

September 2013

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Accessible Transport

Appendix A:

Evidence from Accessible Transport Scrutiny Review

Members of the review group

Councillor Sue Anderson (chair)

Councillor Marilyn Ashton

Councillor Jerry Miles

Councillor John Nickolay

Councillor Stephen Wright

Tony Wood – Harrow Transport User's Association

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1. NOTES ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT REVIEW - MEETING OFFICERS

THURSDAY 14TH MARCH

Present:

Councillor Anderson (chairman)	Peter Barron, Principal planning officer
Councillor Ashton	David Eaglesham, Service manager Traffic and Highway network management
Councillor John Nickolay	Ann Fine, Transport policy officer
Councillor Miles	Phil Greenwood, Head of major development projects
Councillor Wright	Paul Newman, Team leader Traffic management
Tony Wood, chairman of the Harrow Public Transport Users' Association	Fern Silverio, Divisional director collections & benefits
	Simone van Elk, Scrutiny officer

1. Welcome

Councillor Anderson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The review looks at accessibility of transport and to discover potential leverage for negotiations with Transport for London (TfL), as well as looking at small changes that could improve accessibility. The scope of the review was to look at all disabilities: visible as well as invisible, residents in wheelchairs as well residents with prams or large luggage. An important question is what the priorities of disabled residents are for change and how that is taken into account in decision-making.

Tony Wood commented that the Harrow Public Transport Users' Association has been lobbying Transport for London (TfL) for 20 years to make Harrow on the Hill station accessible. There was a scheme to install 5 lifts in Harrow on the Hill station with total costs of £35m. At that time five stations were considered top priority by TfL, of which Harrow on the Hill was one. When five years ago the funding for the scheme fell through, not only was the scheme cancelled, but TfL also removed Harrow on the Hill station entirely from its priority list. It is difficult to comprehend why the station is no longer a priority. The first priority should be to get Harrow on the Hill station back in the queue for adaptation.

2. Discussion

The council's transport policies:

Ann Fine explained that the council's transport policies are derived from the Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS), which lists three key priorities for improving accessibility:

- 1) Improving the transport opportunities for all Londoners
- 2) Enhance the quality of life for all Londoners
- 3) Improve the safety and security for all Londoners

Harrow Council has produced the Harrow Transport Local Implementation Plan (LIP) in response to the MTS, which explains how the council will contribute to implementing the MTS and which follows Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) regulations and the Equality Act. The strategy is widely consulted on with residents including disability groups.

The approach in the LIP was not to see disabled residents as a separate group but incorporate their requirements into every aspect of the strategy. The LIP contains more than a 100 individual policies. A separate document, the Transport and Disabilities Procedures, contains 16 separate policies from the LIP that refer directly to accessibility. The first five of these policies can't be done by the council on its own – they require other organisations and funding.

The council actively lobbies TfL for changes to stations in Harrow. The funding from Harrow Council itself can only have a small impact. TfL provides funding through the LIP to implement the policies in the LIP. Currently the council gets slightly less than £2.5m a year for various transport initiatives. There is a formula that decides the amount of funding based on population size weighted for deprivation criteria. The borough doesn't have many traffic accidents and so scores low on deprivation. 23% of the funding from the LIP is specifically assigned to improve accessibility. [*That would amount to £575k – see addendum for clarification*] Everyone interprets accessibility differently so there are very many things this money can be spent on. The money from the LIP is distributed amongst improvements to kerbs, public seating, bus stops, travel training

etc. Concessionary travel is not included in the LIP nor funded through the LIP. The LIP covers the period 2011 to 2013/14 but some policies plan 20 years ahead.

The mayor has dropped the requirement for councils to provide a new LIP as producing it is a long and costly process. Instead, the mayor has asked for an update of the current LIP which would include new policies. Councillor Wright asked how the LIP was approved. Ann Fine answered that this was approved by Cabinet and adopted by full Council.

Implementation of transport policies

Paul Newman explained how the council implements its transport policies:

a) *Bus stops*. TfL determines which buses are used, but Harrow Council is responsible for providing the bus stops. TfL provides funding to convert bus stops to make them fully accessible. There are more than 430 bus stops in the borough, of which 87% will be DDA compliant at the end of the financial year. The council's target is to have 100% compliant by 2015, which would be ahead of TfL's target.

b) *Station accessibility*. It is deeply disappointing that Harrow on the Hill is not accessible. Disabled people can access many stations on the Chiltern line, but can't get off at Harrow, which is also disappointing for the town centre. The council continues to lobby TfL to improve accessibility at Harrow on the Hill station.

c) *Public Realm*. The work in Public Realm contains two elements: maintaining the current infrastructure and providing new infrastructure. The department keeps a score of the number of defects in a road and the council's ability to modify the defects. This is used as a basis to determine which works have priority. When the council is aware of where disabled residents live, this is taken into account and works in that area become a priority.

The aim of the council is to reduce accidents when designing infrastructure. Harrow is either the best or joined best borough in London when it comes to number of accidents. The council uses refuges, tactile crossings, different coloured markings, etc. to making crossing as easy as possible. The census revealed that the borough has an increasing number of elderly residents. Providing benches or informal seating makes it easier for people to get about. Many people are concerned that seating attracts unwanted visitors, which is why the location of seating is carefully selected and CCTV is used where possible. In addition, there is a government initiative to declutter streets by getting rid of unnecessary signs to improve access to streets and facilities.

d) *Traffic signals*. These are managed and operated by TfL. The Council makes a contribution to the costs of traffic lights in the borough. Signals include tactical devices to assist people with disabilities. A new countdown device is being tested on several locations in London which shows how many seconds are left till the light changes. A countdown traffic light is on TfL's programme to be installed on the crossing of Sheepcote Lane and Station Road.

e) *Disabled parking bays*. TfL provides a budget for disabled parking bays. H-bars on roads are non-enforceable but people do adhere to them which helps clear traffic. The budget for the bays is £35,000 this year compared to £65,000 last year, which also has to cover staff time. The provision and enforcement of parking is funded by Harrow Council and the council also provides parking concessions to residents. The council also provides a booklet about parking in Harrow for residents and works with outside organisations to spread information to residents like the national organisation for parking and the guide for disabled parking, and provides information to companies for their phone apps and sat navs.

e) *Street works*. Lots of the work in this area consists of replacing pavements. In those cases the council tries to provide adequate space and temporary ramps, liaises with companies about prospective street works and does letter drops so people are aware the works will be happening.

f) *Walking and cycling*. Harrow council is trying to get funding to improve facilities.

g) *Partner organisations*. Harrow Association of Disabled people (HAD) are always asked for feedback about any designs. Other groups are also consulted: the Harrow Public Transport Users' Association, CAB, Age concern and TARSAP advisors. In addition, we talk to housing officers, do walks about estates and speak to occupational therapists.

David Eaglesham added that of the £2.5m annual LIP funding £350,000 is for projects specifically aimed at improving accessibility. [*£350k would amount to 14% - se addendum for clarification*] However, other transport projects also take account of accessibility issues because all aspects of a project are considered and are always subject to consultation, so all the money the council spends is deployed towards accessibility in some way. Accessibility is also affected by works on the highway and Harrow council has joined the

London Permit scheme, which puts conditions on utility companies the council works with to ensure disabled people have sufficient access during works.

Tony Wood added that the Department for Transport has a fund to increase the accessibility of train stations but only stations outside London can apply - stations in London have to go through TfL to get funding. DfT should change that condition. In addition, there is currently a vacancy for an advisor for TARSAP. Tony suggested that HAD sends a representative. They're not currently on the list to be able to nominate someone. Ann Fine added that in the past HAD haven't been able to physically attend the TARSAP meetings, but that may be different now.

Councillor Nickolay asked since Network rail has made Harrow and Wealdstone accessible, whether they'd be able to make Harrow on the Hill accessible. He added that there are also smaller things that can be changed like inconsiderate parking by the public. Tony Wood commented that Harrow on the Hill station is owned by TfL, but used by LUL and Chiltern so the funding situation is quite complicated, where as Harrow and Wealdstone station owned by Network rail and used by LUL, LO, TOC's (Southern and London Midland).

