

Climate Action, Environment & Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting:	Thursday 29 February 2024
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Sustainable Transport Strategy
Report of:	Frances Martin, Executive Director for Environment, Climate and Public Protection.
Cabinet Member Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Fairer Environment
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Considerations

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Westminster City Council is in the process of creating its first overarching Sustainable Transport Strategy, following a clear direction from the Council's Fairer Westminster vision. Its aim is to bring together the Council's strategic priorities, targets, and deliverables on sustainable transport in one clear, evidence-led document.
- 1.2 The Sustainable Transport Strategy will guide future programmes of work and place-based improvements across the City Highways, Public Realm, Place Shaping, Communities, Public Health, Active Westminster, Environment, and other relevant teams. This is a new approach and will echo the ambitions of a Fairer Westminster, building a city that supports and celebrates all of its communities. It will also enable a partnership approach to sustainable transport in Westminster, collaborating with our many stakeholders, particularly Transport for London (TfL), to achieve a genuine shift in usage towards sustainable modes of transport.

- 1.3 The strategy will consolidate, and, where necessary, supersede previous strategies relating to sustainable transport, foregrounding the aims of a Fairer Westminster and a Fairer Environment at its heart.
- 1.4 It should be noted that the London Mayoral election is due to take place on 2 May 2024. Prior to the consultation of this strategy, the Council will engage with the Greater London Authority to understand any changes to transport initiatives in London as a result of the election or any other longer-term pledges that may emerge too.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to review the proposals for the future Sustainable Transport Strategy, and to consider:
 - 2.1.1 The suggested proposals regarding strategic priorities set out at section 4 of the report, supported by the evidence base provided;
 - 2.1.2 The fast-growing nature of competing pressures on Westminster's transport network, including shifting trends, user behaviour and kerbside priorities;
 - 2.1.3 The current engagement approach set out for the Sustainable Transport Strategy, including the needs of diverse stakeholders such as those who work, visit, live in, or commute through, Westminster; and
 - 2.1.4 The potential opportunities of the Sustainable Transport Strategy in setting ambitious targets and supporting a long-term change in behavioural patterns, as well as opportunities to access funding.

3. Background and context

- 3.1 Westminster City Council does not currently have an overarching transport strategy. Previous Delivery Plans relating to walking, cycling, freight and servicing and road safety have been effective in setting deliverables for improvements in the transport network, but this has resulted in focussing on individual silo programmes. The Sustainable Transport Strategy will offer one clear strategic vision.
- 3.2 The driving force behind developing a sustainable transport strategy for Westminster sits both with the Fairer Westminster and Fairer Environment framework. In these pledges, the Council has committed to promoting active travel and sustainable transport to deliver greener neighbourhoods, cleaner air, and healthier lives. Through the Local Implementation Plan (LIP), which sets out how the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy will be supported by Westminster, the Council has also clearly identified road safety and transport improvements as key priorities. This embraces Vision Zero which is the road safety ambition to eliminate all Killed and Seriously Injury related collisions by 2041. It is anticipated that the Council will be tasked to submit a new LIP bid to the Mayor and TfL this Autumn, and this will need to establish a delivery programme bid to cover the next three years.

