

APPENDIX ONE

**Improving Cycling Safety
Scrutiny Challenge Session Report**



**London Borough of Tower Hamlets
March 2015**

Chair's Foreword

The council is committed to ensuring that the borough is safe for the cyclists that use them and the people that are considering this mode of travel. This scrutiny review looks at the progress the council has made to date in this area.

The review invited experts from across London to share their knowledge and learning on how we can make the London Borough of Tower Hamlets one of the safest boroughs in London for cycling.

Over the last few years we have sadly seen a number of fatalities on our roads. This makes our aspiration more urgent day by day. With more and more of our borough's residents looking to cycling to and from work and to cycle for leisure and recreation, it is right we do all we can to make our community safer.

As a ward councillor, I see the rise of childhood obesity and the spiralling costs for travel across our community. We must make it easier and safer for residents to cycle and to keep their bikes in our neighbourhoods.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in this review. The experts who inspired us for what could be achieved. The cycling campaigns that have ensured that cycle safety is a growing priority for this council and the officers who worked to make this happen.

I hope that councillors from across the political parties can work together to turn the recommendations in this report into a reality and make sure we stop the fatalities on our roads.

Cllr John Pierce

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1:

The council produces an enhanced plan for cycling in Tower Hamlets to ensure that the borough is at the forefront of this agenda.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The council explores the costs and feasibility of the provision of secure cycle parking across the borough.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

The council works with local schools and Sustrans to incorporate route plans proposed by young people into the enhanced plan for cycling in Tower Hamlets as part of the consultation process.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Support for the 'Safer Lorries Safer Cycling' scheme is the policy of the council and the council should now sign the pledge.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

The council imposes a 20mph speed limit on all residential and borough roads and the council should work with the police to ensure that 20mph is enforced.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

The council publicises annual spend on its cycling agenda.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

The council consults residents and ward members on the London Cycling Campaign's proposal to keep the road to the south of Victoria Park open for longer and explore ways to influence the park's statutory opening hours.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

The development of a cycle friendly borough is treated as a priority by the council.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

The council better influences developers to provide greater cycle parking facilities for their developments.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

The council works with TfL to roll out more cycle specific signals across the borough.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In recent years, cycling has grown in popularity for both work and pleasure. The Government aims to make cycling a more convenient, attractive and realistic choice for short journeys, especially those made to work and school. It cites the need to reduce congestion, improve health outcomes and create more pleasant places to live as key issues that cycling can help address. The increased popularity of cycling has also been helped by the recent success of British cyclists in the London Olympics, during which Tower Hamlets was a host borough, and the Tour de France.
- 1.2 However, as cycle usage has grown, the potential for conflict with other road users including motorists and pedestrians, together with the overall safety of cyclists, has become an area of increasing concern.
- 1.3 High profile pan-London movements such as the London Cycling Campaign's 'Space for Cycling' look to change the emphasis and ensure better conditions for cyclists in London. In 2013, the Mayor of London published his 'Vision for Cycling in London' – a strategy that intends to "normalise" cycling and make it an integral part of the capital's transport system.¹ This includes the implementation of dedicated cycle lanes and the central London cycle hire scheme which demonstrate the emphasis on cycling as a credible and feasible alternative to other forms of road transport.
- 1.4 In February 2012, the Government announced £8 million of funding to Sustrans – a British charity promoting sustainable transport - for projects to enhance cycle routes across England; and a further £7 million allocated to the Cycle Rail Working Group for investment in infrastructure improvements to support integration between cycle and rail stations.
- 1.5 Recognising the mounting concern over road safety for cyclists in the borough, particularly given the rise in fatalities on busy arterial roads and the importance of cycling as a viable means of physical activity, the scrutiny challenge session focused on considering the issue of cycle safety.
- 1.6 The aim of the challenge session was to assess all transport interventions and policy in relation to cycle safety and draw on good practice from partners and other local authorities in London. The session also sought to identify causes of cyclists' safety concerns and barriers preventing people from cycling or from cycling more frequently. In the process it was hoped that cost effective measures could be identified, that can be implemented to improve cycling safety.
- 1.7 The session was chaired by Councillor John Pierce. It took place on Thursday 29th January 2015.
- 1.8 The session was attended by:

Cllr John Pierce	Vice chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Challenge Session Chair
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¹ GLA. (2013). *THE MAYOR'S VISION FOR CYCLING IN LONDON: An Olympic Legacy for all Londoners.*