Main areas of planning

Peter Barron presented main areas of planning that relate to accessibility:

a) *General direction of planning.* In the Core Strategy Harrow town centre, along with Wealdstone and Station Road, is an intensification area. In terms of public transport it is the most accessible area in the borough and is therefore the local focus for growth. The Area Action Plan (AAP) further develops the plans and proposals in the Core Strategy. There is a strong commitment in the Core Strategy to lobby the Mayor for improved access. This is linked with similar policies in the LIP. The policies are directed towards housing growth and retaining the designation of Harrow town centre as a Metropolitan centre by the GLA. There are only 12 metropolitan town centres in London at the moment, so this should help when TfL reviews its priorities for access improvements to stations.

b) *Lifetime neighbourhoods.* Homes can be designated as lifetime homes by fulfilling certain design criteria which make those homes adaptable for future accessibility requirements. However, if the wider urban environment isn't also accessible then the accessible home on its own is worthless. When creating lifetime neighbourhoods, consideration is given to shops, walking environment and safe spaces. Policy 2 of the Development Management Policies DPD commits Harrow Council to providing lifetime neighbourhoods. A second policy in the DPD relates to access requirements and will form the basis for supplementary planning documents on design and accessibility. New developments have to include disabled parking in their designs, even when the buildings wouldn't include other parking facilities. That is included in our own local targets for lifetime homes. Most large residential schemes include parking in their design.

c) *Individual developments* When a planning application is submitted we assess whether it generates a financial contribution to the infrastructure made necessary by development, so whether it would for instance require new bus stops or other transport infrastructure. And the council then requires a contribution. The contributions flowing from planning obligations have been limited: £0.6m in 2010-11, £0.2m in 2011-12 and £3.4m in 2012-13.

d) *Funding improvements through planning* The emerging Community Infrastructure Levy sets a non-negotiable charge per square metre as a basis for different types of development. The Council has prepared a draft charging schedule which will undergo 2 stages of consultation and will hopefully be adopted mid 2013. The CIL is estimated to generate £10m over the next 10 years. Harrow's total infrastructure bill is £137m, of which £60m is designated for transport.

The results of the 2011 Census are now being received from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This shows that 14.6% of the borough's population describe themselves as having a limiting long term illness.

The effectiveness of the Council's planning policies is monitored annually through Harrow's Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR).

Residents are consulted for all major planning documents. In addition HAD, Disabled Go, Mind in Harrow and Age UK are specifically consulted on all Development Planning Documents.

Harrow on the Hill station

Councillor Nickolay commented that imaginative planning was needed for Harrow on the Hill station. The bus station at Harrow on the Hill could potentially be relocated. South Kensington station has managed to jump

the queue by making a deal with the council, TfL and a developer. That's perhaps one way to make progress.

Peter Barron commented that the Dandara site is still an allocated site for redevelopment to deliver other objectives for the area. The bus station is already accessible but additional capacity is required. The core strategy sets out requirements that planned developments have to be realistic and deliverable. It was felt not realistic to commit to a new bus station at the time. Small changes are probably more realistic at the moment and there is a possibility of additional bus standing space on College Road or Kymberley Road as part of funded public realm improvements.

Councillor Ashton commented that she was the portfolio holder in 2006 when the planning application was made. Dandara had bought the site and made a planning application. Dandara owns 51 College Road, but they don't own all the access to the site. This makes it complicated. When the college no longer had the funding to relocate, the scheme fell through. Regardless of what would take its place, if the college can't move, the Dandara site can't be developed. Bits of funding from planning would help, because unless the council matches funds, TfL won't help with Harrow on the Hill Station.

Peter Barron commented that if the Dandara site would be developed, the CIL could make funding available. But even then, the council could only top up funding from elsewhere, not match other funding exactly. Phil Greenwood added that there could be other ways forward. The detailed costs for adapting the station matter a lot. Rather than doing everything at once, maybe the area could improve over time. For example, get lifts from the street onto the concourse so there is a throughway through the station and add lifts from the concourse to the platforms later. Lobbying TfL becomes easier with such plans.

Ann Fine added that TfL is currently studying the idea of lifts in the station, which would be funded through the sites TfL owns in the borough. There is a policy in the LIP that if TfL sells land it owns in the borough, parts of the proceeds have to be reinvested in the borough. TfL will still decide how to use the funds. The fact that TfL is commissioning this study is a breakthrough. Tony added that in the rail liaison meeting a senior planner from TfL has alluded that a partnership approach could be viable. Ann Fine commented that when TfL talks about partnership funding, that doesn't automatically mean 50% from TfL and 50% from the council. The fund matching would show interest from the borough, so it would negotiations to show a small amount from the borough.

Councillor Wright asked about the basis for the transport documents. How much is based on the priorities of disabled groups? Ann Fine answered that there are certain difficulties because when these people don't have access, they move to more accessible locations which makes contact more difficult. Making certain stations accessible could lead to increased demand. It is difficult for residents with disabilities to provide the council with information. The council has a statutory obligation for our planning documents, so in response to these difficulties, the transport planning team has set up a separate group to consult residents with disabilities. This group now meets twice a year, because they can't meet more often. It is also difficult for these residents to be representative of their groups – they can express what they personally expect, but find it difficult to speak on behalf of a group.

David Eaglesham added that changes to Harrow on the Hill station is unlikely to feature in TfL's next business plan. However, if Harrow brings forward a significant contribution it could be discussed. However, it is unclear what the size of the contribution should look like.

Peter Barron commented that Harrow on the Hill station is a constant issue in feedback in consultations with disabled residents. However, if a huge proportion of the £10m CIL funding would be spent on Harrow on the Hill station other improvements would get less funding or wouldn't be done at all. Tony Wood asked whether a site development can include a CIL and section 106 levy at the same time. Peter Barron answered that the CIL would replace Planning Obligations as the means for securing general contributions towards infrastructure, but that site specific technical requirements may still necessitate Planning Obligations for individual proposals.

Stanmore Station

Councillor Ashton added that we should also consider Stanmore station and the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital. Stanmore station is at the end of the Jubilee line and is an important station for commuters. It is misleading to say that Stanmore station is accessible. The ramp includes a step and the car park is difficult to access in a wheelchair. Until TfL admits that Stanmore is not in any way step free, we won't get any funding or help. We should look at getting money out of the development of the hospital. The hospital can't function properly until that station is accessible so it's in the hospital's interest to encourage TfL to match fund adjustments to Stanmore station.

Peter Barron added that the council is involved in the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital's planning application. It is a big project and requires significant funding. Money from the hospital development could be used for Stanmore station but that would take funding for the new hospital or there would need to be more enabling residential development on the Green Belt site. The Stanmore station site has a car park which TfL are interested in redeveloping, which could fund work at the station. It was also pointed out that the Core Strategy contains a commitment to seek the use by TfL of receipts from sale/redevelopment of its land in the borough to fund public transport improvements in the borough.

Tony Wood: that car park is in high demand, so selling it for development would be a bad idea but double decking it might be a good option. The car park in Rayner's Lane is unusual in that a quarter of it is owned by the council. Harrow could also open up to new bus services. David Eaglesham commented that the current focus is to improve the bus services around the hospital, not the stations.

Concessionary travel

Fern Silverio explained about the council's concessionary travel policies. Currently about 60,000 residents use concessionary travel: 42,000 are recipients of freedom passes, 13,000 recipients of blue badges and 5,200 are taxi card scheme users. There are 230,000 residents in the borough and combined with people that work in the borough, there is a great % of people that use concessionary travel. Freedom passes and blue badges are national policies.

Three years ago the concessionary travel process was reviewed and new processes implemented. With regards Blue Badges an external contractor was appointed to now assess all applications: the rejection rate for renewal applications currently stands at 41% and 27% for new cases. The amount of blue badges in circulation has a knock-on effect on the amount of disabled parking bays. In the coming months the overall number of badges will continue to reduce and possibly go down to approximately 9,000 blue badges. This will mean that disabled bays will be freed up if they are no longer being used by illegitimate Blue Badge holders. Another knock on effect might be that general parking spaces may be increased if it transpires that some disabled parking bays can be removed which in turn would increase parking revenue which could offset the increased costs of concessionary travel generally. The costs of concessionary travel are £9.5m per annum.

Harrow also operates a discretionary taxi card scheme for residents with mobility problems. This allows subsidised taxi transport for scheme members who must pass a mobility assessment to qualify. It is funded by both a Harrow contribution (approximately £250k) and a grant from TfL. TfL contributes £9.5m to the London scheme, of which around £300k is allocated to Harrow. which is around £2m less this year than they used to contribute. The scheme used to subsidise around 60,000 taxi trips annually but for 2013/14 Harrow is reducing its contribution to the scheme by £200k. The reductions in funding by both Harrow and TfL means residents are currently being consulted on options to ensure the scheme stays within the reduced overall budget. This may well have an impact on accessibility to transport which could be mitigated by bus routes.

