

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF GREEN TRAVEL PLANS

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INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the Environmental Services and Public Health Sub-Committee meeting of 9th June 2002, Members agreed to conduct a review of Green Travel. This topic was further refined to focus on Green Travel Plans (GTPs) in Croydon, and Terms of Reference were agreed at the Sub-Committee meeting of 24th September 2002.

BACKGROUND - WHY GREEN TRAVEL PLANS?

- 1.2 Department of Transport figures estimate that traffic in the United Kingdom is forecast to rise by 17% over ten years*. In addition, Croydon's third Talkabout Survey, conducted in autumn 2000, showed that local residents felt traffic congestion was one of their top concerns.
- 1.3 Traffic levels have a direct impact on air quality. This review has examined some of the work carried out as part of Croydon's Air Quality Action Plan, drawn up in 2000 following the requirements of section 84(2) of the Environment Act 1995.
- 1.4 The Transport White Paper (1998). "A new Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone", and the Transport act (2000) have led a number of organisations to implement their own Travel Plans, thus producing a range of good practice and experience in this field.

THE REVIEW

- 1.5 The main objectives of the review were:

* *Transport 2010: the Background Analysis (July 2000)*

- To evaluate the implementation of Green Travel measures in Croydon
- To determine how green travel measures have been implemented by other agencies borough and country-wide
- To identify good practice in implementing green travel measures which might be applied locally
- To use this information to draw recommendations for improving Green Travel measures and their implementation in Croydon

1.6 It was hoped that the process of conducting the review will provide opportunities to:

- Raise awareness of green travel issues within Croydon Council, other organisations and the community
- Publicise the growing volume of good practice in this field
- Lead by example in implementing measures to reduce local traffic congestion
- To use this information to draw recommendations for improving Green Travel measures and their implementation in Croydon

1.7 In addition to consultation with a wide variety of Croydon Council officers and green travel staff in other councils, the review involved two surveys. One was carried out with a small sample of 48 Croydon staff, and sought to determine:

- Whether they were aware of the Council's Green Travel Plan and its incentives
- Whether they were in favour of Green Travel Measures

1.8 The second survey was carried out with members of the Environment Action Network, a group of Council staff who promote environmental sustainability within their work place. This survey aimed to find out how interested members were in promoting green travel initiatives, and what support they felt they needed to promote sustainability more effectively, and to overcome obstacles to "environmentally friendly" habits.

THE COUNCIL'S GREEN TRAVEL PLAN AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 In response to growing traffic congestion, and in line with its vision and values, Croydon Council published its own Green Travel Plan in 1999. This was followed by a staff travel survey which yielded an extensive database of staff views, which could inform the development of incentives to move away from travel by car.

2.2 The Council has put a number of measures in place to encourage staff to reduce their reliance on the car, endeavouring, where possible, to reduce the need to travel at all. Measures include:

- Opportunities to work away from the office base and to take advantage of the Worksmart initiative to work more flexible hours, such as "nine day fortnights"
- Interest-free season ticket loans paid back through deductions from pay
- The availability of a car-share database, advertised in a variety of ways, including the Intranet Home Page
- Bicycle and motorbike essential and casual allowances
- A wide variety of information and advice, disseminated through posters, e-mail, the Council's website, etc

2.3 In addition, the Council provides other opportunities for avoiding the need to travel, such as conference calls. Information on how to use this system is available on the Intranet, and

expertise is being developed in some sections on how best to manage such calls, but discussions with the Council's Contact Centre suggest that this technology is rarely used.

2.4 Other measures are currently being considered, e.g.

- Individualised marketing in specific areas in Croydon to assist residents to find appropriate alternatives to car use. This approach led to a reduction of 8% in car use in Perth (Australia).
- Making use of car clubs such as Bed Zed to cater for occasional car usage, e.g. business travel, thus freeing staff to consider alternative means of transport for commuting purposes. A feasibility study has been conducted locally, and further action in this field will follow when TfL 's current car club trials have been completed.
- Proposed changes to car user and mileage allowances, and car loans, to encourage the use of more environmentally friendly vehicles for staff who need a vehicle to carry out their work

2.5 A number of green travel measures can be used to reduce commuting by car in the case of staff whose work entails business travel. Measures being considered include:

- Making use of car pools, or a council car fleet, to provide essential travel by car
- The use of technology e.g. conference calls to obviate the need for meetings

2.6 It is hoped that future developments such as the replacement of IMPPS (Integrated Management of Payroll and Personnel System) software with new personnel information systems will help the Council collect more management information and monitor data such as the take-up of initiatives reducing the need to travel or use a car.