Cllr Rachael Saunders	Ward Councillor for Mile End
Cllr Alibor Choudhury	Cabinet Member for Resources
Jamie Blake	Service Head, Public Realm; LBTH
Margaret Cooper	Head of Transport & Highways, LBTH
Tom Rawlings	Road Safety Engineer, LBTH
Robert Morton	Transportation Engineer, LBTH
Ahmed Hassan	Engineering Graduate, LBTH
Simon Castle	Roads and Transport Command, Cycle Safety Team - Metropolitan Police
Simon Wickenden	Traffic Management Officer, Metropolitan Police
James Scott	Senior Project Officer (Bike It), Sustrans
Amy Berkhout	Bike It Officer for Tower Hamlets, Sustrans
Paul Lavelle	Principal Technical Planner (Cycling), Transport for London
Ben Kennedy	Principal Transport Planner, Hackney Council
Tyler Linton	Senior Sustainable Transport Planner, Hackney Council
Owen Pearson	Co-ordinator, Tower Hamlets Wheelers
Terry Patterson	Campaigns Officer, Tower Hamlets Wheelers
Gerry Matthews	Member of Tower Hamlets Wheelers
Tom Bogdanowicz	Senior Policy and Development Officer, London Cycling Campaign
Mark Cairns	Senior Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer; LBTH
Shamima Khatun	Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer; LBTH

- 1.9 The agenda for the session included an introduction to the key issues under review by Cllr John Pierce followed by presentations and discussion on a range of issues. This included whether the current strategies and policies in place address the need for strategically coordinated cycle provision and safety, and what barriers impede the successful development of the council's cycling strategy.
- 1.10 The session was underpinned by three core questions:
- a) What has been the general response to date from cyclists in the borough to the measures introduced both in terms of training and infrastructure improvements?
 - b) What further cost-effective measures can the council implement to improve cycle safety?
 - c) As a cyclist, what issues/areas of concern do you want the council to address specifically that has not already been acknowledged in the London Cycling Campaign ward asks for Tower Hamlets?

1. BACKGROUND

National and regional context and policy

- 1.1 While bicycle use as the main form of transport for getting to work increased in recent years, urban areas have witnessed higher increases in cycle usage. In London, cycle use on main roads during the 2012/13 financial year was 176% higher than in 2000. Cycle commuting has shown a substantial increase across the capital, but growth is concentrated in inner and central London. Hackney has not only witnessed the largest rise in cycle use in the last ten years, at present it is the local highway authority with the highest level of cycle commuting in the country (Tower Hamlets statistics are covered in the section – local context and policy).
- 1.2 According to the 2011 Census, there were 3.6 million people living in London who were in employment in March 2011, and of this figure, 4 per cent used a bicycle to travel to work. The numbers of Londoners cycling to work doubled between 2001 to 2011 from 77,300 to 155,300. This was a much faster rate of growth than the overall rise in workers, which was 36 per cent. Neighbouring borough Hackney had by far the largest proportion of residents cycling to work with 15 per cent of the total.
- 1.3 There is a mixed picture regarding trends for cycling safety in recent years. Cycling was 61% per cent safer in 2012 than it was in 2002 (measured nationally, per mile travelled).² However, the perception is that it remains significantly riskier than some other travelling modes such as driving, walking and public transport. The attitudes of road users, layout and speed limits on roads can conspire to make cycling feel more dangerous.
- 1.4 Furthermore, the Department for Transport (DfT) reports that the number of cyclists seriously injured in the UK has increased in recent years, faster than the rise in cyclists on the roads. For example:
- The number of cyclists killed increased by 10% from 107 in 2011 to 118 in 2012; and
 - The number of cyclists reported to have been seriously injured increased by 4% from 3,085 in 2011 to 3,222 in 2012³.
- 1.5 The London Mayor's Vision for Cycling document articulates how it intends to create a 'Central London Grid' of bike routes, focussing on four key outcomes:
1. A Tube network for the bike
 2. Safer streets for the bike
 3. More people travelling by bike
 4. Better places for everyone.

Over the next ten years spending on progressing the cycling agenda in London will total £913 million, almost triple the previously planned levels. A lot of this investment will focus on infrastructure improvements to routes and junctions, tying into the second element of this delivery plan: Safer streets.