The above reduction in service is sensitive and our extensive consultation will ensure we engage service users on the reasons why the changes to the scheme are necessary. From analysis carried out we know that around 1500 to 1700 residents currently use the card, of which 415 people use 45% of all trips. We are trying to understand who this key group are as from an EQIA point of view, it is important to assess need and to try and put in proposals that actually meet need.

The costs of concessionary travel have increased for the council, as over the past 5 years TfL has taken subsidy away as well as increased the travel fares - by 5.6% for 2013/14 for example which is much more than inflation. The taxi card scheme will need to become self funded from TfL contributions only. As more residents become elderly, more demand will be placed on the scheme. The PCT provides free transport to get patients to and from hospital, but the service can mean long journeys for residents as the driver goes around pick up points before going to the destination. This translates into 2 plus hour trips for an ill resident to get to hospital so residents tend not to use the facility and use the taxi card scheme instead. This results in cost shunt from PCT to Harrow and in residents using their taxi card trip allowance to make hospital trips rather than for their leisure which is what the scheme was intended for; to increase quality of life.

Current strategy is to reduce cost on discretionary concessionary travel. With the financial pressures the council is faced with and the decreasing budget, there is no other alternative. The question is which options we continue to provide. This is also relevant in light of welfare reforms, so we have to consider what our strategic objectives are.

Councillor Nickolay asked whether there is a compensating factor at work. If there is a drop in blue badges, then there should be a drop in its use. Fern Silverio answered that people with blue badges from outside the borough will still visit the borough. The drop is only in the badges provided by Harrow, but this would likely have an impact on car parking. Councillor Nickolay asked whether freedom passes pay for themselves. Fern answered that they don't. They are paid for from the Parking ring fenced account but as this is not enough to cover expenditure, it is topped up from the general fund. Costs are based on usage. It costs about £200 a year per person. David Eaglesham added that the surplus made from parking rates is used to fund freedom passes, which is £4m after the costs for providing the parking and enforcement are subtracted. Ann Fine commented that providing freedom passes is compulsory for pensioners and those qualifying through specific disabilities. The council also used to provide a large number of discretionary freedom passes. However pressures to find savings have meant that this has now been reduced considerably.

Councillor Miles asked about the company doing the assessments for the freedom passes. Fern answered that the new cases are assessed by one company, but as they didn't have sufficient capacity, existing cases were reviewed by the previous contractor. Councillor Miles asked whether the council always abides by the companies' recommendations. Fern answered that their decision is final. The assessment process has been standardised and no longer relies on GP endorsements. Tony Wood asked who paid for the Mayor's 60+ travel card. Fern Silverio answered that the mayor pays those in full.

3) Next steps

Councillor Anderson explained that the information from this meeting would be synthesized in the review group's final report, where they hope to provide constructive proposals. The review group will also travel through the borough alongside disabled people. Ann Fine recommended that access to outdoor spaces be included in those journeys, which is a valuable but often neglected area of access for disabled people. David Eaglesham commented that the focus should be on the whole journey. Tony Wood recommended travelling with partially sighted in addition to people with mobility issues. Councillor Anderson commented that the review aims to engage with residents with mental health problems, autism, and an entire spectrum of disabilities.

David Eaglesham added that there are currently significant reorganisations going on within our departments so it may be uncertain who is able to participate in the review further down the line. Ann Fine commented that the reorganisation has already damaged the relationship with TfL. No one has been assigned to be the contact for TfL. David Eaglesham commented that the funding coming from TfL is based on the current arrangements.

Peter Barron added that an important aspect of funding is that the preparation for CIL is a technical exercise. The governance arrangements for CIL, however, haven't been agreed on yet. Lots of departments will want to draw on funding from CIL. Phil Greenwood commented that the current arrangements consider how to collect, raise and administer CIL, but the decision of how to spend the revenue is an entirely different question.

Addendum notes meeting officers– clarification funding from LIP to improve accessibility – David Eaglesham

The term accessibility is confusing and needs to be clearly defined. In respect of the TfL programme this relates to all users. However, in terms of the scope of the scrutiny review accessibility this means just people with disabilities.

About 7% of the TfL transport programme for 13/14 is dedicated specifically to people with disabilities. That is £126,000 of a total £1,743,000. The remaining schemes in the programme can also include elements of improving disability access although the focus is not exclusively on that. The quantity of funding dedicated to this element is difficult to determine but could be an additional 5% of the remaining £1,617,000, so about an additional £87,000

To summarise:

Total TfL budget for 13/14	£1,743,000
Specific disability access projects	£126,000
Proportion of projects that support disability access	£87,000
Spend on disability access	£213,000

Total percentage of budget

12%

2. NOTES JOURNEY THROUGH BOROUGH WITH NICKY BAKER ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT REVIEW Wednesday 24th April

Present

Councillor Anderson, Councillor Wright

Nicky Baker (volunteer)

Simone van Elk (scrutiny officer)

1. Journey itself

Met Nicky Baker at the HAD office, Headstone Drive	
Walked' to Harrow and Wealdstone station	12 minutes
Arrived at Harrow and Wealdstone station	3 minutes to reach the platform employee arrived several minutes before train to assist with the ramp
Fast train to Watford Junction	
At Watford Junction station	3 minutes to go outside, 3 minutes to get back to the platform employee arrived 3 minutes before train to assist with the ramp
Fast train back to Harrow and Wealdstone station	
'Walked' to bus stop in Wealdstone high street (stop F)	10 minutes from station to bus stop
Bus stop got moved, so 'walked' to George gangway	7 minutes from bus stop to bus stop
Waited for bus	
Bus 140 to town centre	2 minutes to get on the bus
Bus stop across from Debenhams	2 minutes to exit the bus
'Walked' via St Georges to end of Junction Road	20 minutes
'Walked' to Harrow bus station	10 minutes
Waited for bus	
Bus 340 to bus stop in Wealdstone High Street (stop G)	
'Walked' to HAD office	5 minutes

2. Practical difficulties

Trains

- Nicky explained that when travelling from Harrow and Wealdstone station in a wheelchair, recently the staff have only helped people in wheelchairs onto the fast trains. The reason is unclear; Nicky has asked staff but they also don't seem to know why. Nicky commented that it would be great if the review could find out the reason why. Officially a freedom pass does not cover journeys on a fast trains but only on slow

trains. As staff at Harrow & Wealdstone station aren't allowed to put wheel chair users on slow trains, this could create difficulties when tickets are checked. Luckily, so far it hasn't been a problem.

- Nicky doesn't have enough range in her arms to press the buttons to call for the lift at Harrow & Wealdstone station or Watford Junction station. When entering Harrow and Wealdstone station from Masons Avenue, a person in a wheel chair has to go onto platform 6 to get the lift up to the concourse. The buttons for the lift on platform 6 are remarkably close to a steel pillar, while on the concourse above the platforms, there is a metal rail on the floor just in front of the buttons of the lift to platform 5. Both make it more difficult to position a wheel chair close to the buttons. Nicky also can't reach the buttons in the lift itself.
- Trains don't stop at the same place on the platform every time, so the person in the wheelchair and the employee with the ramp could easily be at the wrong place on the platform. This means that sometimes one needs to move along the platform quite quickly to be able to catch the train.
- According to TfL's step-free tube guide map, Carpenters Park Overground station is accessible via a manual boarding ramp. Nicky commented that because staff won't put people in wheelchairs on slow trains from Harrow & Wealdstone, they actually can't get to Carpenters Park.
- Nicky commented that when travelling back from central London late at night in a wheelchair, she is restricted in her choice of trains by the time the staff finishes work. Without the staff to provide the ramp, Nicky wouldn't be able to alight from the train and the staff at Harrow and Wealdstone only work till 11.30pm. Additionally, Nicky usually catches an earlier train to be able to remedy any unusual circumstances.
- Nicky comments that a problem specific to deaf people travelling by train is that they're likely to miss announcements about delays and cancellations.

Buses

- The bus stop at Harrow and Wealdstone station isn't accessible with the ramp. Every time Nicky has used a bus there, the ramp has broken because of the severe gradient between the pavement and the ramp.
- Instead of the bus stop at Harrow and Wealdstone station, Nicky uses the stop in Wealdstone high street. On this occasion, the bus stop has been moved to George gangway. The temporary stop at George gangway is on a long slope and the bus stop is towards the top, which means it can be quite difficult for people in manual wheelchairs to access.
- When using a bus Wheelchair users have a special button to make the bus stop. This makes a special sound that indicates to the driver that the wheelchair user wants to exit the bus so they know to extend the ramp. According to Nicky, often the bus driver doesn't hear the sound and doesn't put the ramp out.