2.7 Currently available incentives have been promoted through a variety of channels, relying mainly on written communication (e.g. leaflets, posters, the Internet and the Intranet) to circulate information to a wide audience.

THE COUNCIL'S VEHICLE FLEET

3.1 New additions to the Council's fleet reflect the perceived need to take into account the need to minimise car emissions, two examples being the provision of bicycles to Neighbourhood Wardens and the acquisition of the Mayor's new car, which runs on LPG.

3.2 In order to ensure that vehicles used to provide council services are regularly renewed to take advantage of increasingly sophisticated technology controlling emissions, and run on cleaner fuels such as LPG, the Council has used the leverage of major contracts, such as the recently awarded Cleansing contract, to incorporate and, where possible, enforce clauses governing the acquisition and management of new vehicles.

3.3 Areas of work which can lead to a significant shift towards lower pollution in future are:

- The creation of a Council car pool for business travel, which would minimise the need for staff to commute to work by car
- The take-up of new clean fuels and tax rebates when these prove to be cost-effective and practical to use - one fuel currently under investigation being "water diesel"

- A more strategic approach to the procurement of Council vehicles, with a view to taking up environmentally friendly technology at a competitive price
- Exploring the possibility of funding the switch to cleaner fuels through grants available through the Energy Saving Trust
- Proposals to establish a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) in Croydon, preferably as part of a London-wide LEZ, to exclude the most polluting buses, lorries and coaches from the area by 2007, as suggested in the recently completed London Low Emission Zone Feasibility Study.

THE GREEN TRAVEL PLAN AND STAFF VIEWS

4.1 The potential for staff to take up alternatives to car use is reasonably good. The Staff Travel Survey conducted in spring 1999, which had a response rate of 41.4% (i.e. 2100 surveys) showed that:

- 60.7% of staff questioned lived 5 miles or less away from their place of work
- 37.1% travel 50 miles or less per month for work
- The Staff Survey showed that about 45% of staff have an essential car user allowance, and 19% have a casual user allowance
- 58% of Council staff regularly drive into work by car
- If car benefits were withdrawn, 67% of staff concerned said they would carry on using their car in the same way despite the added expense - suggesting that this may not be an effective way of encouraging staff to use alternative means of transport
- However, 52% of respondents in receipt of car allowances stated that they would be willing to trade them in for an alternative benefit, the most popular being cash alternatives, season tickets, and increased annual leave.
- Some respondents stated that no incentives would deter them from continuing to travel by car. However, they made up only 9% of total responses.

4.2 However, the results of the Scrutiny Staff survey show that little is known about alternatives to car use. Only 11% were aware of incentives available. Take-up of alternatives to car use support this finding: in January 2003, only 166 staff made use of the Council provided season tickets, and while personnel staff could not provide figures on the number of bicycle loans given, they stated that these were very rare.

4.3 The Scrutiny staff survey showed that Respondents cited a variety of hurdles to the take-up of "green" travel options, including inconvenience (27%), problems with public transport (25%), as well as cost (13%) - despite the far higher costs of running a car.

4.4 The results of the survey conducted with members of the Environment Action Network suggest that promotion needs to:

- Highlight genuinely attractive, and easy to use alternatives to single car use
- Offer alternatives which are straight-forward and practical to use
- Do a lot of preparatory thinking and work to overcome to the reported lack of time to figure out how to travel green - 28% of respondents reported a perception that people were too busy to take up environmentally friendly alternatives
- Reward users of alternative forms of transport in a way which they considered worthwhile
- Be seen to be supported and implemented by senior management

- 4.5 Unison and GMB were consulted regarding their views on green travel, and discussion also took place with the Council's Equalities Unit. They acknowledged the need for developing sustainable measures to minimise pollution, but stressed that they need to be balanced against a number of considerations such as health and safety, and salary retention issues.
- 4.6 Potential problems identified included:
- Safety risks associated with travelling alone outside working hours
 - Reduced employment opportunities for disabled staff
 - Potential recruitment and retention difficulties
- 4.7 It was stressed that any new measures to steer staff away from single car usage needs to be subjected to full consultation, to assess its potential impact on staff and lead to a well-thought out implementation of new procedures.