- 3.3 The current local and national political landscape surrounding sustainability and transport is complex. The Mayor of London's Transport Strategy 2018 sets out the plan to transform London's streets by improving public transport and creating opportunities for new homes and jobs over the next two decades. To achieve this, the Mayor wants to encourage more people to walk, cycle and use public transport with the aim for 80% of all trips in London to be by those means by 2041. To achieve this, there is a large emphasis on collaborative partnerships, as well as on shifting behaviours by fundamentally changing the way people choose to move around the city.
- 3.4 These are principles which will be strongly echoed in Westminster's sustainable transport strategy as well. Transport is integral to shaping the daily lives of our communities and how they go about their day-to-day, but it also plays a vital part in shaping the character and vibrancy of Westminster. It is more important than ever to understand the full range of resident, worker, student and visitor perspectives on transport in the borough so that we can create a future-proof strategy that is co-designed by our communities that enables sustainable change over the years to come for all user groups.
- 3.5 It's also important for the Council to understand what transport currently looks like in the borough and its impacts. Westminster, for many years, has faced the highest number of all types of collisions of any borough in London. Road safety is a huge discouraging factor impacting active and sustainable transport choices, particularly in those choosing to cycle, with only 2.7% of Westminster residents choosing cycling as their main mode of transport.
- 3.6 Car ownership is low in the borough with 66% of households not owning a car. This rises to 89% for residents under the age of 35. It is encouraging to see car dependency reducing in the borough, however it is also known that freight, servicing and delivery (FSD) vehicles are on the rise - particularly in respect of light goods vehicles and to a lesser extent delivery drivers on Power Two Wheelers. Convenience culture, fast deliveries and access needs for Westminster's many businesses mean that these types of vehicles are often the greatest cause of congestion, air pollution and collisions in the borough.
- 3.7 Whilst air quality has been improving in the borough over the past few years, our data shows that 14% of current CO2 emissions come from road transport. Poor air quality is associated with a range of health issues, with children and the elderly being particularly vulnerable to the effects of air pollution. Air quality is gradually improving, but 30% of NO2 is still caused by transport. This has huge impacts on lung health, propensity to travel actively, and liveability in the city. The Environmental Justice Measure, created by the Council as a data tool to help measure how people are differently impacted by their environment and climate change, also highlighted that the most affected communities in regard to poor air quality are also the most deprived, with less access to green space and lower incomes which limits investment to greener modal choices like electric vehicles or bikes. Understanding the challenges at a neighbourhood level is important when seeking to establish a sustainable transport strategy that will reflect the needs and aspirations of all our communities.

- 3.8 This Sustainable Transport Strategy for Westminster will prioritise accessibility, affordability and inclusivity and will aim to:
- Ensure that transportation services benefit everyone, regardless of background or economic status. Inclusive planning, environmental justice considerations, and ongoing community engagement are integral components of our approach, fostering fairness and continuous adaptation to the diverse needs of our population.
 - Complete a consistent vision for a Fairer Environment which consolidates, showcases, and expands upon our many existing deliverables.
 - Reflect our growing evidence base and shifting trends which will help navigate a complex and changing landscape.
 - Set ambitious targets and methods to achieving our goals of a net zero city by 2040.
- 3.9 Westminster's sustainable transport strategy will also pull together a range of policies and plans at a local, regional and national level including the upcoming Air Quality Action Plan, our Climate Emergency Action Plan and City Plan.
- 3.10 The Transport Strategy will build upon some of the existing initiatives that have been implemented under the Fairer Westminster vision. Improving air quality in Westminster and reducing pollution and emissions is a key priority for the Council. Steps have been taken to reduce petrol and diesel car travel wherever possible. A micro-logistics hub in Pimlico was established in April 2023 to tackle the issue of high numbers of vehicles on Westminster's streets by delivering online purchases to residents and offices via electric cargo bikes. The cargo e-bikes deliver as many as 2,000 parcels a day which help to reduce congestion, pollution and fatalities. The strategy will set a clear vision on how the Council can encourage additional hubs like this in the borough and how it can influence convenience culture deliveries which have huge impacts on congestion and pollution.
- 3.11 The Council has also implemented nearly 2,500 on-street electric vehicle (EV) charge points in Westminster, with more to be added to provide even greater coverage for the growing number of EV owners in the city. With 90% of all car trips in London travelling less than 7 miles, EVs are an ideal choice for an emission free short trip. Initiatives like this show a dedication from the Council to greater transport sustainability in the city. However, with high population density and low levels of private off-road parking, more EV charging on-street will be a necessity.
- 3.12 In January 2024, the Council announced that it is introducing emissions-based charging for residents and visitors who drive into the city. The new emissions-based charging schemes will see vehicles being charged based on their levels of CO2 emissions. Vehicles that produce lower levels of CO2 will be charged less in comparison to those which produce more. This new scheme will support

the growth of EVs in the city while keeping charges fair, proportionate and as low as possible.