Streets, pavements, crossings

- Nicky comments that different crossings have different times allocated for pedestrians to cross, so whether there is enough time depends on the specific crossing. Since she uses an electric wheel chair, she can get across quicker than people in manual wheel chairs.
- Due to building of an apartment block, parts of the pavement on Headstone Lane and Junction road are fenced off. Unfortunately, the fencing has also been placed over a dropped kerb which means people using wheel chairs can't get off the kerb at that corner. The space left on the pavement at the corner is very narrow, which means turning is difficult. Nicky only discovered this problem as she was already on the pavement. There were no notifications any of us could see that exiting the kerb at that corner had become impossible in a wheelchair. Nicky also hadn't received any leaflets warning her of the changes.

Other difficulties

- Nicky mentioned that travel at peak times is very difficult due to lack of space. Because Nicky is seated relatively low, people don't see her in a crowded train or bus or tube. The result is that people tend to move towards her because they think there is space. According to Nicky this can feel like she's being overrun.
- Councillor Wright asked whether Nicky had considered working in Central London. Nicky answered that she would be worried about getting to work in rush hour, which is why she preferred working in Harrow and the surrounding area. Even in her current job, her hours are from 07.30 till 15.30 to avoid rush hour traffic.
- Nicky's parents own a van which they use to drive her round. When it breaks down, Nicky's alternative route to work is the 140 bus. To get to work on time, she *has to* get the 7.17am bus, because all later buses are too busy for her to fit on.

3. Staff

- An employee from London Overground at Harrow and Wealdstone station explained that they provide the ramp for access the train but are not allowed to help people onto the train by giving them a push, even

when the ramp is too steep for a person to use. That way they can't be held accountable for injuries. There isn't always a great run up to the ramp because of buildings on the platform so it can be hard for people to get on the train.

- Nicky mentioned that staff are generally more helpful when they know you.
- Communicating with the bus driver is difficult for Nicky because of the distance between the driver and the wheelchair space, the other passengers in between and the noise. Sometimes, while Nicky is already on the bus, the bus driver doesn't extend the ramp out properly when Nicky wants to alight. This means Nicky has to shout through noise and crowd on the bus to get the driver's attention. Especially when it's busy, this can be difficult. Asking the bus driver for assistance with any issue is difficult enough while on the bus, let alone while still standing on the pavement waiting for the ramp to extend.
- Officially, buggies should always be folded on a bus. When people bring buggies on the bus, in the very best case, the driver will tell when entering that they have to fold their buggy. There is very little space to manoeuvre in the bus itself, which makes it difficult for people to fold their buggy while the person in the wheelchair finds their space in the bus at the same time. Alternatively, when someone in a wheelchair wants to use the bus, the driver could delay the bus at the stop and not extend the ramp till the buggy has been folded. Finally, a bus driver could decide not to move the bus until the buggy has been folded down. Unfortunately, this does not always happen.

4. Lived experiences

- Nicky comments that she is not able to travel alone and that she has never travelled alone. She's almost thirty. There are too many little things that can go wrong; it's too risky for her.
- Because using public transport with a disability means you're less flexible, (sudden) changes can be distressing and can create massive difficulties. Nicky possesses a wealth of knowledge about accessible stations, roads, and modes of transport in Harrow and surrounding areas – all useful, if not necessary, for her to be able to use public transport. Having that knowledge makes it easier to adapt. But she still requires other people's assistance.
- Nicky tells a story of when she was travelling with her father. At the station they wanted to get off, they couldn't see the employee with the ramp, so her father left the train to try and find the employee. While he was off the train, the doors started closing and the train started to leave. Nicky couldn't have reached the open doors button to prevent the train from leaving. If a fellow passenger hadn't used the emergency stop, which meant the train stopped at the platform, she would have been stuck on that train by herself. There may not be another accessible station along the route and even if there is, employees at that station don't know a person with a wheelchair is on that train and needs assistance.
- If a train gets terminated, it might not stop at an accessible station. Nicky tells another story where she was on a train that got terminated. Luckily the train manager was near her so it was easy to talk to him about how Nicky would be able to leave at an accessible station. In this instance, the train manager sprinted down the train to warn the machinist to stop the train at the next accessible station, so Nicky could at least get off the train and out of the station and then home somehow.
- During one of Nicky's journeys from London Euston to Harrow & Wealdstone, the lift at the platform she got off at was not working. This meant she had to stay on the platform to catch the next train in the same direction, get off at Watford Junction and get on a train back to Harrow and Wealdstone. The train from Watford Junction stops at a different platform than the one from Euston which meant there was a working lift on that platform, which meant she could leave the station.
- During the journey, the councillors got some sense of the stress that can occur while travelling. Nicky mentioned that she knows quite a number of people who don't use public transport precisely because they feel scared and anxious. This provides a significant barrier to people being able to travel independently. This can be even scarier if you suddenly become disabled.

3. NOTES JOURNEY THROUGH BOROUGH WITH HASMUKH MEHTA ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT REVIEW Thursday 16th May

Present

Councillor Sue Anderson

Mr Hasmukh Metha (volunteer)

Simone van Elk (scrutiny officer)

1. Journey itself

Met Mr Mehta at Harrow on the Hill bus station
Bus 140 to West Harrow
Arrived at Lascelles Avenue (stop WX)

From the bus stop on Lascelles Avenue, we walked around West Harrow on our way to North Harrow station:

Crossed Lascelles Avenue turned into Ford Close walked down Ford Close and followed it's turn to the right walked through pedestrian area around flats through to Butler Road turned left onto Butler Road took a wrong turn left into Bowen Road towards Marshalls Close walked to the crossing between Bowen Road and Butler Road turned left into Butler Road turned right into Drury Road walked down to crossing with Vaughan Road turned left into Vaughan Road walked to crossing between Vaughan Road and Wilson Gardens crossed Wilson Gardens and walked down The Gardens to the entry of WestHarrow station.

From WestHarrow station:

Metropolitan line to Rayners Lane

Bus H10 to North Harrow station

Metropolitan line to Harrow on the Hill station

Walked from Harrow on the Hill station down the north side of College Road to the corner of Station Road

Walked back to Harrow on the Hill bus station along the sound side of College Road

2. Practical difficulties

Buses and bus stops

- Mr Mehta has Harrow on the Hill bus station for many years, so is very familiar with it. It is still difficult for him to find the right bus by himself as there are so many buses, it is very noisy inside and outside the station and there are many doors leading out of the station. As a result, he always asks someone for help to get to the right bus.
- The audio announcements on the buses tell Mr Mehta where his stop is. Before the audio announcements, he used to rely on counting the stops. When he uses the same bus regularly, he'll also recognise where the bus is by the movements it makes: when it swerves in to stops, when it makes sharp turns, where it waits for crossings, etc.
- Sometimes it is difficult to hear the announcements or the bus drivers due to noise. The volume of the announcements depends on the specific bus: the announcements on the 114 bus route are all right, the announcements on the 183 bus route are sometimes quite soft.
- Bus stops often have digital signs which show when the next buses are due. Unfortunately, this information is only visible and not audible. Mr Mehta prefers the tube to the bus, as with buses he can't check how long he'd have to wait. Why wouldn't bus stops have a button that provides that same information via loudspeakers?

Trains, tube and stations

- Mr Mehta finds Harrow and Wealdstone station a difficult station to navigate. Entering the station is ok, but moving up and down the concourse is a hassle. Harrow on the Hill station is easier to use as he knows his way round.
- Mr Mehta uses the hand rails along the stairs and along the entrance of WestHarrow station to enter the station and the platforms. He prefers using the rails next to the wall as the ones in the middle often gets interrupted. At WestHarrow station, the hand rails do not run all the way along the entrance up to the stairs to the platform. The little sections at stations where the hand rails are interrupted are more difficult to navigate.
- When trains are level with the platform, they are easily accessible for people in a wheelchair. But this does make it more difficult for Mr Mehta to alight from the train. It is more difficult to feel the opening between the train and platform with his white cane as there is no gap to indicate where the exit is. Usually there isn't much time at the station to alight from the train.
- Normally, once Mr Mehta has alighted from the train and has found either the wall or the strip of tactile paving on the platform, he follows people's voices to direct him towards the exit of the platform.
- Nowadays announcements on the tube are made slightly before the tube arrives at the next stop, which provides time to get to the door. Announcements used to be made (almost) at the time of arrival, which did not provide sufficient time.
- At the tube stations on our route (North Harrow, Rayners Lane, Harrow on the Hill), the tactile pavement leads up to the ticket barriers but Mr Mehta does require assistance to be able to swipe his card on the barriers.

