

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **MONDAY, 24TH FEBRUARY, 2025** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT**

Councillors Awale Olad (Chair), Nina De Ayala Parker, Sharon Hardwick, Matthew Kirk, Izzy Lenga, Rishi Madlani, Stephen Stark and Shiva Tiwari

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Councillors Kemi Atolagbe (remote attendance), Linda Chung (remote attendance), Nasrine Djemai (Cabinet Member for New Homes and Community Investment) Adam Harrison (Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden) and Lorraine Revah (remote attendance).

**The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.**

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

There were none.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA**

All Committee members indicated that they were customers of Thames Water.

#### **3. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)**

The Chair informed members that he had received three deputation requests.

The first was from Joan Munro on behalf of The South Hampstead Flood Action Group requesting that Thames Water and the Council work together to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to hold back potential floodwater and the slit carried down from Hampstead.

The second deputation was from Tony Travers and related to the activities of Thames Water in Fitzrovia. The two deputations relating to Thames Water would be taken with agenda item 7 Thames Water Update

The third deputation was from Milan Kecman and related to Zip car flexibility in Camden- it was proposed that this item would be taken after consideration of item 5 and the minutes item 6.

#### Zip Car flexibility Deputation

Consideration was given to the deputation statement referred to above.

The following response was given by the depute to members questions:

- The red zones on the map indicated areas where parking was not allowed.
- With regards to the ability to park zip cars in problematic congested areas in Camden, these areas could be highlighted in red so zip car users would not be allowed to park in those areas but in locations nearby.
- Although it was agreed that bikes and scooters caused obstruction as well as other issues when left on the pavements, zip cars on the other hand would be parked in empty car bays on the street and cause less of a problem.
- The benefits of using zip cars included reduction in individual car ownership in the borough.
- There were car hire services available, it was however the flexibility of what zip car could offer that was more appealing. It offered the back to bay model where it could be rented for a specific period or used and then similar to the lime bikes the car could be dropped off wherever you wanted.
- Zip car use was more convenient and cheaper than individuals owning their own car. The money saved from getting rid of individual cars could be spent in local shops and restaurants.
- The only reason Zip Car usage would increase were if people enjoyed using it and found purpose from using it similar to lime bike usage in the borough.
- Zip cars would be parked in residents' bays.
- The research indicated that people would give up their cars if zip car flex were introduced in the borough.
- It would be better if Camden introduced a car sharing policy and if complaints occurred from residents these could be addressed then.
- The government was encouraging the use of the Zip Car flex model.

Sam Margolis, Head of Transport Strategy and Projects and Brenda Busingye, Transport and Travel Planning Manager made the following comments in response to the deputation and members questions:

- The Council's position was based on the objectives and policies outlined in Camden's Transport Strategy.
- The Council prioritised walking, cycling and public transport as the primary mode of travel within the borough.

- The Transport Strategy set ambitious targets to increase sustainable transport mode share from 85% in 2017 to 93% by 2041
- Since 2011 Camden had reduced car dependency with car trips declining from 19% to just 12% of all residents' trips by 2024.
- The percentage of car free households in the borough had risen to around two thirds of all properties, officers were of the view that introducing point to point Zipcar flex could encourage additional car use undermining these achievements and discouraging further shifts towards sustainable transport modes.
- Officers were of the view that the data quoted by the depute with regards to car clubs removing 22 vehicles from the road was not specific to the flex model, officers understood that it was based on a nationwide Como UK survey of members which included the back to base model which remained the predominant model of this facility in the UK and which was actively supported in Camden.
- With regards to the 5-to-6-kilometre concern, the beta survey suggested that many trips made using floating car club vehicles were under 5 to 6 kilometres. Camden's strategy supported modal shifts, active and sustainable transport for such distances.
- Walking already accounted for 52% of residents' trips, cycling also had significant growth potential. One way point to point shared cycling had grown in the borough, providing additional facilities for the 5-to-6-kilometre range.
- Introducing more opportunities for short one-way car journeys contradicted the Council's objectives and could divert trips away from healthier, more sustainable modes of transport.
- The Council's strategy aimed to reduce motor traffic volumes by 25% by 2041, these had already been cut by 15% and emissions had been reduced by half. The introduction of Zipcar flex lacked fixed parking locations and could increase vehicular movements and parking prices, potentially exacerbating congestion and related air quality issues in Camden.
- The Council's existing policies had successfully reduced the number of cars owned in the borough by 22% in the last decade which was the largest reduction anywhere in London.
- Camden's strategy including not permitting Zipcar flex was having benefits over and above other boroughs.
- London already had the most extensive back to base car club network in London with around 150 locations in use and approximately 25,000 members. This model effectively balanced the need for occasional car access with Camden's goals of reducing parking demand and promoting sustainable travel.
- Zipcar flex supporters asserted that it offered increased accessibility, however it did introduce unpredictability in vehicle distribution which could create parking stress as well as potentially impact the accessibility of vehicles for some people.
- The current network of carpool vehicles were available for this purpose and positioned throughout the borough so that users would not need to travel far to access the vehicle.