3.13 Alternatives to private car ownership, including other more sustainable alternatives such as cycle storage and car clubs, could reduce pressure on the use of road space in the long term if private ownership reduced. This is why the prioritisation of how the Council will repurpose kerbside space for sustainable uses will be a paramount consideration of the strategy.

3.14 Westminster's transport network has already greatly benefited from a vast amount of workstreams aiming to improve sustainable travel in the borough. Currently, Westminster benefits from:

- 32 Underground stations servicing some of the 1 million daily visitors/commuters a day;
- 3 Elizabeth Line stations at Tottenham Court Road, Bond Street and Paddington;
- 4 Mainline Rail Stations at Paddington, Charing Cross, Marylebone and Victoria;
- Around 495 bus stops and 73-day bus routes in Westminster (as of Spring 2023);
- 1 bus station;
- One coach station with routes that span much of the UK and destinations in Europe;
- 4 TfL Riverbus piers (Embankment, Millbank, Temple and Westminster Millenium);
- 2,500 electric vehicle charging points;
- 12,362 Westminster cycle stands and 946 TfL cycle stands;
- 3,741 TfL Santander cycle hire docking points;
- 330 micromobility bays for dockless bikes and e-scooters with approximately 80,000 trips per week taking place;
- 225 secure storage units including hangars, lockers, shelters and racks, with space for 1,386 bikes;
- 438 marked loading bays; and
- 11 school streets.

3.15 The figures above demonstrate some of the amazing work that has already gone in to ensuring a diverse sustainable transport network in Westminster, however there is still more to do.

4. Westminster's Strategic Priorities

4.1 Our vision for this sustainable transport strategy in Westminster is to ensure long-term sustainability across the transport network. To achieve this, the Council seeks to prioritise 6 crucial pillars that will enable all its communities to travel safely and sustainably, lead healthier lives in a less polluted environment, and benefit from increased economic and social growth at the local level. These 6 pillars are:

1. **Road Safety:** Understanding how road safety impacts user behaviours enables the Council to design appropriate improvements in the network that encourages active travel choices. A distinct focus on the continuation of the Council's road safety and School Travel Plan work with its schools, colleges and other institutions will be vital.
 2. **Access and Inclusion:** The strategy proposes to improve accessibility to public spaces and venues, ensuring that all individuals can navigate and participate fully in community life and access essential services. This leads to a more inclusive and accessible urban environment.
 3. **Health and Exercise:** The strategy seeks to enhance the quality of life for residents by creating a more liveable, connected, and sustainable urban environment. This can lead to improved health, well-being, and overall satisfaction.
 4. **Air Quality:** Westminster will meet World Health Organisation guideline levels for air pollution by 2040, with the help of cleaner transport. This strategy, alongside the Air Quality Action Plan, will set clear deliverables to achieve this.
 5. **Climate Change:** One of the fundamental benefits lies in the strategy's contribution to environmental sustainability. By promoting sustainable modes of transportation such as walking, cycling, and eco-friendly public transport, the strategy aims to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the environmental impact of transportation.
 6. **Sustainable Economy:** The strategy aims to bolster the local economy by creating a sustainable transport network. This can lead to increased economic opportunities, especially for businesses that align with the principles of the strategy, such as eco-friendly transport services. A focus on the encouragement and trial of more sustainable freight, servicing and deliveries of Westminster's 24/7 needs is imperative.
- 4.2 This strategy will also seek to establish a hierarchy for sustainable transport uses in Westminster, which will help to prioritise the ways in which the Council repurposes or allocates kerbside uses over the next 10-20 years. Competing pressures on a valuable finite resource, such as the kerbside, creates challenges on how the Council should move forward with sustainable changes in the most effective way. There are currently 42 uses of kerbside space in the borough, all of which bring with them a wealth of benefits to our communities, such as cycle lanes, bus priority, widened footways, cycle hangers and electric vehicle charging. A full list of the current kerbside uses can be found at appendix 2. Whilst all those uses support a transition towards a more sustainable transport network, they all bring slightly different benefits to different user groups across the city.
- 4.3 Decision-making on the 'how' and 'why' to repurpose elements of the kerbside will be much better-informed moving forward with a strategy that enables the allocation of road and kerbside space in accordance with clear, evidence-led prioritisation towards sustainable transport and net zero.