² The National Cycling Charity. (2015). *Cycling Statistics*. [On-line]. <http://www.ctc.org.uk/resources/ctc-cycling-statistics>

³ Department for Transport. (2015). *Cycling*. [On-line]. <http://think.direct.gov.uk/cycling.html>

- 1.6 The Mayor of London's Cycle Safety Action Plan looks to address the following identified danger points:
- Better junctions – spending on the Better Junctions programme will be significantly increased and improvements to the worst junctions will be prioritised to improve the safety of cyclists around large vehicles.
 - Safer lorries and vans – the Greater London Authority and Transport for London will assist boroughs and businesses across London, including developers and utility companies, to ensure that they work together to lever their buying powers with contractors to ensure their vehicles are adequately equipped to protect cyclists.
 - 20mph limits, training, awareness and enforcement – expanding the Metropolitan Police's Cycle Task Force by more than a quarter (from 39 to 50 officers) to improve enforcement against antisocial road user behaviour, provide safety education, and offer training and information.

- 1.7 The London Plan is the strategic plan setting out an integrated social, economic and environmental framework for the future development of London, looking forward 15-20 years. The Plan sets out the policy framework for the Mayor of London's involvement in major planning decisions and the London-wide context within which individual boroughs must set their local planning policies. Within this, policy 3C.21 (Improving conditions for cycling) states that borough development policies should:
- Identify and implement high quality, direct, cycling routes, where possible segregated from motorised traffic, giving access to public transport nodes, town centres and key land uses
 - Ensure that routes are segregated from pedestrians as far as practical, but are not isolated
 - Identify, complete and promote the relevant sections of the London Cycle Network Plus, and other cycling routes
 - Take account of measures identified in the TfL Cycling Action Plan
 - Encourage provision of sufficient, secure cycle parking facilities within developments.

Local context and policy

Local Take-up

- 1.8 Tower Hamlets experienced the biggest percentage increase in London for residents cycling to work between 2001 at 2,213 to 2011 to 7,785 representing a 251.8% increase. Simultaneously, the population increased from 196,121 to 254,100, a 29.6% increase.
- 1.9 7 per cent of Tower Hamlets residents now travel to work by bicycle – the 6th highest figure for London boroughs - and grew from 3% in 2001 when the borough had the 8th highest levels.
- 1.10 The council lobbied TfL to extend its Central London Cycle Hire scheme across the borough and contributed to the funding and delivery of the initiative which was completed up to the A12 by March 2012. Further

extension of the scheme to cover the Olympic Park is currently being developed and will include additional stations in the east of the borough.

The council maintains 5 cycle counters to monitor the level of cycling through the borough. Data from these indicate a steady increase in numbers cycling in the borough.

Tower Hamlets Cycling Plan

- 1.11 'Cycling Connections'⁴ sets out the cycling strategy for Tower Hamlets until 2020, and aims to boost the number of people choosing to cycle in order to improve fitness, reduce road congestion and help the environment.
- 1.12 As part of this plan, the council has outlined the key cycling objectives for the borough to:
- Maximise the role of cycling as a priority form of travel to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality
 - Provide safe, convenient, efficient and attractive cycling conditions across Tower Hamlets
 - Improve awareness and understanding of the benefits of cycling amongst all road users, employers, service providers and local citizens
 - Improve health by increasing levels of physical activity through cycling projects in the borough.
- 1.13 The council's plan identifies both insufficient cycle parking and a lack of adequate cycle routes as areas for action. In relation to the latter of these, the council seeks to ensure that cycle routes are implemented and evaluated to the highest standards, using TfL's London Cycle Design Standards (LCDS), and the Cycle Route Implementation and Stakeholder Plan (CRISP) process to evaluate and monitor the quality of the existing routes in the borough, which include:
- The London Cycle Network+ (LCN+), a network of radial and orbital routes for cyclists covering the whole of London. This forms part of the larger London Cycle Network and is an attempt at refining this network in terms of its priority strategic routes. In Tower Hamlets, there are six LCN+ routes.
 - TfL Cycle Superhighways (CS), a set of high profile radial routes into central London including CS2, which runs from Barking to Tower Hill via the A13 and Cable Street. Recently, the Mayor of London announced plans to upgrade CS2 and launched a public consultation on introducing kerb and wand separated cycle tracks along the whole route and new junctions to separate cyclists from other traffic. The council has formally responded to this consultation, urging TfL to review its proposals regarding the upgrade from Aldgate to Bow; and expressing its concerns about the safety implications of these planned changes for all road users (including cyclists) and how these will operate in practice. It has also commented on the area wide impacts, particularly in the Whitechapel market vicinity.

