

Opposition Policy Item – Implementation of trial car club scheme

Background

As up to 90% of pollution emissions in London come from motor vehicles, car clubs can play a valuable role in the reduction of pollution. Studies in Europe have shown that each Car Club vehicle typically replaces five to ten private vehicles, thereby reducing congestion and pollution.

A car club provides its members with quick and easy access to a car for short term hire. Members can make use of car club vehicles as and when they need them. We have explained below how Car Clubs operate based on successful schemes in neighbouring Brent. We have specifically stated that the business case for the scheme should demonstrate that the scheme can at worst be revenue neutral.

Using Car Clubs

Book - for as little as half an hour at a time, using telephone or internet. The booking can be made well ahead of time or with a few minutes notice.

Unlock - cars are located at designated parking bays in the local area and accessed using the member's smart card

Drive – Once inside the driver enters a pin and drives away, returning the car at the end of the journey. It is possible to extend the booking if necessary

Pay - Pay-as-you-go charges include fuel and maintenance costs. A subscription charge is paid monthly or annually.

Benefits of a Car Club

Joining a car club is an excellent way to reduce the financial and environmental costs of the private car, while retaining most of the benefits.

The obvious incentive to become a member of a car club is to avoid the initial heavy outlay for a vehicle and still enjoy the benefits of a car. Thereafter, members of a car club enjoy the benefits of reduced car dependency and enjoy the health benefits of greener travel modes that are reduced stress and improved health.

The high fixed cost involved in owning a car and the comparative low usage cost, encourages owners to maximise their use even where alternative more environmentally friendly modes would be more efficient modes of travel.

Car ownership brings an environmental cost in the production of an extra vehicle and the additional car usage that comes with ownership.

The benefits of car clubs, is that they reduce car ownership and therefore car dependency.

The benefit of a car clubs is that the entire travel cost is transferred to the user as a usage cost and therefore, a fairer cost comparison can be made between the different travel modes at the point of use. This can only encourage more people to use public transport, cycle and walk around the borough.

Benefits for Businesses

Reduced parking demand – shortages of parking spaces can be alleviated with car sharing and car clubs.

Save Money – Reduction in the need to lease parking spaces.

Reduced congestion – many businesses have staff that need to make business trips by car and congestion impacts on their travel time.

Healthier workforce – sustainable travel modes are more physically active and can help staff to achieve their 10,000 steps a day, or if they cycle do the 30 minutes required to half their risk of heart attack. Physical activity is good for a healthier work life balance and is a good stress reliever.

Reduced Cost – Car clubs take responsibility for the maintenance and repair of the vehicle. User pay per hour of use and for fuel usage.

The need to reduce car dependency

For each car-owner that switches to car clubs, 1.2 tonnes of carbon emissions are saved per annum.

Road Transport contributes to 88% of the UK's carbon monoxide emissions

In recent years increased car dependency has resulted in dramatic increases in congestion. Between 2002 and 2006 traffic volumes have risen by 48%. Reducing car dependency through increased car sharing and reduced car ownership can help to slow or even reverse this trend.

In the UK, former car owners increase their use of non-car transport modes by 40% after joining a car club. Two-thirds of those who owned a car before joining saw their mileage fall, by an average of around 25%

72% of London City Car Club users have given up one or more of their privately owned vehicles or deferred the purchase of a vehicle.

Creating liveable communities

Car sharing reduces pressure on road space freeing up road space for other users. Carplus summed up the benefits in these terms:

“Noisy busy roads littered with cars divide communities and foster social exclusion. Car clubs allow neighbourhoods to function with fewer parking spaces, which enable initiatives such as City Living (high density urban lifestyle with convenient access to facilities and mobility), Car Free Housing and Home Zones (a street designed primarily to meet the interests of pedestrians and cyclists rather than motorists, opening up the street for social use) to succeed. Giving space back to people from the car improves social cohesion and makes for vibrant communities.”

The proposal

Council requests that the cabinet draw up plans for a trial Car Club scheme. The Car Club will operate on the following basis:

1. The club will be operated by a private contractor selected by the Council.
2. A business case will be developed that aims for the trial car club scheme to be revenue neutral at worst.
3. The trial area should be chosen on the basis of it being an area that would benefit most from reduced car usage. We would suggest one or more of the following areas:
 - High Barnet – The area to the west of Barnet High Street
 - Cricklewood Broadway - where a joint strategy with the London Borough of Brent (who already operate several car clubs) could be implemented.
 - Hendon - Brent Street
4. That after a fixed initial term that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the trial and if judged a success look at ways of extending the scheme.