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- In the recent Council's Transport Strategy 3 year plan a focus area had been developed on how to improve existing back to base carpool offer which recognised the overall transport mix.
- The Council remained focused on prioritising sustainable transport solutions that aligned with its objectives and while it supported innovative mobility solutions that genuinely contributed to reducing car dependency, officers did not believe that Zipcar flex aligned with Camden's transport priorities.
- The Council would continue to invest in measures that support walking, cycling, public transport and shared mobility models, including back to base car clubs ensuring Camden remained a leader in sustainable urban transport.

In response to Committee members questions, the Head of Transport Strategy and Projects provided the following information:

- Most boroughs had adopted a similar approach to Camden which was the bay-based model, parking in a zone rather than a particular bay. The benefit of this was providing certainty of where the vehicle would be.
- The Council had looked at and compared the data from other boroughs and in terms of car ownership, reductions in overall motor vehicle trips Camden was outperforming a number of these other boroughs.
- However, the individual boroughs were not collecting their own data on the specific impact of Zipcar flex against the fixed data, this information was collected by Como UK which was the national umbrella organisation.
- The Council continually reviewed data presented. If data from Como UK or others were able to show comprehensively and clearly that the Zip Car flex model had an impact on outcomes such as car use reduction, air quality improvements on its own and not lumped in with back to base models then that would be reviewed carefully. However, the current data showed that the Council's approach was having benefits over and above other boroughs. It was also fair to say that it was not just the City of London that did not have this model, neither did Brent or Barnet. The Council would continue to keep it under review.

The depute responding to the officer's comments noted that measuring the success of the impact of Zip Car flex was by correlating this with a reduction in car ownership. However, there were a number of multifactorial issues which were related and this could never be achieved unless Zip Car flex was allowed in the borough. In addition, reduction in car ownership of 22% in Camden compared to 11% in Kensington and Chelsea were different boroughs and factors such as cost of living could be the reasons for this difference rather than due to Camden's policy.

Committee Members made the following comments:

- The case appeared to be strong that Camden should be in line with other boroughs and national policy. The important thing was that the number of car owners were reduced and the more options there were to drive down car ownership the better.

- It was difficult to understand the benefit of the Zipcar flex compared to hiring a car to get to places you needed to. With the Zipcar flex, the borough already had issues with scooters and e-bikes, adding cars in the south of the borough would be problematic.
- This was likely to increase journeys into the borough while the Council was trying to reduce the number of vehicle journeys into the borough, it was worth looking at on a regular basis.
- Committee members were generally supportive of Camden's current policy there did not appear to be an appetite for change, however there was an appetite for continuous conversation around this particular subject, they were sure that this would be looked at again in future.

The Committee thanked the deputies for attending.

#### **4. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)**

##### **Broadcasting of the meeting**

The Chair announced that the meeting was being broadcast live by the Council to the internet and could be viewed on the website for twelve months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts were archived and could be made available on request.

#### **5. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT**

There was none.

#### **6. MINUTES**

##### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2025 be signed as an accurate record.

#### **7. THAMES WATER UPDATE REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report of Thames Water.

Consideration was also given to the deputation statements referred to in Item 4 above.

