan. The majority of issues around public transport provision are issues over which the Council has influence rather than control.
- 3.2.5 Managing car use is the next package of measures and is critical to the success of the plan. The key proposals here are to review the allocation of "Essential User Parking Permits", to adopt a consistent, Council-wide approach to the allocation of parking spaces, to introduce a consistent and fair tariff of parking charges for workplace parking, and to end the provision of free parking spaces for staff in commercial car parks.
- 3.2.6 Further packages of proposals deal with reducing the need to travel, business travel, information and planning, and measures for Members and visitors.

3.3 Results of the Consultation

- 3.3.1 Consultation was through a questionnaire attached to the consultation draft Travel Plan posted on the intranet during July and August 2008. There were 21 questions. Some questions were “Yes/No” and, if so, a secondary question followed each closed question allowing additional comments.
- 3.3.2 A total of 155 responses were received of which 100 were complete responses with all questions answered. The spread of responses was across all Directorates and covered all the major Council office sites.
- 3.3.3 The responses to the Draft Travel Plan were encouraging, with 76% (91) of respondents (119) favouring the Council’s overall approach to the Travel Plan while 24% (28) did not. 48% (72) of respondents supported the whole package of measures, whilst 52% (77) did not (the issues raised are summarised below).
- 3.3.4 The proportion who felt that the Council had the right balance between charges and incentives contained in the consultation draft Travel Plan was 60 % (59 of the 99 who responded) with 40% disagreeing.
- 3.3.5 The majority of respondents (68% - 68 out of 100 replies) felt that the Council is right to discourage the use of the private car to deliver its services, and that it is right to encourage more sustainable transport. As well as this, most people who responded (83% - 80 out of 96 replies) believed that the Travel Plan positively contributes to the Council achieving sustainable development.
- 3.3.6 Nevertheless, when faced with supporting work-place parking charges a minority (37% - 38 out of 103 replies) was in favour of this move with 63% (65) against.
- 3.3.7 Those not in favour of charging for parking gave reasons such as need to change their working lifestyle – for example combining a journey to or from work with another journey purpose (eg: the school run, or shopping). The move to more flexible working practices may mitigate this concern.
- 3.3.8 Another concern raised is how parking allocations will be issued. The proposals put forward in the Parking Management Strategy section of the proposed Council travel Plan summarise the principles on which it is proposed this be based.
- 3.3.9 A further concern mentioned was recruitment and retention issues. Some staff drive from areas where public transport is poor, or where it is cheaper or quicker to drive. This is obviously a concern and could lead to some difficulties when staff are asked to make adjustments. In the long run a more sustainable solution is for the Council to employ a greater proportion of local people and those who can travel to work sustainably but the transition may be difficult for individuals.
- 3.3.10 In addition, restrictions on the provision of workplace parking and/or the introduction of charges are increasingly becoming the norm for London

authorities. Our inner London neighbours make little or no provision for workplace parking. A number of outer London authorities have now introduced workplace parking charges and others are planning to do so. Still others have rationed the availability of parking so that staff have a place for a limited number of days per week. This makes impacts on recruitment and retention less likely.

- 3.3.11 An early decision in principle to introduce parking charges will allow time for officers to consider alternative working styles and options to make their commute more sustainable and cheaper perhaps through lift-sharing, reducing their vehicle's engine size at the next purchase and so on.
- 3.3.12 Perhaps the biggest issue for the Travel Plan to deal with is to ensure that operational efficiency of the Council is not compromised. There are clearly some journeys which Council staff undertake in order to provide services to the community, and for which walking, cycling or public transport are not acceptable options. Time and efficiency are major concerns as is having to carry heavy goods or materials, dealing with emergencies and needing rapid access to people or premises, perhaps where vulnerable members of the community need to be visited. Detailed work will be needed in each specific service to establish exactly what the local travel patterns of all officers are on Council business and to assess if there are more efficient travel opportunities to comply with the proposed new Council policy. Each service unit will be asked to reassess their use of travel and transport in order to establish what "quick wins" may be available. This may include car sharing, the use of pool cars, car clubs, better driving techniques, the use of more environmentally friendly vehicles and the creation of a central, interactive travel information, route advice and bookings system, as suggested in the Travel Plan measures.