Pavements, streets and roads

- Mr Mehta can be nervous to cross busy roads on his own, for example Lascelles Avenue, even if they have a respite in the middle. Due to traffic, he also chooses to cross Ford Close halfway down the road instead of at the corner Lascelles Avenue.
- The crossing of main roads is the most difficult for Mr Mehta. He has to rely on people to help him.
- Both Ford Close and Butler Road have very uneven pavement, and on Butler Road the stones have small ridges. Many people trip up here, including sighted people.
- It is difficult for Mr Mehta to walk in a straight line by himself, which is why the sides of a road can serve as important guides. When front gardens are turned into driveways and especially when they are placed opposite dropped kerbs, the pavement, front garden and sometimes road become level. This means there is hardly anything to distinguish between the different sections of the street with a white cane. Mr Mehta quite often walks into people's front gardens. The south side of Butler road between the crossings of Bowen Road and Drury Road is especially difficult in this regard.
- Pavements have poles with traffic signs and other notices placed on them. If Mr Mehta happens to miss the pole with his white cane, he can still bump his head on the notice board. It would be easier if the signs were placed on the wall instead of a pole on the pavement.
- As well as poles with traffic signs, A-boards also obstruct the pavement. On the north side of College road leading for Harrow on the Hill station to Station road, there are quite a number of A-boards in the way.
- Often hedges in front gardens are overgrown and hang over the road. Walking into these shrubs, especially if they're brambles, roses or nettles, can be painful. Councillor Anderson comments that if a hedge is placed in someone's garden, it is the home owner's or tenant's responsibility to trim the hedge. If they don't, there is a special number to call at the council. Council officers can then write to the occupants of the house that they should trim their hedge. If they don't, the council can trim the hedges itself but will then charge the occupant.
- The crossing between Vaughan road and The Gardens that crosses Wilson gardens is quite wide as well as level. This means that aside from the respite in the middle, there aren't bearings to help keep a straight line. Mr Mehta can often end up meters down the road by the time he has crossed. Bumps in the road and tactile paving could prevent this difficulty.
- The pavement of College Road is very wide which makes it difficult to navigate. Mr Mehta generally uses the north side of the road, despite the many A boards, as the south side has many junction cabinets, telephone boxes and public seating places near to the road.
- A new idea in the design of roads and pavements is 'shared space'. A shared space is a single, level surface that shared by all streets users. Wide level roads are very difficult to navigate for VIP (Visually Impaired People) as there are no bearings to help keep a straight line, which makes it difficult to get from A to B. In addition, they can't see traffic coming, so it is potentially more dangerous as well.
- Mr Mehta walks the wrong way about once every 6 months. He doesn't get panicked though, but just asks for help. Once he's lost his bearings, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find his way again without help. A difficulty he experiences is that he can't call a friend on the phone because he can't describe his surroundings. He just waits for someone to walk past so he can get help. This can sometimes take 15 to 20 minutes, as he lives in a neighbourhood where it can be quiet during the day. Fortunately, he doesn't get afraid or worried or panicked. This may be the case for other VIP though.

Other

- For Mr Mehta 80% of his navigation is based on hearing; the remaining 20% is based on his other senses. Obviously his memory plays a big part in his ability to navigate as he can recognise the distance between different familiar points on his route, for instances trees, crossings and gates.
- When Mr Mehta travels to unfamiliar places, he will get travel advice by phoning London Transport and will note down the advice with his Braille machine. He always asks people for assistance to find his way and often also asks the driver of for example the bus to alert him to his stop.
- Mostly people are very helpful as well as most staff. People will often offer Mr Mehta a seat on the bus or tube and offer to help him at crossings or warn him when he seems to have lost his way.
- Electric cars are very quiet. Where as with normal cars, a blind person can hear them coming and more easily avoid them, and can hear them coming down roads and thus identify where side roads are, with electric cars this isn't possible. There is a campaign to introduce a slight mechanical noise to electrical cars.
- One of the best things in recent years has been the introduction of audible announcements in public transport. It makes it easier for VIP to travel independently.
- One improvement that would make a great difference is the provision of talking GPS systems. That way, VIP wouldn't get lost so easily anymore.
- A minor difficulty for Mr Mehta is that every train has different seats at different places. Some seats fold while many don't, some face forward, some face the sides. He understands that the fold away seats provide space for wheelchair users. All buses have different layouts as well which make them more difficult to navigate. It depends on the line of the bus what the layout is like.

3. Lived experiences

- Mr Mehta is quite independent and he's not afraid to ask other people for help, which makes travelling easier for him. But many people he knows are afraid or nervous to travel alone.
- Mr Mehta is active in many organisations, works in the local college in Wembley, participates in campaigns of the national federation of the blind and often goes into central London. He is personally quite satisfied with public transport and his ability to get around.

4: ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT SEMINAR ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT REVIEW MONDAY 13th MAY

Present

<p>Councillor Sue Anderson (chair) Councillor Jerry Miles Councillor John Nickolay Councillor Stephen Wright Tony Wood, Harrow Public Transport User Association</p> <p>Felicity Page, Senior Professional Scrutiny Simone van Elk, Scrutiny Officer</p>	<p>Raymond Rawlison, Age UK Gwen Batham, Age UK Nicky Baker, HAD Tim Stockman, Harrow Mencap Yvonne Lee, Harrow Mencap John Clifton, Harrow Epilepsy Support Group Norman Bell, Middlesex Association for the Blind Steven Jones, Safety standards manager, Metroline bus company Jacqui Carter, Garage manager, Harrow Weald at Edgware, Metroline bus company Mark Mervyn, Bus Driver, Metroline bus company Raksha Parmar, Operations Support Manager, Metroline bus company Peter Barron, Principal planning officer, Harrow Council</p>
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Points raised

1) Experiences of Public Transport

A) Positive comments

- H18 bus service is superb.
- Bus lines serve as a lifeline for one participant
- All buses have disabled access.
- General public are helpful when they see a person using a white cane
- Metroline provides a good response to problems
- Accessibility of public transport is getting better

B) Negative comments

Stations

- Harrow on the Hill station is not step-free

Trains and underground

- One participant in a wheelchair does not use the train, underground or overground at all.
- It can be stressful waiting for assistance at a train station and not knowing whether the assistance will be there on time.
- Train stations require people in wheelchairs to book for assistance 24 hours in advance. Even at stations where there is always enough staff.

Buses and bus stops

- Especially when a bus has been delayed, the bus tends to leave the bus stop very quickly. This makes it difficult to find a seat in time.
- The bus stop outside Harrow and Wealdstone station on The Bridge isn't accessible with a ramp. One participant has gotten stuck on a bus as the ramp broke while entering the bus at this particular stop.
- Bus stop in Wealdstone high street has been moved, but the digital display doesn't reflect this.

- The notice that this bus stop had been moved was only visible if you faced away from the road.
- Notices about bus stops that have been moved, don't contain information about how long the disruption is scheduled to be.
- Buses don't always stop next to the kerb.
- To exit a bus while in a wheelchair, often one has to yell at the driver to get the ramp extended.
- Bus drivers often say kerbs aren't suitable for using the ramps.
- Often, kerbs at bus stops have bins and signs to don't leave enough space for the ramp to be used.
- The bus stop across from the Waitrose in Harrow and Wealdstone had its shelter removed. Comment was added that this was done to put in a replacement, but due to technical problems the replacement shelter had been delayed.

Pavements and street works

- The Rayners Lane estate has a lack of dropped kerbs. The dropped kerb near the H12 bus stop on one side of the road has even been removed.
- Road works in Wealdstone high street reduce accessibility.

Travel information

- The announcements on buses are often either visible or audible – not both.
- Signs and announcements can be improved to reflect accurate travel information in multiple ways.
- Announcement regarding cancelled trains are often only audible and don't show on the displays.
- Announcement concerning the gap at platforms need to be visible as well as audible.
- Displays should provide real time travel information.
- Making complaints can be difficult as there are many different companies and providers involved.
- When a complaint is made to TfL, there is no option to get feedback on the complaint.

Other

- Full access doesn't just relate to physical accessibility.
- Using public transport can be intimidating.
- Travelling during rush hour is very difficult.
- People with invisible disabilities don't get the same helpful response from the general public
- One participant felt restricted to venues that were local.

2) Improvements

Stations

- Harrow on the Hill should be made step free.
- Maybe the lift shafts of the post office could be used to make Harrow on the Hill step-free
- Rayners Lane should be made step free
- Maybe the private sector could fund cable cars or lifts at stations.
- Currently, funicular lifts are being installed at Greenford station, which is a cheap method of providing step free access. They do require wide staircases. They could be used at more stations.