BENCHMARKING WITH OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 5.1 15 London boroughs and 10 councils nation-wide were consulted in September 2002 to ascertain what progress they had made on implementing green travel plans.
- 5.2 Croydon Council compared well with these councils, having launched its Green Travel Plan, surveyed staff and put a wide variety of measures in place. One area in which it lagged behind was its failure to share the results of its staff travel survey council-wide. This exercise yielded a useful collection of good practice, which may lead to useful discussions with the appropriate officers to identify the crucial factors behind successful initiatives. Two examples are the success of Derbyshire County Council in getting staff to take up car-sharing, and a good response to green travel promotion in Portsmouth and Bournemouth.
- 5.3 Problems encountered included:
- Lack of resources (11 respondents)
 - General lack of support or resistance to green travel alternatives (16 respondents)
 - An expressed view that car travel is simply easier

CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Surveys and benchmarking exercises have shown that promoting a voluntary practice such as green travel is a challenge, especially if it involves relinquishing one's comforts and making significant changes to one's routine. In addition, introducing, promoting and maintaining changes council-wide requires practices and procedures which are fundamentally different from traditional Council services, such as providing a statutory service, usually with a clearly earmarked source of funding available year after year.
- 6.2 In order to make this sustainable, the Council would need to dedicate long-term resources, funding and staffing time to develop and monitor the effectiveness of the Council's Green Travel Plan, and to disseminate information and advice in the long term. Lengthy staff vacancies relating to the promoting of green travel measures such as those experienced in 2001-2002 can seriously erode the effectiveness of initiatives set up by previous post-holders, particularly if they remain the sole individual in charge of disseminating information and advice.

- 6.3 Traffic congestion and increasing air pollution in Croydon make green travel measures a necessity. A growing number of people are beginning to appreciate this and few are completely intransigent. However, ways will have to be devised to make staff see the link between the issues and their own actions, and then take measures which genuinely suit their life-styles and work duties.
- 6.4 Some controversy has previously been generated by focusing on the withdrawal of benefits to staff who are contracted to use their cars for work. The staff travel survey has shown that such action would not significantly change the travel habits of such staff, and prevented the Council from focusing on more staff-friendly and popular alternatives such as tele-working, car clubs, etc. While up and coming opportunities must be identified and used to control the emissions of cars used in connection with Council work, any future work on Green Travel Plans needs to take into consideration that this is still a voluntary code, which will only be taken up if it is seen to be attractive and practical by the staff concerned.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That chief officers confirm their support for Green Travel Initiatives through CMT, and instruct the Environment Forum to review and take forward Croydon's Green Travel Plan with an action plan for the Council and its departments, which would include:

- proposals on how to make the best possible use of opportunities already in place such as Worksmart, free season ticket loans, the car share database, as well as car users' priorities identified through the Staff Travel Survey, to reduce car usage
- identifying staff resources to set up an effective communication system to promote green travel initiatives and monitor their effectiveness, and to pursue the work already initiated by the Green Travel Co-ordinator, whose appointment will come to an end on 31st March 2004 as the funding for this post ceases
- ensuring that each Department nominates an officer whose role would involve championing and promoting Green Travel issues and initiatives, and liaising with appropriate officers to keep up to date with developments impacting on Green Travel, and communicate these to their department.
- ascertaining what role the Environment Action network can play in promoting Green Travel Initiatives and supporting the work of officers and Green Travel Champions
- the Croydon Strategic Partnership Board and the Environment Partnership considering this review, and reporting back its implications for their work.

GREEN TRAVEL AND OTHER CROYDON EMPLOYERS - EXISTING AND POTENTIAL

1.1 Green travel initiatives have been adopted by a number of employers country-wide, as shown in the following examples, drawn from an extensive compilation of Green Travel case studies by the Department for Transport:

- A 14% drop in the number of commuter journeys car by Addenbrooks NHS trust (Cambridge)
- A 12% reduction in car journeys at Orange offices situated in Bristol city centre
- A 9% increase in car-sharing by Nottingham City Hospital

WHAT GREEN TRAVEL CAN MEAN FOR CROYDON EMPLOYERS

2.1 Whenever drawing up or implementing a green travel plan, an employer will have to balance gains such as better health, an improved local environment and enhanced image with the organisational and resource implications of setting it up.

2.2 The success of a green travel plan is dependent on the following criteria:

- A good understanding of the needs of staff
- A good understanding of the opportunities and limitations of the site
- The staff's and management's awareness that their needs are understood
- Measures which are sustainable, and have a balance of popular and practical "carrots" and effective "sticks", such as paying for parking, which the staff are willing to support
- Effective dissemination of information to staff through existing networks (e.g. team meetings, induction packs for new staff with follow-up during the first weeks of employment)
- Formal and informal opportunities to discuss travel options
- Sustained follow-up of green travel promotion
- Drawing up and implementing a plan which uses the employer's resources and time effectively and reduces transport costs in an effective and sustainable manner

2.3 Employers country-wide have found a range of ways to reduce the cost of implementing green travel measures:

- Orange used computer technology to automate the processing of responses to its staff travel survey, the results of which were then used to promote appropriate alternatives to car travel
- Employers in Cressex in High Wycombe worked together to improve travel alternatives in a congested area, and the Winchester Commuter Forum, set up in 1998, brought together Hampshire County Council, the local hospital and a number of firms, to devise travel options which would have a significant impact on the area
- As a result of the partnership working in Cressex, a decision was made to identify and work on top local priorities, rather than spend resources on a weighty strategy. An outcome of this work will be the launch of a shuttle bus service, funded by Section 106 contributions, in January 2004.