3.4 The Package of Measures

- 3.4.1 In the light of the comments received in the consultation, it is proposed to retain all the measures in the package that were included in the consultation draft Travel Plan as no new evidence emerged that would result in a measure being dropped or new ones added. The main concerns expressed were over implementation and the implications for individuals of the measures proposed.
- 3.4.2 The 35 measures contained in the draft plan represent a proportionate and balanced approach to encouraging the change in behaviour of staff, with a mixture of information, encouragement, improved facilities, the removal of unjustifiable and unfair subsidies, and a balanced set of financial incentives and disincentives. Some of the measures are ready to implement, others will require the development of detailed business cases, or will need further consultation over the detail before implementation. It is believed that, taken as a whole, the measures are likely to bring about a significant and welcome further shift towards more sustainable travel and the achievement of the Council's strategic priorities.

3.5 Parking

- 3.5.1 The part of the Travel Plan most likely to be controversial is the proposal to reduce or eliminate free parking for staff at Council locations, and to charge for parking for remaining staff who wish to continue to come to work by car. The only exemptions would be for registered disabled staff who hold blue badges.
- 3.5.2 The current direct cost of providing parking for staff is substantial. The Council pays £372,000 per annum for 426 staff car parking spaces (with most spaces costing £19 per week). This cost has increased substantially last year and in many cases will no longer be affordable to the services concerned. The Council also provides a further 616 staff parking spaces at a number of buildings for which no charge is made. The opportunity cost will be similar to the £19 per week for most paid for spaces, ie around £600,000 per year
- 3.5.3 This amounts to a very substantial subsidy to car users, many of whom do not need their car for work, whilst the only subsidy to non-car users is the foregone interest on interest free season ticket loans totalling £6,000 per year across the Council. This runs counter to the Council's policy objectives and raises substantial issues of equity.
- 3.5.4 The Council's position on requiring staff to provide cars for work is confused. It has been the Council's policy for many years that it would not pay the NJC Essential Car User Allowance even where staff are required to provide a car for work. Nevertheless, a small number of staff (<50) receive an allowance based on the Essential Car User Allowance whilst many others do not. The Unions have raised this issue. Implementation of the Travel Plan should reduce the numbers of staff required to provide their own cars for work and it is proposed that new, Council-wide policy be developed in this area. .
- 3.5.5 Around 750 staff are provided with Essential User Parking Permits allowing them to park in residents parking bays anywhere in the borough except within 500 metres of their workplace. A review of policy, practice and criteria in this area is recommended as part of the Travel Plan programme.
- 3.5.6 Overall, it is believed that the Travel Plan proposals offer a clear, fair and consistent approach to resolving long standing problems in the area of managing car use and parking at Council offices. These include support and incentives to reduce parking demand and an opportunity to make parking financially self supporting, whilst providing revenue towards ongoing costs of the Travel Plan.

3.6 Proposed Policy and Procedure for Staff Travel

- 3.6.1 It is proposed that a new policy and procedure for staff travel be developed to support and implement, where required, the measures proposed in the Travel Plan. This would be subject to the usual consultation before being agreed.

3.7 Other Issues

- 3.7.1 The current National Joint Council rates of business mileage re-imbusement do not encourage the use of sustainable forms of transport, nor encourage the purchase of small and low CO₂ emitting cars, nor do they encourage more modern, less polluting cars to be purchased and used. It is recommended that Brent agree a local policy and adopt rates for business mileage re-imbusement that support our sustainability policy objectives. This proposal was opposed by the Unions.
- 3.7.2 If parking charges are introduced then there is a likelihood that some that employees will park in surrounding roads in order to avoid the charges. This could well be the case around the Town Hall where there is no controlled parking zone. It is recommended that take up of the Town Hall car park and the parking density in the surrounding streets is monitored following introduction of charges to identify any problems.
- 3.7.3 A review of parking spaces allocated to individuals will be undertaken for each office location and access to spaces reprioritised based on the following criteria: 1) people with disabilities (at no charge), 2) those required to provide and use a private car as part of their contract of employment, 3) staff who can make a strong case for needing access to parking space, either on a temporary or permanent basis, based on their particular, personal circumstances and needs, 4) staff with casual car user status and 5) others.
- 3.7.4 It is recommended that Human Resources monitor the effects of the Travel Plan on recruitment and retention as well as the implementation of the new Staff Travel Policy and Procedures. There is a presumption that any impact on recruitment and retention will be negative but it may be that the new Council Travel Plan will persuade some prospective staff that the Council is serious about these issues and therefore expects all its staff to follow these policies. This will demonstrate to Brent's communities that the Council is practicing what it preaches and providing leadership locally.
- 3.7.5 An issue raised during the consultation is that staff bring their cars into work and use their car for other purposes using multiple trips e.g. taking children to school, going shopping or going to the gym after work as this is convenient. In order to enable staff to make adjustments to their lifestyle and make the necessary changes to accommodate the Council's new policies, it is recommended that adequate notice be given to staff that these changes will be introduced. It is therefore recommended that the new Travel Plan is implemented from 1st April 2009. If measures need to be phased in over a period of time it is proposed that the phasing of the measures will be agreed by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, Director of Environment and Culture and the Head of Human Resources.