The following responses were given by the deputies to members questions:

- In terms of engagement by Thames Water during and after the flooding crisis in 2021, it was initially complete chaos when the incident first occurred. However, Thames Water had since reviewed their customer relations and there had been ongoing meetings with the organisation since then. Thames Water representatives had been charming but there had not been much action taken to protect residents in the area from flooding.
- Camden was not one of Thames Water's priority areas. The organisation had a 25-year drainage and waste-water management plan, of which Camden was not featured at all and not considered a priority for flood prevention. There had been a few devices placed in people's homes that protected them from sewers but no substantial work done to prevent flooding.
- With regards to reoccurring issues with surface repairs, if the repairs on the surface were not properly resolved it was difficult to believe that Thames Water could easily resolve issues underneath the surface.
- It would be ideal if more sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) could be put in Hampstead to specifically target areas where flooding was prevalent which should not cost a lot of money.
- The Interim London Surface Water Strategy referred to in Thames Water report supported a catchment-based approach which could also generate some funding from other boroughs providing a concerted proactive approach to deal with this and the impacts of climate change.
- There were also other small things that Thames Water could do such as a project which looked at putting SUDS whenever the utility companies dug up roads.
- Working together with all the stakeholders to find the best spots to place the SUDS so water could be held back from flooding the communities.
- West Hampstead was very badly flooded in 1975 and 2002, however a huge tank reservoir was built under Maybrook Park which appeared to have stopped the floods, something similar was required in Hampstead.
- It was interesting to know how Thames Water managed its assets, as it appeared to show less interest in how it dealt with its operations in the middle of a big city such as London.
- Thames Water typically took a six-to-nine-day permit to carry out utility works and then only worked for 10% of the time.
- In terms of improvements since the flooding in 2021, Camden had provided support creating a rain garden at the top of Goldhurst Terrace and were planning to put more SUDS in the area.
- Thames Water had provided funds to the Council to put in major SUD schemes at the corner of Belsize Road and Priory Road.
- Thames Water had also put in non-return valves as a means of preventing sewage from going into residents' flats.
- Pressure had been put on the Council and TfL to keep gullies they were responsible for clean, which allowed for unrestricted flow of water down the main sewer.
- Commitments had also been obtained from the O2 Centre that the new development would achieve the greenfield run off rate.
- Despite this people were still concerned about flooding in the area.

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- In terms of flood insurance for properties in the area, a lot of residents were unable to obtain flood insurance for their buildings and those that were had to pay substantially increased costs.

Martin Padley (Water Director - Thames Water), Paul Wetton (Head of Asset Planning- Thames Water) and Michael Benteke (London Stakeholder Engagement Manager Thames Water) were present to respond to the deputations and Committee's questions. They provided the following information:

- In terms of Thames Water responding to questions at meetings it was useful if any pre questions could be made known beforehand which would allow the right people from Thames Water to attend to respond to questions.
- Thames Water shared a lot of the concerns expressed by the deputees with regards to flooding as this was one of the biggest threats to London due to climate change.
- The capital was likely to see a lot more heavy storms with the organization taking action to protect properties in the area, some of which included installing non return valves, clearing of sewers to protect homes and provision of funding for SUD schemes and the Flood Forum.
- The reality was the issue of flooding was a huge problem which was not something that any organization could tackle alone, it required as already mentioned everybody working together including the government, local authorities which was the reason Thames Water was part of the London Surface Water Strategy Group. These included all the key organisations working together on a catchment-based approach tackling surface water flooding across London.
- The Group was due to publish its report in the summer.
- Thames Water had replaced 57% of the distribution mains which was a huge proportion compared to the rest of the Country.
- The organization had an ageing asset base and in recent proposals there had been a request to replace 570 kilometers of mains pipes which would be the biggest request ever since privatization.
- The replacement of the water main in Warren Street had been replaced to an adequate standard which was evidenced by the reduction in the number of leaks and holes year on year.
- London and Camden were unique in that the soil was the most corrosive with the oldest mains and although there had been no investment driver, 57% of the mains in the area had been replaced.
- Thames Water had been provided with funds last year to deliver 150 kilometres of maintenance across the whole of the Thames catchment area.
- The funding was not sufficient, and shareholders were required to contribute to make sure the programme could be delivered.
- The change for this current five-year period was that the organization had been given money to achieve targets on an annual basis as well as a five-year period. In addition, the criteria for where maintenance was carried out had changed and was no longer based on customer complaints, leakage but were now told where to carry out the replacements.