2.4 A good use of resources may emerge from examining how measures might be combined to achieve significant reductions in car use. Examples might be:

- Combining Walking Buses with opportunities for flexible working hours to reduce the need to combine commuting with school run
- Combine the use of pool cars with tele-working to minimise the reliance on the car for work-related journeys

GREEN TRAVEL PLANS IN CROYDON

- 3.1 Work is currently been done with a number of local businesses on the development of Company Travel plans, These include Mayday Hospital, Croydon Primary Health Care Trust, IKEA and B&Q. Recent work has include the inputting of data from B&q's stff travel survey to an Excel database for analysis, and providing information to B&Q on secure cycle parking options.
- 3.2 Promotion of green travel to businesses has included:
- Attending the Business First 2003 exhibition at Croydon Fairfield Halls on 8th and 9th October, and the Croydon Social Enterprise conference on 22nd October, to promote travel plan, a Cycle-Friendly Employers' Guide, car-sharing, etc
 - Drawing up a detailed swot analysis and marketing plan to encourage and assist small and medium-sized enterprises in Croydon in incorporating environmental sustainability into their practices and complying with new legislation and regulations. Developments which businesses may have to adapt to in future may include the Low Emission Zone (mentioned on page 3 of this document) which, if implemented, will require businesses to equip their vehicles with emission reduction technology or scrap vehicles which do not comply with new regulations

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE AND GREEN TRAVEL MEASURES

- 4.1 A further tool which the Planning and Transportation department are developing to encourage the take up of alternatives to single car usage is guidance for developers to assist them in producing effective Green Travel Plans, when these are required in conjunction with a planning application for a new development. This requirement is set out in Policy T6 of the draft Croydon Plan, the statutory strategy document governing planning requirements due to become effective in 2005.
- 4.2 Travel Plans need to cover a package of measures tailored to the needs of individual sites and should provide evidence of a developer's commitment to making development more sustainable.
- 4.3 To maximise the take-up of this guidance by developers, this guidance would need to:
- Be concise, in Plain English, with diagrams where necessary to make the information quicker to absorb (an existing example of good practice being Croydon's SPG10, "Designing for Accessibility")
 - Have a list of useful contact names, websites, and publications to assist developers in producing a green travel plan to accompany their application. This is particularly important as information about public transport accessibility changes from time to time, making it difficult to provide up-to-date information through the guidance itself.

- 4.4 In order to encourage the production and implementation of Green Travel Plans in the borough, Croydon Council has produced a CD jointly with Sutton Council, as part of the SRB6 action plan, providing a detailed “toolkit” to assist potential developers. Planning and Transportation envisage therefore that Croydon’s SPG will provide the background and context underpinning the information contained in the CD.
- 4.5 As part of Croydon’s development team approach to dealing with major developments, developers would also be encouraged to engage in pre-application discussions regarding their application, in order to iron out potential problems at an early stage.

CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 A number of employers are beginning to take forward green travel measures. The good practice and hurdles encountered by these organisations can be put to good use in promoting green travel to other employers in the borough.
- 5.2 The Council has embarked on a many-faceted approach to promoting green travel with local employers, thus aiming to achieve a critical mass of awareness. The success of this approach will depend on the networks created, an understanding of the opportunities and hurdles presented by the physical environment and staff priorities, the quality of follow-up to initial ideas, and the example provided by the effectiveness of Croydon Council’s own measures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Development of Green Travel Plans with other local employers needs to include:

1 - Completing the production of Supplementary Planning Guidance on Green Travel Plans, as such guidance will have a long-term effect in shaping the transport arrangements of major new developments in Croydon as well as the town’s “transport culture”.

2 - Continuing to ascertain areas of common interest on which both the Council and businesses can work, e.g. car-share databases, bulk travel discounts, environmental improvements to make walking and cycling safer and more attractive, jointly funded events to promote green travel effectively, etc

3 - Continue to make use of local partnerships and networks, such as the Environment Partnership and the Croydon Strategic Partnership, to enable all local employers to benchmark on GTPs

4 - Where the opportunity arises as a result of initial joint projects/discussions, promoting and supporting the preparation of full GTPs by local employers.