3.7.6 The Council uses very few flights in the course of undertaking its business and the Travel Plan, as drafted, does not include a policy on air travel. The presumption is that the use of air flights is a last resort once all other travel options have been examined and rejected as being impractical. It is recommended that if flights are used by Council staff or Members, then the resultant carbon emissions will be offset by the Council through an appropriate scheme and the costs recharged to the relevant service unit.

3.8 Next Steps

3.8.1 As indicated in paragraph 3.3.12, a great deal of further work is needed to ensure the effective implementation of the Travel Plan once the plan has been adopted and the principles set out in the recommendations have been agreed. In particular, detailed operational arrangements for each Council building affected by parking charges and the reprioritisation of parking space allocations will need to be developed and consulted on. Agreement will also be needed from the Executive on the level of parking charges proposed. Agreement will be needed from General Purposes Committee to the proposed local allowances for staff business related travel. Agreement will be needed on the revised criteria for the future allocation of Essential User Permits and staff eligibility for these. It is planned to submit all these recommendations to the appropriate committees for approval during February 2009.

4.0 Financial Implications

Current cost dimensions

4.1 The council currently subsidises staff travel in the following ways:

Home to work

- ◆ Direct purchase of parking spaces from National Car Park - £372,000 per annum for 426 staff car parking spaces (with most spaces costing £19 per week);¹
- ◆ Provision of a further 616 staff car parking spaces at council buildings (together with visitor spaces at some buildings e.g. Brent House, Mahatma Gandhi House, the Town Hall);
- ◆ Interest free season ticket/bike loans totalling £128,000 to 87 members of staff (around £1,500 loan per member of staff) at a cost of around £6,000 per annum (interest foregone).

Work travel

- ◆ Payment of car mileage expenses in excess of £300,000 per annum (offset by recovery of VAT of around £10,000 per annum). Car mileage rate is 41 pence per mile for cars with engine size under 1000cc, 44 pence per mile for cars with engine size 1000cc to 1199cc, and 56 pence per mile for cars with engine size of 1200cc and over;
- ◆ Payment by services for essential parking permits of c £94,000 per annum (750 at £125 each);
- ◆ A non-quantifiable amount spent on:

¹ Children's Social Care has recently cancelled 42 passes for staff at Brent House Annexe yielding an annual saving of £41,000. Prior to that the council was paying for 468 spaces at an annual cost of £413,000.

- On- and off-street parking reimbursed through expense claims
- Office Oyster cards used for business travel in London;
- Other expenses reimbursed for business travel in London and elsewhere.

Operational vehicles

The council also has fleets of vehicles used for operational purposes either in a pool or as part of a contract e.g. Brent Transport Service, the Parks Service.

Financial implications of the plan

4.2 The table below summarises the Travel Plan measures and the associated costs. The costs are divided into set-up costs (if applicable) and annual on-going costs (if applicable). The subsidy proposed for annual ticket loans is taxable.² The estimates of cost of the subsidy assume that the proposed 5% subsidy (on top of the benefit from providing the loan interest free) will be the net benefit to a basic rate tax-payer and that the council would therefore gross up the subsidy to 6.3%.

Measures	One-off cost	Annual costs
Walking	£2,680	0
Cycling	£71,776	£9,700
Public transport	0	£94,000
Managing car use	£950	£950
Travel information planning and marketing	£16,500	£2,000
Annual maintenance/replacement budget for cycling and walking facilities	0	£20,000
Additional support required for delivery of the Plan (to be reviewed after 2 years)	0	£40,000
Grand total	£91,906	£166,650
One-off costs funded over 5 years on invest to save basis (interest at 6%)	N/A	£22,000
Grand total annual costs – one-off costs funded over 5 years	N/A	£188,650

4.3 It is proposed that income raised from charging for parking spaces at council sites will be hypothecated to fund the costs set out above. As an example, the total 616 council sites which are currently raising no revenue could yield an income of £188K per year. This is based on an average charge of £10 per week (inclusive of VAT), representing 52% of the commercial rate in Wembley (which is £19 per week), assumed occupancy of 80% (taking account of unused places and places occupied by blue badge holders), and administrative costs of £30k per year. On these assumptions, the estimated income from introduction of parking charges broadly offsets the estimated cost of implementing the travel

² The council will discuss with HMRC whether it would be possible to get a dispensation for this but it is unlikely that this will be granted

plan. Costs and income assumptions will need to be reviewed as the plan is implemented to ensure that it remains cost neutral.