- In terms of working across London the monetary value of replacing mains pipes costs £1,500 a metre. Pentonville Road cost even more £8500 a metre. There was the need for the organization to balance larger work with some smaller work to enable the schemes to work effectively for Thames Water.
- The organisation's priorities had been dictated through the price review, what it would like to do, and the amount of money provided, which was not sufficient.

In response to questions Thames Water officers commented that:

- The 95% success rate of returning roads and pathways to their original state was independently assured by PJ Cleary's independent contractor company employed by Thames Water.

Invited to comment on Thames Waters response, Tony Travers (deputee) noted that the response was a generalized statistic about the whole of the Thames Water region and was not a precise answer about precise examples of Thames Water's work in Camden. With specific reference to reinstatement work on Warren Street, he questioned the reason why the work had to be carried out twice.

Commenting further, Tony Travers was of the view that there needed to be an independent inspection regime that picked up such issues without expecting the responsibility to fall on Camden officers to inspect the work of the utility companies.

In response Thames Water Officers remarked that:

- They did everything they could do to prevent things from going wrong and were sorry every time it went wrong. They were always trying to balance the best commercial return, the best value for money and the best pound unit rate for the work that was done.
- There could have been a number of reasons why the work had to be carried out twice, it could have been the performance contractor, or the wrong material used. If there were specific projects, streets or roads where there were concerns, if this information could be provided it could be investigated, and the root causes of the problem could be understood.

A Committee member commenting on the deputation about the poor quality of reinstatement work on Warren Street and Thames Water's reported 95% success reinstatement work figure quoted in their report, said they were uncomfortable with the figure quoted particularly when there was clear evidence that reinstatement work on Warren Street had to be carried out twice. The Committee member asked for a detailed report from Thames Water on the reasons for the reinstatement work being carried out twice.

**Action By: London Stakeholder Engagement Manager Thames Water, and  
Head of Asset Planning Thames Water**



The Director of Environment and Sustainability responding to a Committee member's question about what was being done to address the flood issues raised in the deputation, commented that Camden continued to work with the South Hampstead Flood Action Group, the City of London and Thames Water on how it managed the catchment areas to mitigate surface water flooding in the area including diverting the flow of water off Hampstead Heath into the drainage system in the area which allowed the water to move more quickly as well as implementing flip dividers in the drainage system on Parliament Hill to slow the flow of water in that area. The Council would continue to work with other agencies in the area.

Responding to further questions Thames Water officers commented that:

- Managing water at a surface level was the only realistic way of dealing with flooding.
- With regards to the flooding in the Belsize area in 2021 and the amount of rain from the storm that occurred, building a few tanks or making slightly bigger sewers would not have made a difference.
- Funded schemes with other agencies, including the Council which involved holding the water back was the way forward, however this would require funding, which Thames Water did not currently have, as well as the need for it to be evidence based.
- Thames Water took the issue of flooding seriously, had spent millions of pounds trying to protect individual homes, had funded the London Surface Water Strategy Group and were working with other agencies, however Thames Water could not tackle issues of storms and climate change on its own and could not say flooding in the area would not happen again.
- The maintenance replacement cost per metre of pipe in London costs eight times more than the Office of Water Services (Ofwat) allowance per metre. The cost of doing maintenance replacement work in London cost much more than in other parts of the Country.
- Although it did not excuse the poor performance or poor management of Thames Water, the allowance provided to do the work it wanted to do was not sufficient.
- The organisation had mechanisms to claw back money from contractors that were not performing adequately. That was why issues raised about areas such as Warren Street would be looked at closely to see what had occurred.
- In cases where major incidents or emergencies occurred Thames Water set up a central incident team that managed issues including the distribution of bottled water in consultation with partners, stakeholders and colleagues from other organisations including local Councils.
- The organization had a priority list of vulnerable residents, there was detail on the Thames Water's website on how to join or be included on the list. The organization was happy to add people that met the criteria to the list.
- In terms of water pressure, Thames Water had not reduced the water pressure in Camden in the last few years.

- In cases with water, the pipes remained the same size and when demand went up the water pressure naturally goes down. However, if there were cases of loss of water if provided with more details, they were happy to investigate this.
- Trunk mains were the major pipes which huge volumes of water passed through, the air valves were regularly checked as well as online monitoring looking at the water pressure within those trunk mains.
- The monitoring of the deterioration of the mains as well as the valve maintenance provided an indication of the condition of the mains pipes.
- With regards to the smaller mains pipe the aim was to replace this as part of the Asset Management Period cycle (AMPS) replacement programme which was a priority.
- The reason the terms 'relatively good' and 'good' to describe the condition of the pipes was to put it in plain English.