5. Evidence base

- 5.1 It is vital to establish an evidence base that will help shape the initiatives and key deliverables that result from this strategy. The Council is undertaking a rigorous process of analysis into current kerbside initiatives in Westminster and their successes. It is also analysing transport related data, looking specifically at how mobility needs are served in Westminster and what pressures exist upon our transport network, both socially and environmentally.
- 5.2 It has been particularly important to compile our evidence base in the context of the 6 strategic priorities set out as part of this strategy. An executive summary of the key findings to date is attached as appendix 1.
- 5.3 The Council has also looked to establish a breadth of examples from other cities or London boroughs that have existing transport strategies. A list of some of the ambitious targets or strategies set by other local authorities can be found at appendix 2.

6. Economic Analysis

- 6.1 It is important to consider the wider benefits and challenges that the transport network produces in the context of the economy as part of this strategy. To further enhance the evidence base for this strategy, we are seeking to analyse the social and economic value of different uses of the kerbside in the borough. By completing this piece of work, we will be able to understand the holistic value of the current uses of Westminster's kerbside across different geographical areas of the borough, as well as how the value of kerbside uses may differ across geographical areas. The latter will be extremely useful when establishing a prioritisation hierarchy for kerbside use in the future at the local/neighbourhood level.
- 6.2 Understanding the economic and social value of our highways will also help inform decision-making on how best to balance the extent of revenue generated that supports the delivery of essential services, as well as prioritising sustainable uses. It is anticipated that this piece of work will have concluded by the summer and will therefore be able to influence the work of the strategy. A further update on this will be provided in due course.

7. Challenges

- 7.1 The world is being shaped by significant social and economic change brought about by the pandemic, more extreme weather conditions, evolving technology, and population growth, to name just a few. Each of these bring with them critical challenges for sustainable transport that will be considered as part of this strategy.
- 7.2 The continued growth of London has significantly increased the demand on the transport network, particularly in the many public transport hubs that Westminster is home to. Substantial modal shift is required to enable the meaningful changes necessary to improving sustainable travel in the borough.

- 7.3 Travel choices, particularly car usage, can be impacted by many factors outside of our control including fuel prices, insurance costs, TfL Congestion charges and Ultra Low Emission Zone charges. Whilst these factors influence users to choose other sustainable alternatives, the challenge is in creating a permanency in this modal shift so that users see walking, cycling or public transport as a first choice and preferred option. This is difficult to achieve, and it will take time. There are many complexities to behavioural change, such as balancing growth and economic sustainability at the same time as trying to reduce or alleviate the impacts of the movement of people, services and goods. Furthermore, encouraging individuals to choose walking or cycling as their main mode of transport when road safety is worsening for these users is a difficult task. This is why we need understand the desires and aspirations of our communities to aid the design of this strategy.
- 7.4 As previously identified, the political landscape surrounding sustainable travel is complex. Initiatives such as Segregated Cycle Lanes, Bus Lanes, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, and Zero Emission Zones can divide individuals on the perceived 'right' way to move forward towards a more sustainable future. Understanding the previous and existing frustrations on transport capabilities in the borough will be integral to designing an effective strategy, and we will aim to gather this feedback through our proposed engagement approach.
- 7.5 Westminster is a major destination location, with London being the most searched-for global tourist destination in 2023. On an average year, Westminster sees approximately 25 million people visit the borough which puts significant pressure on our streets and transport network. This is exacerbated further by the influx of more than 1 million people who commute into or through the borough on an average weekday. Demand is only going to continue to increase, and any future strategy needs to be wide-reaching to influence the vast range, and significant numbers, of people travelling in Westminster.
- 7.6 Finally, it should be noted that there is a lack of appropriate legislation covering certain modes of transport. Whilst some Bills are in progress, such as the Automated Vehicle Bill and The Pedicabs (London) Bill, there is a notable absence of an overarching Transport Bill. At present, there is no confirmation whether the Transport Bill will be progressed or if Parliament will consider it in a future session. This presents challenges in the Council's ability to respond to new or emerging modes of transport, such as dockless bikes and e-scooters. It creates the need for effective collaboration and cooperation with external partners, such as TfL and the GLA, to ensure the continuity of workstreams outside of legislation or aside from any change in political steer.