⁴ LBTH. (2009). *Cycling Connections: The Cycling Plan for Tower Hamlets*.

- The Sustrans Connect 2 network of priority routes for walkers and cyclists.
 - Greenways, a network of routes running through parks, forests, waterways and quiet residential streets.
 - Other walking and cycling routes such as those at Victoria Park and Stepney.
- 2.14 The council engages closely with local cycling organisations such as the Tower Hamlets Wheelers, a London Cycling Campaign affiliate in the borough, to promote cycling.
- It also works closely with the public to identify cycle theft hotspots, and raises cyclists' awareness of bike security through a number of initiatives such as encouraging bike users to register their bicycle model details at 'Immobilise' and providing information on good quality locks and cycle insurance.
- 2.15 Various cycle training programmes are run in the borough as part of the council's educational endeavours. It promotes 'Inclusive Cycling for All' and offers safe cycle training to people who have specific training requirements. Moreover, the council has provided a range of cycle training schemes for a number of years, including giving free cycle training to all children from year groups 6 to 13. One-to-one cycling training is also offered to adults, up to Level 3 of the National Standard, to equip the borough's residents with the skills and training to cycle competently on its streets.
- 2.16 The 'Bike It' project is led by Sustrans and was launched in September 2008. Each academic year, it focused on ten schools in the borough. The main aim of the project was to tackle childhood obesity through increasing physical activity via cycling to school.
- 2.17 The primary funding source for the Tower Hamlets Cycle Plan is TfL. The annual TfL funding bids form the main funding stream to implement non-LCN+ local schemes including local cycle routes, cycle parking and training, promotional events and awareness raising schemes. Alternative sources include developer contributions from Section 106 agreements. According to the London Plan, "major new developments should provide new, high quality, segregated pedestrian and cycle routes, which are direct and provide good connections to the existing pattern of streets, and to bus stops and stations" (Mayor of London, 2004).

Other local cycling measures

- 2.18 Around 85 per cent of the borough is located within local 20pmh zones. The majority of these areas have experienced a reduction in the total number of casualties through road accidents.
- 2.20 The London Cycling Campaign's (LCC) 2014 'Space for Cycling' campaign aimed to persuade local councils in Greater London to adopt ward-specific cycling improvements, suggested by their borough groups (in collaboration with local people). Prior to the elections in May 2014, the Mayor of Tower Hamlets signed up to deliver these 'ward asks', and regular liaison meetings

involving local cycling representatives have now been established to enable progress on the action plan and other cycle initiatives to be coordinated.

2.21 In 2013, Tower Hamlets Council committed additional funding to a series of Accelerated Delivery Initiatives which included cycling improvements and pothole repairs (with a view to improving riding conditions for cyclists). The cycling improvements delivered in 2013-14 included public bike pumps, a schools outreach cycling programme, on-street and workplace cycle parking spaces, cycle permeability schemes, and pothole repairs.

2.22 Awards for local success

The council's work in relation to supporting cycling in the borough has been recognised with a range of awards in recent years. These include:

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| 2015 | <u>London Transport Awards</u>
Shortlisted for Contribution to Sustainable Transport – for Derbyshire Street scheme |
| 2014 | <u>London Cycling Campaign Award</u>
Youth Sector Cycling Champion – Tower Hamlets BMX Club |
| 2013 | <u>London Cycling Campaign Awards</u>
Best Schools Cycling Project – Virginia Primary
Best Cycling Initiative – Sustrans Connect 2 highly commended |
| 2011 | <u>London Transport Award</u>
Achievements in Cycling – Oceans 11 Women's Cycle Project

<u>London Cycling Campaign Award</u>
Best Cycle Facility – BWB Suspended cycle and foot path Bow Flyover |
| 2010 | <u>London Transport Award</u>
Cycle Improvements – Healthy Borough projects with NHS & Bike It

<u>London Cycling Campaign Awards</u>
Best Community Cycling Initiative – Tower Hamlets Cycle Club
Best Cycling Initiative for Children – Streets of Growth
Best Workplace Cycling Initiative – Tower Hamlets Council Cycle User Group |

2. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Cyclists' response to training and infrastructure improvements