Trains and underground

- There should be more moveable ramps on trains and at stations.

Buses and bus stops

- Some bus seats are placed so high that it is difficult to use for short people.
- Often, people place their buggies in the space for wheelchairs. The existing policy is that people are requested to remove their buggy, but they are not required to. The new policy would be that wheelchair users are priority, but this still doesn't require people to remove their buggy. The signs on buses are becoming stricter in asking people to remove their buggies.
- Make buses so that two wheelchair users could use the same bus at the same time. This could also solve some of the problems around wheelchair space in buses being used for buggies.
- Many bus stops are cluttered with fixed bins, lamp posts and signs. They should be audited by bus drivers.
- The current policy of the Metrolink bus company is that if a ramp on a bus fails during a journey, the bus should immediately be taken to a garage.

Pavements and street works

- Kerbside works in the borough are on a three year programme – this needs to be quicker.
- The pavement between the town centre and Morrisons underneath the main road is placed in a circle, is uneven and very textured. It is incredibly difficult to use in a wheelchair, with a rollator or with a buggy.

Travel information

- Comments and complaints to London buses can be improved as there are so many different bus companies. It is unclear where to complain.
- Travel information should be accurate, real time and always both visible and audible.
- In stations, there is often a lack of sign posts to the 'disabled access area', e.g. the elevators.

Other

- Bus companies require wheelchair users to back into the pad in the space for wheelchairs due to health and safety requirements. However, other adults can decide themselves whether they want to sit, stand, hold on to any handles or not. Wheelchair users aren't allowed to assess those risks themselves.
- When in a wheelchair in public transport while it's crowded, it can feel like you're being overrun.
- Dial-a-Ride offers a great service. However it is difficult to book as the phone lines are generally overwhelmed with calls between 9am and noon.
- The taxicard scheme is easy to use in Harrow. When farther out of the borough, taxis can be more difficult to arrange. You can get charged for long waits of the taxi.
- There should be a holistic approach to accessibility, for instance with bus stops are accessible and where dropped kerbs are placed.

5. RESPONSES CONSULTATION ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT REVIEW

Number of responses	14
Online responses	11
Paper	3

Question 1: Please tell us how often you use each to get around the borough

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Couple of times a year	Hardly ever/never
Pavements and footpaths	12	2			
Bus	1	6	2		3
Underground/Tube	1	5	2	1	2
Overground/ Train		6	2	1	5
Taxi		1	1	4	5
Private Car	6	3	2		2
Concessionary travel		1			8
Other	1		1		5

Comments question 1	
ATR1	I would like the opportunity to say that grass verges are badly looked after and that ma
ATR5	Freedom pass ongoing use
ATR7	Bicycle
ATR10	Bicycle

Question 2: Please tell us how accessible each of the following is when you travel

	No difficulties	Minor difficulties	Severe difficulties	Inaccessible
Buses	5	4	1	1
Bus stops	7	3	3	1
Overground/ Trains	6	3	4	1
Train stations	5	1	3	3
Underground/Tube	3	2	6	3
Tube stations	3	2	2	2
Pavements and footpaths	5	7	2	
Pedestrian crossings	8	4	2	
Other:	3			

Comments question 2	
ATR5	<p>Stanmore underground station has 48 steep steps to the platforms, and a very long and tortuous ramp from the car park only for wheelchair users. Lift(s) are desperately needed, particularly as the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, currently being rebuilt and enlarged, is close by, and additional buses planned to transport people to and from the Hospital.</p> <p>Harrow-on-the-Hill station (underground and overground) is another station that should have lifts installed. It is a very busy central hub for the town and totally inaccessible for the disabled.</p> <p>Crossing at Stanmore Hill/Church Rd/The Broadway is highly dangerous with numerous accidents having taken place, including one recent fatality. Pedestrian phase is desperately needed to be included in the traffic lights sequence.</p>
ATR6	Have to drive a distance to access public transport
ATR7	Harrow on the Hill station needs lifts from street to ticket hall and ticket hall to platforms
ATR8	I am filling this for my son who is adhd and autistic. The buses are crowded the 186 is dangerous there are always incidents on it so I pick him up from Harrow on the hill due to this. The station guards are extremely rude. He has a freedom pass which app is being stopped which the council will have to provide transport. Surely it is cheaper to provide a freedom pass than daily transport to school! When my sons pass sometimes doesn't work the staff are rude to him. When he started school they would not let me on the platform with him even though he is autistic. They made me pay for a platform pass. The pavements are wonky and all the roads have potholes in that damage your car felbridge Vernon drive are the worst!
ATR9	Stairs at Harrow on the Hill station are very difficult. Some buses are high of the ground + the kerb is high. Pavements are very uneven
ATR11	Harrow on the Hill station needs access, lifts or escalators for people with mobility problems, since there are a larger number than usual of stairs.
Paper 2	Difficult without appropriate help

Question 3: How often do any of the following create difficulties when travelling?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Couple of times a year	Hardly ever/never
Length of travel time via accessible route	1		1	2	8
Attitude of staff	1	1	1	1	8
Attitude of general public	1	1	1	2	7
Accuracy of travel information	1		1	3	7
Other:					6

Comments question 3	
ATR6	Have to wait a longtime when there is o one only bus available
ATR8	As above buses are dangerous people push and swear. My daughter was punched on the 186. Wealdstone is full of people with mental health problems who hang around drinking. The community police do nothing to make it safe only the churches patrol on a friday and saturday to try and make it safe!

Question 4: Please list your top three suggestions to improve your ability to get around the Borough:

ATR2 1	Lifts at Harrow on the Hill station
2	Lifts at Rayners Lane station
3	Lift at Kenton station
ATR3 1	Lifts at Harrow on the Hill station
2	Lifts at Rayners Lane station
3	Lift at Kenton station
ATR4 1	Improve provision for cyclists. Better road surface particularly at edge of lanes where cyclists ride.
ATR5 1	Stanmore underground lifts
2	Stanmore Hill/The Broadway pedestrian crossing improvement.
3	Harrow-on-the-Hill Station lifts
ATR6 1	Provide bud service where is none
2	divert existing bus routes not covered
ATR7 1	speed up buses by providing express services to places like Ealing, Heathrow etc
2	provide a direct bus service from Harrow Bus station to Central Middlesex Hospital
3	More bike lanes, where possible segregated from other road traffic
ATR8 1	Sort out the people drinking in the street in wealdstone and drug dealers
2	bus cameras on buses esp 186!
3	train all staff at harron the hill as the are rude and verbally abusive. When I was collecting for the adhd there they told me i was pocketing the money!
ATR9 1	Lift at HOTH station
ATR10 1	More frequent buses
ATR11 1	Improve Harrow on the Hill station access
Paper1 1	If eyesight was good I would be able to travel
Paper2 1	Ask the right questions for this form
2	Think about questions before you write them.
3	Use your imagination

Question 5: Please describe what impact your access to public transport has on your daily life.

ATR5	Makes for limited use of public transport.
ATR6	To have access to details of bus routes so as to shorten the time wasted. Free parking available for people attending council meeting (Council reps etc)
ATR7	Major importance - enables me to travel widely and avoids need to use the car.
ATR8	I have to use my car I would prefer to use public transport to save the environment.
ATR9	I am very lucky to live where there are so many different types of transport and so many services
ATR10	A great deal - for journeys to shops, and underground and overground trips to central London and more locally.
Paper 1	Unable to travel due to eyesight
Paper 2	Load of hassle

Question 6: How do your experiences of public transport impact on your ability to take longer journeys out of the Borough, for example to central London?

ATR4	I avoid busy times as I find standing for extended periods difficult.
ATR5	Journeys out of the Borough, particularly central London, are rare. Occassionaly I am driven by car.
ATR6	London Transport provides good connections it would be helpful if advice is available to workout your journey perticulaly when you are not a frequent traveller
ATR7	Good experience generally, as long as I can still climb the steps to Harrow on the Hill station.If this becomes impossible due to physical deterioration, using Harrow and Wealdstone will make life more difficult.
ATR8	There are no direct buses from belmont to Northwood hills why does it take 3 buses when lots of children go to school there!
ATR9	Engeneering works are a nuisance since some weekends they are on many different routes. If I have to take the Piccadily line the stairs at South Harrow station are also difficult
ATR10	As written above - it's very useful to have the good transport links to central London that we do.
ATR11	Have to go via Pinner instead of Harrow on the Hill.
Paper 1	Not applicable see question 5
Paper 2	No difference

Question 7: Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months?