A Committee member requested more clarity and evidence from Thames Water about the terms used to describe the condition of the pipes in their reports. Thames Water officers agreed to share the methodology used.

**Action By: London Stakeholder Engagement Manager Thames Water, and Head of Asset Planning Thames Water**

Answering further questions Thames Water officers made the following comments:

- The organization was very aware of the disruption caused by utility works in areas such as West End Lane and this would be investigated.
- The organization had replaced 112 kilometres of mains across London over a five-year period and over the next 5 years was looking to replace 570 kilometres of mains. However, in some instances as pointed out the organization was returning to the same mains time and time again to carry out patch repairs because that was what it was funded to do.
- Due to insufficient funding all the organization could do was patch repairs, but there was the recognition that more needed to be done.

A Committee member asked if Thames Water could provide details of the roads in Camden over the last five years that had been dug up more than once as the member was of the view that this would highlight the problem. Thames Water agreed to look into this and provide a list of these roads.

**Action By: London Stakeholder Engagement Manager Thames Water, and Head of Asset Planning Thames Water**

- With regards to replacing the 15-inch pipe on Belsize Road, until the competition and markets authority process had been completed the organization would not know the amount of money available to carry out the management replacement programme.
- As reassurance a business case had been made for £421 million worth of investment specifically to target trunk mains burst that affected basement flooding and to protect residents.

- In terms of the time for the replacement of the 15-inch pipe it would be within the 5-year cycle.
- In terms of compensation for the flooding initially Thames Water picked up costs for looking after people who had been flooded after the main water burst in Belsize Road however there was no amount of money that could compensate for the impact on mental health.

The Chair thanked the deputees for attending the meeting and their deputations.

Thames Water officers were thanked for attending the meeting noting that the Committee expected a detailed response to the issues raised in the deputation.

## **RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

## **8. DOCKLESS BIKE HIRE SCHEME - PROGRESS UPDATE 2025**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Environment and Sustainability.

Councillor Adam Harrison (Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden) Richard Bradbury (Director of Environment and Sustainability), Sam Margolis (Head of Transport Strategy and Projects) Brenda Busingye (Transport and Travel Planning Manager) Sarah Slade (Principal Transport Planner and Steve Hands Transport Planner) made the following comments in response to members questions:

- The Council had a contract in place with the Dockless Hire Bike operators for some time, an aim of the Council had been ensuring compliance with the contract and working closely with the operators to improve users parking compliance. There had been a marked improvement with parking compliance which had risen to 90%, however that still left 10% across the borough that were not complying.
- There were some areas of the borough such as south Hampstead, Maple Street and outside Euston Station where there were still issues.
- The Council was moving to a situation where apart from focusing on compliance it would start a trial of impounding illegally parked bikes which would be launched in the coming weeks.
- The aim was to push the compliance rate even higher than 90%.

Responding to a further question on whether the 90% compliance figure could be reviewed, the Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden commented that the Council always aspired to have a higher parking compliance rate, the Council was attempting to promote active travel with walking and cycling being good for people's health and a means of more affordable forms of transport. Dockless bike

hire was also providing people with a choice about how they travelled around the borough particularly those parts of the borough where there was never going to be a good overground connection. He noted that at the heart of the scheme was a sharing economy in a borough where not everybody had access to cycle parking and storage and being able to share bikes and scooters unlocked that form of travel.

While the Council was working hard to improve the system, the Dockless Hire Bike scheme arrived at a time where there was no agreed system with different boroughs having different sets of rules and it was going to take some time to get it right.

Commenting on a Committee member's question about paying for the floppy barriers Jack Mckenna (Senior Policy Manager Lime) informed the Committee that Lime had recently put forward £5 million which they would be happy for some of that funding to go towards infrastructure on existing parking bays or building new parking bays however it was not responsible for decisions made about where public money was spent in Camden.

Council officers also commenting on funding for the infrastructure noted that it was due to the innovative way the contract was designed and the revenue share agreement derived from this that funding, including fine revenue which had been made available to pay for infrastructure such as floppy barriers.