- 3.1 In the challenge session, officers highlighted the infrastructure that has been developed by the council, which includes a long-established and relatively extensive network of cycle routes (detailed in the background section). Work to improve and augment these routes is in progress, along with improvements to make the borough more cycle-friendly within the funding available.
- 3.2 During the past year, the council's cycle infrastructure improvement work has concentrated on working with TfL on a detailed design for the Cycle Superhighway 2 review, Bow roundabout interim improvements, Quietway routes, an East-West Cycle Route and safer junctions for Cycle Superhighway 3. Further work includes implementation of a number of cycle permeability improvements to filter cyclists through the local road network where many roads are dead-ends; complementary measures helping to improve cyclists' safety, such as proactive road maintenance and slower speed initiatives; and developing actions resulting from the LCC 'Space for Cycling' ward asks,⁵ in discussion with the Tower Hamlets Wheelers.
- 3.3 While there is a lot of work still to do, the council has made progress, and has been recognised with a range of awards in the past few years, from both the London Cycling Campaign and the London Transport Awards. Indeed, at the session the Tower Hamlets Wheelers welcomed the new relationship that had been forged with the council, strengthened from consultations undertaken on the ward asks.
- 3.4 One of the issues Tower Hamlets faces is that approximately 80% of residents live in flats, with attendant difficulties in owning and storing bicycles. The council has worked with TfL to mitigate this by lobbying for an expansion of the cycle hire scheme in the borough, so that in total there are 200 docking stations throughout Tower Hamlets. In addition, the council has installed cycle parking lockers within estates, over 300 secure lockers on roads, 700 on-street cycle stands and introduced cycle bollards in Victoria Park.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

The council produces an enhanced plan for cycling in Tower Hamlets to ensure that the borough is at the forefront of this agenda.

- 3.5 At the session, the Chair stated that other inner London boroughs such as Hackney and Southwark have already started supporting RSLs and housing associations in their locality to supply estate cycle parking, and in some instances financially contribute towards implementation. Following the session, Overview & Scrutiny Committee members suggested that cycle storage provision for all residents be explored with partners.

⁵ Please refer to Appendix 2 for full details on the 'ward asks'.

- 3.6 The council will need to review its current primary source(s) of funding for cycling projects such as LIP allocations from TfL and Section 106 contributions, and consider pursuing match funding opportunities like cycling grants. The latter, by nature, are difficult to predict since it is often dependent on a competitive bidding process – it is therefore more feasible for the council to look into options for subsidising the provision of secure cycle storage in partnership.

RECOMMENDATION 2:
The council explores the costs and feasibility of the provision of secure cycle parking across the borough.

- 3.7 There is a wide range of cycle training provision for adults and children available in the borough (highlighted in the background section of this report). In 2013-14 alone, 2661 children and 145 adults were trained, and family cycle training has also been recently introduced in Tower Hamlets.
- 3.8 Representatives from Sustrans presented on the training initiatives which their organisation offers, centred on encouraging modal shift⁶ and creating communities, such as the 'Bike It' scheme outlined in the background section. They emphasised the importance of parental engagement in cycle training in schools, in order to tackle fears around cycling. Their strategies involve supporting school teachers to take on the role of 'champion trainer', to create a sustainable programme of development.
- 3.9 Citing William Davis Primary School as a case study, Sustrans emphasised the positive impact of effective activities on a young person's personal development. For example, classroom sessions and ride to school events can increase take-up of cycling and foster confidence so that participants can become peer role models within schools. Sustrans also encourages young people to get involved in route planning. The success of Sustrans's approach to achieving a step change in modal use through intergenerational and community work was commended by the Review Group, which expressed a desire for the council to continue its commitment to offer cycle training to people of all ages and abilities in the borough.

RECOMMENDATION 3:
The council works with local schools and Sustrans to incorporate route plans proposed by young people into the enhanced plan for cycling in Tower Hamlets as part of the consultation process.

Measures to improve cycle safety

- 3.10 The Head of Transport & Highways reiterated that Tower Hamlets had the biggest inner London reduction in the percentage of cyclists killed and seriously injured, and that cycle casualties was a cross cutting issue which the council needs to work closely with TfL to address.