No	7
Yes, affecting hearing	1
Yes, a learning disability	
Yes, affecting mobility	3
Yes, affecting vision	1
Yes, mental ill-health	
Other:	2
Total	14

Comments question 7	
ATR4	Standing for extended periods or on buses is difficult.
ATR8	my soin is autistis and has adhd
ATR10	Epilepsy

Question 8: Please provide us with your postcode (this information will only be used to identify whether problems are specific to a certain area. This information will not be used to identify you):

ATR1	HA7 2EF
ATR2	HA1
ATR3	HA1
ATR4	HA2 6DH
ATR5	HA7 4BJ
ATR6	HA3 9JE
ATR7	HA1 4QP
ATR8	
ATR9	HA1 2PR
ATR10	HA3 8LF
ATR11	HA5 4QL
Paper 1	HA3 7DJ
Paper 2	HA2 8LA
Paper 3	

6. NOTES ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT SCRUTINY REVIEW Tuesday 18th June

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Councillor Sue Anderson (chair)	Tim Bellenger, Director Policy and Investigation, London Travel Watch
Councillor Jerry Miles	Gerry Devine, Chair of Trustees, Harrow Community Transport
Councillor John Nickolay	Paul Giles, Performance Delivery Manager, London Sovereign
Councillor Stephen Wright	Colin Izzard, Service Delivery Manager, Metroline
Tony Wood, Harrow Public Transport Users' Association	Stuart McManus, management trainee, Metroline
	Mohammad Hashmi, LUL Deputy Station Manager Wembley Central
	Scott Lester, Regional Borough Programme Manager, TfL
Simone van Elk, Scrutiny Officer, Harrow Council	Hanif Islam, Senior Professional Transport Planning, Harrow Council
	Stephen Kelly, Divisional Director of Planning, Harrow Council

Apologies were received from Councillor Ashton.

2. Presentation on Transport issues identified by Harrow residents by Tim Bellenger, London TravelWatch

Presentation and comments

Tim Bellenger explained the role of London TravelWatch and its findings concerning transport in Harrow. London TravelWatch is a statutory body, funded by the London Assembly, responsible for representing passenger interests across the entire public transport network in London. The organisation also functions as an appeals body for complaints that haven't been resolved by individual transport operators.

In November, London TravelWatch organised a transport user engagement event in Harrow. During this event, two major issues were consistently raised. The first is the lack of step-free access at Harrow-on-the-Hill station. The second is the access to Northwick Park Hospital and the lack of step-free access at Northwick Park station. Though Chiltern Railways uses both stations, they aren't able to apply for all the funds to improve access to stations through the Department of Transport (DfT), but instead would have to get funding via the Mayor. Another issue identified is the access at Sudbury Hill Harrow station.

Improved access would likely generate additional patronage. London TravelWatch will publish research later this year that identifies that increasing accessibility is seen positively by passengers in general, not just passengers with mobility difficulties. It improves passengers' perceptions of getting value for money. Another publication of London TravelWatch to be published later this year focuses on the design of buses and trains. The general public values vehicles with a large space for wheelchair users and buggies. Increased accessibility has positive effects for the whole community, not just the members of the community that have disabilities, such as people with temporary disabilities and people who are less abled-bodied as well as people with small children, buggies and luggage.

It is positive to see that the Council strives to have 100% of its bus stops accessible by 2015. One of the additional benefits of accessible bus stops, is that it makes bus services more reliable as it becomes easier for drivers to use the stop.

London TravelWatch is working on a project with the Royal National Institute of the Blind and Transport for All regarding A-board advertisements on public highways. For both completely blind and partially sighted

people they can form a significant obstruction on the road as many A-boards are put at random places on the pavement. The policy regarding A-boards varies across London Boroughs. The principle put forward by London TravelWatch is 'on the way – not in the way'.

Tony Wood commented that the Northwick Park Public Transport Liaison Group has decided at a recent meeting that, though the accessibility of Northwick Park station is important, the group would focus its efforts on the accessibility of Harrow-on-the-Hill station and the bus links from there to the hospital.

Sudbury Hill Harrow station

Councillor Nickolay commented on Sudbury Hill Harrow station which is used by Chiltern Railways. As Chiltern Railways main turnover comes from customers travelling long distances, they are reluctant to invest in stations where their fast trains don't stop, or to increase the number of stations the fast trains do stop at. Tim Bellenger commented that Sudbury Hill Harrow station currently doesn't have machines to top up Oyster card, which means that when passengers top-up their Oyster cards elsewhere the proceeds don't go to Chiltern Railways. Councillor Nickolay commented that it might be necessary to put an extra rail track to ensure that Chiltern Railways can let the fast trains pass the slow trains. Tim Bellenger suggested there may be scope to reopen the Great Western route for trains to the North if the HS2 line is placed in a tunnel, which would free up space on the Chiltern line. Hanif Islam commented that there had been a meeting with Chiltern Railways concerning Sudbury Hill Harrow station. Step-free access would have to be provided at both ends of the station. Chiltern Railways has indicated it would help if the Council is willing to fund the ticket machines. A feasibility study together with Ealing Council and Brent Council into improvements to the public realm along a wider corridor from South Vale along through Roxeth has just been completed. The study includes plans to adapt footways, parking, bus stops and step-free access at stations. Two challenges have been identified. The first is funding, which the Councils are now looking into. The other difficulty is that a section of private land is required for the works.

Bus stops

Hanif Islam mentioned that TfL has opened a possibility for additional funding to improve the accessibility of bus stops. The Council could potentially get more funding if the deadline to have all bus stops accessible was moved forward. Hanif Islam answered that that was a possibility. Colin Izzard asked if this funding was part of the LIP funding. Scott Lester answered that the Mayor had set up an additional fund for accessible bus stops over and above the funding through the LIP. The costs for making all bus stops in Harrow accessible this year is estimated at £0.5m.

Harrow-on-the-Hill station

Councillor Wright suggested raising money for step-free access at Harrow-on-the-Hill station via commercial fundraising, comparable to the Emirates Airline or the Barclays Bicycle hire scheme. The Council would need to consider what they could offer big business in return, for example advertisements on the concourse. One might even consider changing the name of the station. Tony Wood commented that in the current economic climate, one might need to take a cautious view. Scott Lester added that there would still be an extra maintenance liability for TfL. The results of the Chancellor's Spending Review would soon be announced public which could have a significant impact on available budgets.

Stephen Kelly explained the Council's work to create a context in which the accessibility of Harrow-on-the-Hill station would be a bigger priority. Firstly, Harrow's reputation for investment and its pedestrian footfall isn't as high as say Camden. This has an influence on the priority that is given for accessible stations in the Borough. The sense has to be created that an area is improving. If the forecast pedestrian growth rate is above the national average, local stations move up in priority for funding. The Council is committed to helping growth happen. Harrow itself is changing as well with increased developments and intensification. The Core Strategy has identified the heart of Harrow as an intensification area. The Greater London Authority (GLA) and TfL have funds specifically targeted to the heart of Harrow. The Council has worked to ensure that additional capital investment is reinvested in Harrow itself. Work is also being done with the Outer London Fund to create a critical mass of people and investments. Major developments in the town centre, such as the Lowlands recreation centre, drive movements into the town centre. All this work done around planning has a slow burning impact but it does influence priorities.

The Council is also considering the scheme for adaptations to Harrow-on-the-Hill station itself: Is the current scheme the only possibility or could there be several linked schemes? What would be the cost of each individual part? Is the Council able to pay for one of the sections and are partners able to pay for the others? How does all this fit together? Installing lifts from the concourse to platforms would happen on Network Rail Land which brings specific costs due to safety considerations, technical requirements, and regulatory

approval. If TfL would fund the costs of going down to the platforms, other parties might be able to help passengers get up to the concourse. There are possibilities for funds via the Mayor's growth fund or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). If the scheme is divided into bite sized chunks, it aids the discussion with TfL about the priority of the business case.

Finally, Harrow-on-the-Hill station is scheduled to be used a pilot for commercialisation. The Council is in active negotiations with TfL about the reinvesting the funds from commercialisation back into the station. If the quality of the facilities in and around the station improves, this could lead to an increase in passengers and an increase of the station's profile.