Initially the Council had to put in some funding including TfL funds to develop the network, the network had enabled the Council to generate income which had further been invested into improving the parking bays, but there was further ongoing funding from TfL every year which the Council could apply for as well as micromobility funds.

Officers looked to use all other sources of funding rather than the Council's capital. There had been upfront cost the Council had paid but over the course of the contract the Council would be getting the money back.

Alex Berwin (Head of Policy, Human Forest) and Jack Mckenna (Senior Policy Manager Lime) provided the following responses to members questions.

- The dockless Bike Hire operators fully acknowledged that the situation on the street regarding bike parking compliance had not been good enough.
- In terms of feedback to senior management, Lime's Chief Executive had met with the Council and TfL over the last couple of months and based on that, an action plan had been developed.
- In terms of how this was related to Camden, 8 more staff were deployed on the streets of Camden, with 28 staff working in Camden every day.
- The staff worked with officers at identified specific areas of focus mainly around Euston Road.
- In the last month around the Euston Road area the number of bikes removed had more than doubled.
- It was understood that the impact needed to be seen, however Lime was listening very clearly and attending locations highlighted as hotspot areas.

- The Lime staff resource was targeted at areas where complaints were made, if the Committee wanted to highlight other areas for resources to be targeted this could be done.
- Lime had a system where it not only contributed a fee to operate in Camden but also shared the revenue from each bike trip made in Camden and also provided infrastructure investment funding.

Officers clarified that the £5m funding from Lime was London wide, Lime was contributing £125,000 which was going towards the funding of 30 parking bays in the borough. The bays would be for the use of all dockless bike hire operators. This was for one phase and further contributions would be made towards further phases.

Responding to the Committee members' comment Alex Berwin (Human Forest) remarked that it would be useful to receive details about the bike outside the Committee member's house whether it had been reported and if nothing had happened then that was a concern.

He also informed the Committee that Human Forest was always striving for 100% parking compliance, noting, however, that there would always be instances where people would misuse the service.

Human Forest had a similar set up to Lime with regards to revenue share as well as the payment of a lump sum to the Council every quarter. This went towards paying for officer's time, creating new bays and scoping out new bays.

Human Forest and Lime also talked to private landowners with the aim of setting up parking bays on private land particularly in areas such as Kings Cross, which was the most popular area for parking bays.

Other tangible actions Human Forest were taking to improve compliance included:

- Doubling resources on the streets with 12 officers specifically located in Camden, they would go around carrying out bike maintenance.
- 5 vans circulating central London including south of Euston Road, the most popular area of Camden where people were using the service.
- 30% of Human Forest bikes had been removed from the borough, the bikes seen south of Euston Road were bikes that end up in this location and not normally deployed there.
- There was a 90% month-on-month growth in the service with Human Forest struggling to keep up with the demand, which was a testament to the popularity of the service.

Responding to further Committee members questions, Alex Berwin (Head of Policy, Human Forest) and Jack Mckenna (Senior Policy Manager Lime) provided the following information:

- On safety issues Lime bikes weighed a bit heavier than Human Forest bikes and in respect of the safety issues that had been reported this was concerning which Lime internal teams were looking at. Lime shared data with the borough

on safety issues but was not aware of the cases raised by the Committee member and was happy to pick those issues up.

- Human Forest had made continuous improvements to the tyres on its bikes, making use of a reputable supplier from Europe. This had been in place over the last year with very few incidents experienced.

Commenting on safety issues with Dockless Bikes, Council officers noted that they were aware of the reports about safety concerns but this had not been an issue of concern up till now. The Council, as part of ongoing monitoring of the contract, received monthly reports from both operators on the number of fines, parking compliance and member usage. As part of these reports is going forward, the Council would ask the operators for information on the number of accidents customers had using the bikes.