⁶ Persuading people to become less car-dependent and to use more sustainable modes of transport

- 3.11 Cyclists present questioned progress by the council on a pledge to support the regional 'Safer Lorries Safer Cycling' scheme. In 2013, HGVs were involved in 9 out of 14 incidents in London leading to cyclist fatalities, and the Mayor of London has requested TfL to look at ways in which lorries can be made safer for cyclists and pedestrians. TfL and London Councils have proposed to prohibit HGVs over 3.5 tonnes that are not fitted with safety equipment, including side guards and extended view mirrors, from driving in the London Low Emission Zone, even if those vehicles are exempt from the national regulations which require this equipment. They estimate that if the ban was introduced, cyclist and pedestrian fatalities and casualties would be prevented.
- 3.12 The council supports the scheme's principle, and already meets most of the requirements including offering cyclist awareness training and provision of safety. However, the Mayor's position is that he cannot commit to sign the pledge until the wording is modified very slightly, to prevent the council being obliged to disqualify non-compliant bids prior to evaluation from potential contractors who would be affected by the scheme. As it stands, this could risk deterring such contractors from tendering for council contracts.
- 3.13 In light of this, officers should investigate how other councils are able to meet the obligations of all of the pledges. It may be necessary to disqualify non-compliant bids prior to evaluation from potential contractors to ensure our streets are safe for cyclists.

RECOMMENDATION 4:
Support for the 'Safer Lorries Safer Cycling' scheme is the policy of the council and the council should now sign the pledge.

- 3.14 The Metropolitan Police provided an overview of the Cycle Task Force Safety Team, funding for which is provided by TfL. The Metropolitan Police holds approximately 20 cycle marking events each year in the borough, with over 700 bicycles marked, and in partnership with the council hosts 8 Exchanging Places HGV cycle safety events annually, attracting over 200 cyclists. Furthermore, the council contributed to the Metropolitan Police initiative 'Operation Safeway' in 2013, to support raising awareness of safe cycling and driving for all road users.
- 3.15 The council also commissions, through TfL, courses for drivers from its major transport-based contractors, and plans to extend this to its Passenger Service drivers, subject to availability. Furthermore, all new council procurements require contractors to be accredited under the Freight Operator Recognition Scheme - waste management and highways contractors are already accredited, and the council is planning this for its Passenger Service fleet. The council continues to work with its contractors through the contract management and monitoring process to improve standards.
- 3.16 Another important tool in improving cyclist safety is the speed limit. The council is looking at proposals to reduce this to 20mph across the borough, on all roads except for the A12 and Limehouse Link/Aspen Way. This could

make limits more consistent and easy to follow for road users, and has the potential to make Tower Hamlets' roads safer and encourage more walking and cycling.

- 3.17 The Red Route Network (TLRN) managed by TfL is also being considered for speed reductions through negotiation with TfL, including the A11, Burdett Road and the A13. There is approximately 29km of TLRN within Tower Hamlets compared with 280km of roads managed by the council, yet in 2013, two thirds of the incidents resulting in cyclists being killed or seriously injured took place on the TLRN.
- 3.18 Representatives from Hackney pointed to the limit of 20mph on all residential roads in their borough which is part of their overall package of measures to support cycling.

RECOMMENDATION 5:
The council imposes a 20mph speed limit on all residential and borough roads and the council should work with the police to ensure that 20mph is enforced.

Other issues for cyclists

- 3.19 The Chair sought clarification on the Local Implementation Plan process and the opportunities for funding cycling that this presented the council. The Head of Transport & Highways explained that an element of LIP funding is allocated for cycle infrastructure and currently stands at £2.5 million, with £300,000 specifically set aside for cycling hotspots and additional schemes which benefit other road users as well.
- 3.20 Tower Hamlets Wheelers suggested that clarity and greater transparency regarding year on year funding and expenditure was important, and that this information should be in the public domain. The Service Head for Public Realm reminded the Review Group that funding is variable due to Section 106 agreements which affect proportionate and absolute spending figures. However, the Chair agreed that this would be helpful overall to assess the priority being given to cycling by the council.

RECOMMENDATION 6:
The council publicises annual spend on its cycling agenda.