- 4.4 Savings from no longer purchasing NCP car spaces will be £372k per year across the council. This saving has been built into central items within the 2009/10 budget projections. Service area budgets will therefore be reduced by the amount currently paid for parking spaces.
- 4.5 The financial implications of proposals such as the introduction of pooled cars will have to be assessed once the scheme is developed with the aim that introduction would be cost neutral, with costs offset by reductions in car mileage allowance.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council has the power under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions. Also, under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, it has the power to do anything which is likely to promote or improve the environmental well-being of its area. In exercising this power, the Council has to have regard to its Community Plan, which refers to the need to promote more sustainable modes of transport, to improve the quality of the local environment, to reduce congestion and the stranglehold of the car on the borough, to address air quality, and reduce the number of road accidents. It is considered that the measures proposed above fall within both of these sections. These objectives have also been adopted within relevant Environment & Culture Service Plans.
- 5.2 Staff currently enjoying the benefit of an allocated parking space provided by the Council may have an express or implied right to this benefit under their contracts of employment. Whether this does apply to any particular individual will depend on the precise facts in their case.
- 5.3 There is a legal obligation to provide workplace access for registered disabled people.
- 5.4 Future plans for consolidation of offices to fewer sites or other major changes to existing council buildings may require planning permission in which case a Travel Plan will be a requirement.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. The main issues identified are discussed below.
- 6.2 The new Council Travel Plan will affect the commuting patterns of a number of staff who currently have a parking place but who may not be allocated a space once the new criteria have been applied or who are affected by the introduction of charges for parking. Members of staff who use their car on multiple trips during the day or evening e.g. to drop their children off at school or use their car after work to pick up children or to go shopping or for leisure purposes, for example, will also be affected possibly adversely and it is likely that amongst staff with such caring responsibilities women could be disproportionately represented. In order to

help staff and members make the appropriate adjustments, it is recommended that three months notice is issued before charges are introduced in order to allow time to make adjustments to their own domestic arrangements.

- 6.2 Introducing parking charges for staff and members for parking on Council sites may have some adverse effects on some staff and members. This is likely to impact disproportionately on those staff who are lower paid for whom affordability may be an issue. The consultation results have indicated that there are fewer objections to this proposal than might have been expected. It is therefore accepted that there will be some adverse consequences on particular members of staff. However not only is the income required to pay for the Travel Plan but parking on Council sites or in the NCP car park in Wembley is also a benefit enjoyed by only some members of staff who happen to have a current parking space. Current arrangements are no better in terms of fairness and there is no argument for maintaining the status quo.
- 6.3 People with disabilities should not be adversely affected by these proposals as the Council will continue with its current policy that if a car parking space is needed then it will be allocated and no charge levied.
- 6.4 Safety at night is also an issue, especially for women who need to work late or attend late meetings and feel unsafe walking alone at night or where using public transport is not an option. Each case will be assessed on its merits by the service manager. The Travel Plan recommends that the taxi fare home is paid if late night meetings are attended and a taxi is required or if a member of staff has to make other arrangements to get home if their liftshare arrangements fail.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications

- 7.1 The current Travel Plan proposal includes support for home working and teleworking. This may reduce pressure on office accommodation.
- 7.2 There may be concerns over recruitment and retention of staff, particularly if parking charges are introduced. It may also present difficulties for certain groups of staff such as parents who transport children to school and are currently car dependent. However, in the medium and longer term, Brent will benefit from attracting and retaining staff who personally subscribe to sustainability and/or enjoy a healthier lifestyle. The fact that most London authorities either make no provision for workplace parking, or are introducing restrictions and/or charges makes recruitment and retention impacts less likely.
- 7.3 There are also unquantifiable but significant benefits in addition to the possible savings in car parking, essential user allowances and mileage costs. Staff benefits include reduced stress, improved health, increased productivity, and reduced levels of sickness. Benefits for those who travel on public transport include the ability to be more productive in their use of time (either personally or towards corporate objectives) during their daily commute.
- 7.4 The building of new Civic Centre will reflect the new Travel Plan's policies and proposed arrangements (if agreed). This may release more space for other uses rather than needing to provide a large number of car parking spaces.

Background Papers

Brent Council Corporate Strategy (2006-2010)

Mayor's Transport Strategy (Transport for London, 2000)

Brent Council Transportation Service Strategy Unit. Service Operational Plan (2008-2009)

Draft Council Travel Plan issued for consultation July 2008

Documents commissioned from Transport Planning International in 2006.

Documents commissioned from JMP Consultants

Results of the Staff Survey February 2008.

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