8. Proposed engagement

- 8.1 The consultation will have a clear focus on the 6 strategic priorities set out in the report above. It will also delve deeper into understanding changing habits and shifting trends, particularly on the potential around future travel, travel after dark and potential transport barriers such as cost and accessibility.
- 8.2 In shaping the Sustainable Transport Strategy, it is crucial to understand the perspectives of residents, visitors, workers, businesses and partners on how

they want to see transport prioritised in the borough. No sustainable transport strategy for a Central London borough can be produced or delivered in isolation. Accordingly, the Council aims to develop a solid evidence base, community and stakeholder buy-in and a strong sense of co-design with those the strategy will impact in order to make it as effective as possible. The engagement strategy emphasises providing an inclusive platform for everyone to voice their opinions. Moreover, the Council seeks to inspire active participation, through a variety of methods, by conducting consultations on specific themes and focal areas.

8.3 The Council recognises the diverse needs of our communities, and that is why a one-size-fits-all approach to engagement is not being suggested. Employing a range of methods of engagement will enable the Council to gain insight on place-based differences that will inform the strategy, reflecting the different geographies, desires and aspirations of our communities. This will include online surveys via our digital engagement platform, community discussion groups, and workshops with influencers in the transport sector, such as the Department for Transport, TfL and across a range of stakeholder partners that represent transport operators and modes.

8.4 By conducting this engagement, the Council hopes to achieve:

- A better understanding of transport user behaviour, motivators and barriers from a diverse range of communities and protected groups;
- Consensus and common ground with partners and stakeholders – defining what the Council wants travel and transport to look like by 2040 that will inform the targets that are set to achieve that; and
- A strong case for sustainable change in Council programmes and practices that will help to achieve the level of ambition needed.

8.5 The Council is anticipating some barriers to communication that will be addressed through the engagement period. These barriers include:

Lack of awareness – This applies to many residents who do not receive our newsletters, or access our website etc, but also to visitors, workers and students who are key stakeholders and are transient in nature. The Council will be creative about how it reaches these people, including via the use of social media channels, links with universities, via Business Improvement Districts, workplaces and even using strategic advertising spaces near to Westminster's main line rail and underground stations.

Digital exclusion – Transport users struggling with access and affordability may also be more likely to experience digitally exclusion, impacting their ability to access our online surveys. The Council will offer engagement sessions via our community hubs such as our libraries, residents' associations and community centres to ensure good outreach.

Foreign language – A lot of environmental information is not available in other core languages. This leads to a lack of inclusion and awareness on campaigns,

initiatives and local issues. This will be overcome by translating information into different languages and providing interpretation where necessary.

Persons with mobility needs – Input from the less mobile will be incorporated into the engagement plan, especially those who have no sight or those with chronic mobility needs. This is in respect to the provision of clutter free footways, access to low floor buses, ramped taxis and disabled ‘Blue Badge’ parking.

8.6 Addressing these challenges involves understanding wider community issues to create a more equitable and inclusive engagement process.

9. Draft timelines

9.1 The timeline below is provided as a high-level overview for the implementation of the Sustainable Transport Strategy:

March/April	Continue compiling case studies, insights and project evaluations Design online surveys and workshops Commence internal engagement and external engagement with influencers via discussion groups (such as TfL, London Councils, SusTrans).
May	Launch Common Place platform and commence online surveys and community workshops
June	Review and analyse consultation responses and evidence base
July	Internal review of first draft of proposed strategy
August/September	Internal review of second draft of proposed strategy
September/October	Commence formal consultation process on strategy
November/December	Adopt strategy

10. Financial Implications

10.1 The Local Implementation Plan (LIP) sets out how the Mayor’s Transport Strategy will be delivered by individual boroughs and is a statutory requirement under the Great London Authority Act 1999. TfL provides an annual LIP grant to boroughs, the value of which is confirmed each year once TfL’s business plan is approved. This sets the overall level of funding London local authorities

will receive and it is distributed between each authority using an agreed formula.