- 3.21 Noting the success of the cycle lane running through Victoria Park, both the LCC and Tower Hamlets Wheelers suggested extending the opening hours of the park to keep the road south of it open for longer. However, there is an Act of Parliament which requires the council to open and close Victoria Park from sunrise to sunset, which no by-law would be able to supersede. This Act of Parliament has been in place since the nineteenth century and is in relation to the land being owned by the Queen. Consulting the community on change of hours would leave the council at risk of falsely building resident expectations on a subject which cannot be changed. Furthermore,

this presents problems for the community and council such as putting residents at risk of accidents as the park has no lighting at night and is unmanaged during these hours. If an accident was to occur to a cyclist, it would also prove difficult for emergency vehicles to reach them. Leaving the park which has undergone a multi-million pound investment programme in recent years, open till late also exposes it to the risk of vandalism and possible anti-social behaviour in that area. There is also no budget to manage the park out of daylight hours or to install lighting.

- 3.22 However, given Victoria Park's popularity with cyclists and the added benefit which extending hours potentially provides to their safety, the council should explore ways to influence the park's statutory opening hours.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

The council consults residents and ward members on the London Cycling Campaign's proposal to keep the road to the south of Victoria Park open for longer and explore ways to influence the park's statutory opening hours.

- 3.23 As a neighbouring borough, Hackney shares many of the characteristics of Tower Hamlets including its population density, diversity and a high level of deprivation. The session heard from the Principal Transport Planner at Hackney Council on its approach to cycling to support transport affordability, reduce congestion, and tackle inequality and high levels of obesity.
- 3.24 Long term political support in that authority, along with a proactive and informed cycling group, has resulted in a more cycling-friendly culture within the organisation as a whole, as well as across the borough. This has led to a holistic approach which includes filtered permeability (modal filtering),⁷ sustained investment in the public realm and targeted events and behaviour change campaigns such as cycle loans. Traffic calming measures such as 20mph zones on all residential roads has complemented this methodology, in addition to significant amounts of investment in cycle parking.
- 3.25 Tower Hamlets has delivered solutions to improve cycle safety such as minor permeability schemes and cycle parking lockers. The Mayor of Tower Hamlets has pledged to make 'Tower Hamlets the most cycle friendly borough in London'. The council has also carried out targeted work with the borough's communities through the 'Bike It' behavioural change programme, and is looking to impose traffic calming measures, such as the 20mph speed limit on residential roads, as well as continued investment in cycle training.
- 3.26 Hackney Council officers promoted their Council's policy to provide sustainable travel options for employees and customers. It also has a fleet of bikes for its staff to use to travel across its borough. This resource has enabled officers to understand the needs of those residents who cycle. Similarly, Tower Hamlets Council also has its own fleet of bicycles for staff to use and regularly explores ways to encourage and support sustainable travel amongst its employees.

⁷ Points that cyclists and pedestrians can pass, but not people in cars

- 3.27 The Mayor has also pledged to provide an extra 1,000 car parking spaces across the borough. This policy will make it more difficult for the council to achieve its aspiration of making the borough cycle friendly, although the additional capacity provided may potentially relieve pressure on existing demand and therefore help reduce CO2 emissions produced by vehicles searching for parking spaces. This may also reduce the risk of vehicles colliding with cyclists or competing for the same road space. Therefore, the council should investigate the impact that providing an extra 1,000 car spaces will have on making Tower Hamlets the most cycle friendly borough in London.

RECOMMENDATION 8:
The development of a cycle friendly borough is treated as a priority by the council.

- 3.28 Work carried out with new housing and commercial developments is also key. Hackney's approach is similar to that of Waltham Forest Council, which requires all new developments to have "future proof" levels of cycle parking and access to realise their 'mini-Holland' ambition. The LCC believed that developers should contribute towards paying for cycle parking facilities.

RECOMMENDATION 9:
The council better influences developers to provide greater cycle parking facilities for their developments.

- 3.29 The representative from Transport for London talked about the impact that greening our streets and designing a 'streets for all' approach to developing our highways. It was also discussed how councils can design out conflict on roads and use cycle specific signals, like the UK's first low level signals for cyclists installed at Bow Roundabout by the Mayor of London. These lights have a cyclist phase to guard against conflict with moving and turning motor traffic.

RECOMMENDATION 10:
The council works with TFL to roll out more cycle specific signals across the borough.

3. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Improving cycling safety is essential in encouraging the current level of cycling in the borough and realising the Mayor of London's vision of a 'cyclised' city. The ten recommendations contained in this report aims to meet the aspiration of making Tower Hamlets a cycle friendly borough, and are based on good practice and an emerging consensus in London about the aspects of that practice across a range of measures including engineering, enforcement and education that should be considered for adoption by the council. These are important not just for cyclists but for all users as investment in cycling has the potential to improve the quality of place.