5 - Identifying resources available both borough and region wide for promoting GTPs and ways of promoting green travel initiatives leading to sustainable changes in travel habits.

GREEN TRAVEL INITIATIVES IN SCHOOLS

TRAFFIC TRENDS

- 1.1 It is estimated that approximately 20% of commuter traffic on the road in the morning is currently made up of cars making the 'school run'. In the last 10 years, the proportion of journeys to school by car has nearly doubled, from 16% to 30% (DfT 2002).
- 1.2 Providing alternatives to car travel would provide the following beneficial outcomes:
 - More exercise as well as road awareness for children
 - An improvement in the quality of air absorbed: in congested, slow moving traffic, pollution levels can be three times higher inside cars than out of them
 - Parents need to spend less time commuting (and have more opportunities to take up work-related green travel alternatives)
 - Last but not least, reduce traffic congestion

COUNCIL INITIATIVES

- 2.1 The impetus to develop a green approach to travel to school is informed by the following local policy documents:
 - Croydon's Interim Local Implementation Plan
 - Croydon's Walking and Cycling Strategies
 - The borough's Health Improvement and Modernisation Plan 2002-2005
- 2.2 Action points contained within these include:
 - The development of "Safer Routes to school" schemes by identifying potential dangers on routes to schools with the assistance of children and parents, and changing the highway environment to improve safety
 - Promotion and support for the "National Healthy Schools Initiative"
 - A Healthy Eating and Overweight Strategy which targets sectors of the population most at risk from coronary heart disease
- 2.3 Other initiatives to reduce the reliance on car travel have included:
 - Promoting the formation of walking buses, which entail setting up and using a walking route to school, routed via the homes of the children involved, the success of this initiative being very dependent on effective promotion to parents and school staff
 - Taking part in Walking Weeks, which take place on two separate weeks in the year, and aim to encourage children to take up this habit in the long-term
 - Cycle training, which is provided in the main in the last year of junior school to about 1200-1300 children borough-wide
 - Providing detailed information packs to schools to encourage them to draw up and implement their own green travel plan
- 2.4 However, the opportunity to develop existing and new green travel initiatives in schools has been hampered by the lack of dedicated staffing resources up till this year, as the responsibilities of the current Green Travel Co-ordinator have excluded work in this field.
- 2.5 This situation is set to change significantly with the following developments:
 - Croydon's success in obtaining £30,000 to fund 50% of a School Travel Co-ordinator post and additional funding amounting to £41,000, which can be used for staffing and promotional costs through the Borough Spending Plan

- The recent launch of a national grant programme to assist schools to produce their own travel plans

2.6 These developments will provide a considerable boost to work in schools. However, any work undertaken will have to include the provision of long-term resources to make these development sustainable. In addition, some consideration will have to be given to the promotion of green travel alternatives to private schools, which educate about 30% of Croydon's young people and whose parents by virtue of their affluence may rely significantly more on travel by car.

CONCLUSIONS

3.1 A number of initiatives are under way to promote alternatives to car travel to school. A number of schools have taken the opportunities presented by "Safe Routes to School" to incorporate transport issues into their school work. It is hoped that this may pave the way for further development work, making use of newly available funding to enable people to commute without a car.

3.2 Awareness raising campaigns need to be consistent with schools' ethos and be provided with adequate support. They will need to "inspire", to provide suggestions for easy adopted, sustainable steps to change one's travel habits, and to give the public an opportunity to establish the link between their own actions (positive and negative) and their impact on the environment. Where possible, simple monitoring systems should be set up to help evaluate the success of initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 - The Planning and Transportation and Education Departments should work together to ensure that any new staff working on School Travel Plans gains prompt access to all relevant services, agencies and networks in order to promote green travel effectively.

2 - The Council should explore the potential for bidding for newly available funding to set up pilot Green Travel Plans with suitable schools within the borough.

3 - In developing school travel plans, that consideration be given to developing initiatives which have a measurable long-term impact, and that appropriate resources be identified to sustain promotion in the long term.

4 - That promotion awareness-raising work provides school children, parents as well as school staff with interestingly presented opportunities to consider how they may take practical initial steps to change their travel habits, easily followed advice and effective incentives to put them into practice.

5 - Staff involved in School Green Travel projects should pool council and health staffing resources to promote walking and cycling to work and school more widely to promote regular exercise in a drive to improve health and minimise the onset of conditions such as asthma, obesity and heart disease.

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