- 10.2 The suggested outcomes and actions of Westminster's Sustainable Transport Strategy will influence the Council's LIP bid to the Mayor and TfL over the years to come and enable performance and outcomes to be measured and reported on. Other miscellaneous Mayoral and TfL funded programmes will also be influenced by the principles established in the upcoming Sustainable Transport Strategy. These include the Mayor's Air Quality Fund (MAQF), the TfL Cycle Training fund, and strategic road resurfacing fund etc.
- 10.3 There are also a wide variety of Revenue and Capital programmes that annually invest into the maintenance, design and modernisation of Westminster's Highways Network. These major programmes are delivered by the Public Realm, Place Shaping, Development Planning, Economic Development and Public Health Fund teams. Much of this output is delivered through the Westminster Capital Programme and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding programmes.

11. Legal and Governance Implications

- 11.1 Section 145 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (GLA Act 1999) requires London local authorities to prepare and maintain Local Implementation Plans (LIP) containing their proposals for the implementation of the Mayor's Transport Strategy within the area that they are responsible for.
- 11.2 TfL London allocates money to the London boroughs to spend on projects that support the Mayor's Transport Strategy through a Local Implementation Plan (LIP). The Council will be tasked to submit a new LIP bid to the Mayor and TfL this Autumn, and this will establish a delivery programme bid to cover the next three years.
- 11.3 It is anticipated that the Council will be tasked to submit a new LIP bid to the Mayor and TfL this Autumn, and this will need to establish a delivery programme bid to cover the next three years. In future years, the transport strategy will be an essential document in shaping the contents of our future LIP proposals, and for any action plans or bids for funding arising from this being approved by the relevant Cabinet Member.

12. Carbon Impact

- 12.1 A carbon impact assessment has not yet been completed. However, it is expected this strategy will set ambitious targets that reduces the current carbon impact of transport in the city.
- 12.2 The strategy will encourage mode shift to more sustainable methods of transport which will have a positive impact in improving air quality and reducing road congestion. The improvements to the transport network in Westminster will also support Westminster's #2035 programme, which aims to cut in half the eighteen-year gap in male life expectancy between the richest and most

deprived areas of Westminster. The strategy will also support the principles set out in Westminster's Climate Emergency Action Plan which sets our emissions target for the City to reach net zero by 2040. Therefore, it is expected the proposed scheme will be carbon positive.

13. Equalities Impact

13.1 An Equalities Impact assessment has been completed regarding the proposed communication, engagement and consultation plan.

13.2 As this strategy will influence residents, business, workers, contractors and other stakeholders in the city, a separate Equalities Impact Assessment for the strategy will be completed accordingly.

14. The Mayor of London election

14.1 The London Mayoral election is due to take place on 2 May 2024. Prior to the consultation of this strategy, the Council will engage with the Greater London Authority to understand any changes to long-term transport initiatives in London because of the election. This will be particularly pertinent for any planned improvements on the London Underground, bus network investment plans, expansion of the Cycleways network, and the Vision Zero ambition etc. Other longer-term pledges may emerge too.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Report Author,
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APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Executive Summary of Evidence Base Slides

Appendix 2 – Transport Strategy Examples

Appendix 3 – Westminster's Kerbside Uses

Appendix 4 – Key Facts & Questions Slides

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Mayor of London's Transport Strategy 2018

A range of TfL 'daughter' strategies including Vision Zero (Road Safety)

Local Implementation Plan 2019

Cycling Strategy 2014

Walking Strategy 2017

Air Quality Action Plan 2019

Freight, Servicing and Deliveries – Strategy and Action Plan 2021

Climate Action Plan 2022

Westminster Parking Occupancy Survey 2022

Sustainable Modes of Transport (WCC Schools) 2022