**Action By: Head of Transport Strategy and Projects**

Answering further Committee members' questions, the following information was provided by the Dockless Bike operators:

- Lime had a dedicated team working with the Police to address anti-social behaviour issues such as riding on pavements at speed and had successfully supported the police in prosecuting individuals.
- The statistics quoted by the Committee member relating to use of Lime bikes to commit crimes was not recognized.
- Lime had recently received an award from the Police for supporting them to reduce crime in the West End by 40%.
- Lime shared its data and responded to every request made by the Police.
- Human Forest had signed up to the E-bike charter which committed them to working closely with members of the disabled community to understand concerns.
- Work had been done with Sightless Charities on improving Human Forest's parking technology
- Human Forest had a team of staff as well as a dedicated phone line whose job was to redistribute bikes, collecting them when tipped over. The bikes also had sensors which alerted staff when the bikes had been tipped over. The response time was about 50 minutes.
- Lime had a Disability Advisory Board which residents were welcome to attend the next meeting.
- The operators checked the bikes regularly, there was a basic check of tyre pressure and brakes every time a bike was touched and fuller inspection of the bike carried out every 2 weeks.
- If there was an issue with any of the e-bikes, there were clear contact details as well as a QR code where a team could be contacted to respond to any issues raised.
- There were also conditions and clear instructions requesting that patrons check the bike thoroughly before using.
- There was an app available where any issues with the bike could be reported.

- There was no form of formal identification as part of the terms and conditions, however, to use the bikes a bankcard was required which was checked.
- If a person was found to be underage, they would be banned from using the service.
- The operators were in discussion with NHS Trusts across London including Camden to have dedicated parking resources on hospital sites. NHS staff were a key user group for the operators.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden commented that most of Camden's parking bays were located on carriageways so issues of bikes falling or being blown over by the wind were less likely to impact residents.

The Head of Transport Strategy and Projects informed the Committee that:

- From the income received from the operators, 75% of the Enforcement Officer's post was funded from that income, the officer picked up issues such as parking bikes outside bays.
- The Council would be conducting an audit over the next year to review the parking bays, particularly where there were inclines or hills to amend the bay design.

The Committee thanked the operators for attending the meeting.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**9. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR NEW HOMES AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT**

Consideration was given to the annual report of the Cabinet Member for New Homes and Community Investment.

In response to questions, Councillor Nasrine Djemai (Cabinet Member for New Homes and Community Investment) David Burns (Director of Economy, Regeneration and Investment) and Neil Vokes (Director of Development) made the following points:

- The Cabinet Member informed a Council member that the Community Investment Programme report would be presented to the Resources and Corporate Performance Committee tomorrow, what was being considered at the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee was an overview of her cabinet portfolio and not just CIP.

- With regards to the new builds in Gospel Oak and whether this would include workspaces that had been previously promised, the Cabinet Member agreed to provide a response to the Council member in writing.
- More detail would be provided in future Annual reports of the Cabinet Member for New Homes and Community Investment on climate progress and sustainability of the programmes the Council delivered in relation to markets street trading, low carbon construction and community investment.
- In terms of the Council's housing target, the number of new homes was below the target over the past 3 years, the Council had devised an action plan to address this. However, the borough's housing target would change due to a future revised plan. The Council was using its planning and CIP levers to work towards achieving its targets despite the limited availability of land, a challenging financial climate and developers preferring to build commercial properties rather than residential properties.
- In terms of buying back Council homes from the right to buy scheme, where finances allowed the Council was considering this as one of the options.
- The Council was taking strides towards the ideal situation of alleviating the housing crisis where there would no longer be a need for temporary accommodation. Brown filled homes were also being used.
- Community Land Trust was an excellent way of offering first homes to those who would not normally be able to afford homes. The Council was open to working in partnership with as many organisations as possible.
- With regards to the recent meeting arranged by Gospel Oak residents which was not attended by the Cabinet Member or officers, the Cabinet Member for New Homes and Community Investment advised that the invitation had been acknowledged but she had also advised that she would confirm whether she would be able to attend, which subsequently she had informed the residents she was unable to.
- Officers informed members that they had not agreed to attend the meeting, advising that a thorough engagement programme had been designed and they had asked residents to attend an existing meeting whereby issues could be discussed.

The Cabinet Member for New Homes and Community Investment and Officers were thanked for their work, time taken to attend the meeting and their responses.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**10. CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2024/25 AND ACTION TRACKER**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Supporting Communities.



***Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee - Monday, 24th February, 2025***

Members discussed the work programme deciding that a further report on Thames Water and the Dockless Bike Hire scheme be brought back in a years' time for a further update.

Also to consider adding an extra meeting in the next municipal year.

**Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

**11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was none.

Having applied committee procedure rule 19(a) at 9.30pm, the meeting ended at 9.59 pm.

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**