Colin Izzard commented that he had seen early designs for the station and wondered how plans impacted on Harrow-on-the-Hill bus station. The stops are on an island surrounded by a busy road and the many buses using the station, so there is room for improvement. Hanif Islam commented that the bus station is a potential site for redevelopment. Options are constrained by a nearby office block and the Network Rail Land at the back. Stephen Kelly commented that compared to several years ago, the response from TfL is much more positive to improve access at Harrow-on-the-Hill. As the context around Harrow-on-the-Hill changes, TfL weighs the importance of this station differently. Scott Lester added that the business case for putting lifts in Harrow-on-the-Hill station hasn't changed substantially with a changed context as the cost-benefit ratio for TfL stays the same. TfL will still have to put in £2m for every £1m the Council puts in. TfL is always looking for extra capital from other partners. The station at Edmonton is a good example where DfT sponsored the project for £800k, the borough used its entire LIP funding for a year and TfL also funded part of the works.

Tony Wood suggested the Council could use a similar financial structure as was done for works in Pett's Hill, where the borough effectively loaned funds from TfL and paid them back via their LIP funding for three years. Stephen Kelly answered that the Council can indeed look at different financial constructions. The situation has changed from looking at TfL to fund the project to the Council looking at what it might contribute itself. If the Council can fund part of the works as a separate individual project, it could look at potentially investing capital spend, CIL money and 106 funds.

Tony Wood mentioned that the costs of the original scheme were £35m, which included 5 lifts. Two lifts would create access to the concourse, while the other lifts would provide access to the different platforms. Apparently, the costs of the scheme haven't increased in price over the years. Councillor Wright suggested raising a ramp to have a bridge across the platforms which would create access from the car park. This would involve removing the booking hall area in favour of the use of Oyster cards. Tony Wood commented that one of the recurrent comments from people with disabilities is that they do not want to be treated differently. In addition, TfL was likely to only want one line of ticket barriers to control as opposed to multiple ones.

Tony Wood commented that step-free access at Harrow-on-the-Hill station should become the top priority of the Council for the next few years for allocating funding. If the Council would put all its efforts into one project it might create a slightly greater chance for change.

A-boards

Tim Bellenger suggested the Council look at its enforcement policy for the placement of A-boards. The Royal Borough of Kingston had implemented a strict policy where A-boards can't be placed on the public highway. Other councils are more pragmatic in their enforcement and offer businesses guidance on where to put the A-boards.

3. Discussion topics

- **Pavements and footpaths**

Councillor Anderson commented that the journey with Mr Mehta had highlighted the difficulties Visually Impaired People (VIP) face when walking across pavements. Colin Izzard commented that the report of the two journeys were generally enlightening. He had noticed uneven pavements with 2 or 3 inch gaps at many points between Harrow and Wealdstone station and the civic centre, which could be improved.

Colin Izzard commented that even accessible bus stops can be challenging to use if there are obstructions on the pavements, for example in Northolt Road. Northolt Road also has many driveways, which makes things more difficult. For a bus stop to be accessible the height of the kerb is essential. The LIP funding can provide to adjust the height of the kerb, but if the rest of the pavement is sinking, this still creates difficulties for the accessibility of a particular bus stop. Metrolink would highlight bus stops that needed remedial work to

the Council. Hanif Islam commented that when creating new bus stops, all aspects of accessibility are taken into account. For existing bus stops this is more difficult as the surroundings can create problems. Sometimes carriageways are near, there can be utility mains in the ground or private land can surround the stop. The Council is conscious to refuse home owners the ability to have a driveway if it creates conflicts with bus stops. The Council can hardly ever move a specific stop, as its location is determined by people needing to use the bus there.

Hanif Islam also commented on the use of A-board advertisements in the Council. If A-boards are placed on private land, it becomes difficult for the Council to influence where they're placed. Some A-boards are placed on public footpaths. Enforcement by the Council is never enough to solve this. Businesses also need to understand the needs of their customers, which include people with mobility difficulties or visual impairments.

Colin Izzard commented on the concept of 'shared space', another issues raised during the journey with Mr Mehta. There can be a lack of clarity in 'shared spaces' about where the expected pavement stops and the roads starts. Scott Lester commented that there is a detailed examination of an area spaces before a 'shared space' is created. St. Johns road near Clapham Junction has been a shared space for the past 20 years, where street furniture demarcates the area between the road and the pavement.

Tony Wood added that many bus stops are unnecessarily cluttered by bins. The bins were once installed so people could dispose of their paper tickets. As paper tickets are no longer used, the bins are either unnecessary or could be moved.

Parking

Gerry Devine commented on trip hazards on pavements. A lot of NHS resources are spent on dealing with the damages. Often these uneven pavements are created by heavy vehicles. It would be useful to implement a system of penalties via CCTV cameras. It could save the Council money as it would enable them to recuperate the costs of repairing roads. Hanif Islam commented that the Council does enforce against illegal parking by sending a Penalty Charge Notices (PCN), if it can identify the owners. This usually requires the license plate to be visible on camera. If there are no cameras, it is a cheaper alternative to place bollards along the pavements to prevent damage, such as for example in Wealdstone High Street. The Council does a routine cycle of inspections of the roads in the Borough which is the basis for a programme of repairs. If the Council is sued for damages, it is generally covered for insurance claims as long as the road has been inspected and repaired according to schedule. Fortunately, cases for damages don't arise very often.

One area of concern is Kenton Road, where there is no dedicated loading space. Businesses have complained to the Council that their only options for delivery of goods are to either park on the pavement or park at a bus stop. There will be a meeting between the businesses and the Council to see if a dedicated loading bay can be introduced in Kenton Road.

Colin commented that one frustration amongst bus drivers is the parking by security vans. It can be an endless chase to track down the owners and issue penalties. Public awareness about appropriate parking is therefore very important. Councillor Wright suggested encouraging residents to take photos of illegally parked vehicles and sending them to the Council. With the wide use of smart phones, it should become easier for the Council to obtain pictures as evidence. Tony Wood suggested using the Council's large network of Neighbourhood Champions to report on bad parking. The responsible officer could send a note about how and where to lodge complaints around parking.

- **Buses**

Tony Wood commented that the journey with Nicky Baker had identified that bus drivers often don't hear the special bell that indicates that a wheelchair user wants to use the ramp at the next stop. Paul Giles commented that the special bell definitely makes a different sound from the other stop buttons and bus drivers do distinguish between the two. Unfortunately, bus drivers had commented to him that the general public uses that special bell so often that it tends to no longer serves its purpose. Tony Wood commented that if drivers are aware a person in a wheelchair is on their bus that should help them recognise the special bell is used genuinely.

Colin Izzard mentioned that TfL has launched a big awareness project about the use of space on buses. The approach is to push the moral imperative for people to make space on the bus for passengers in a wheelchair. There is unfortunately a lot resistance amongst other passengers and many buses are full at any point in time.

Colin Izzard also commented that one difficult issue is enabling communication between the bus driver and passenger in a wheelchair. The driver has his/her Public Address (PA) system, but some passengers with disabilities object to having the attention of the whole bus diverted to them. The question was how much interaction was possible and desirable.

Councillor Wright asked whether buses have CCTV cameras installed. Colin Izzard answered that TfL requires every bus to have CCTV and the average double decker bus has at least 12 cameras. Similarly, buses aren't allowed out of the garage if the ramp is broken and there is a very strict time frame within which the ramp must be fixed.

Councillor Miles asked whether the new buses also have a button outside down the side of the bus to be used by passengers in wheelchairs. Colin Izzard answered that this is one of the design specifications of the buses. If the button is placed far away from the door, wheelchair users have to move around rather quickly to use the ramp. The bus companies do their best to make the buses a friendly environment for passengers with disabilities. Scott Lester commented on the vehicle type. TfL specifies the capacity of the bus, the ramps and whether there should be multiple doors. The choice of the specific type of bus and bus manufacturer is down to the bus companies. Colin commented that it was useful to know that based on a bad experience with a particular stop, perceptions about the difficulties of a specific stop travel widely among passengers.

Scott Lester commented that TfL had worked with Haringey Council to improve accessibility at Muswell Hill bus stop by adding an extra bus stop in the area as Muswell Hill is very steep. The new fund from the Mayor to improve bus stops can be used to install completely new stops. Scott Lester also commented on the capacity of bus routes. During peak times, one would expect about 60 passengers on a bus. To provide that one extra bus in the schedule costs hundreds of thousands of pounds over a year, especially for a potentially small number of passengers in that extra bus. Similar or even greater costs would accrue to change the vehicle type of buses.

Gerry Devine commented that, despite the accessibility of buses and the large number of accessible bus stops, there are still people who can't get to their local bus stop or can't use buses at all. Some people are either too frail or lack confidence. Scott Lester commented that Dial-a-Ride service is available for some people and that hospitals provide special transport to and from hospital appointments. Tim Bellenger commented that as the eligibility criteria for concessionary travel don't overlap, councils, the NHS and Dial-a-Ride services would do better to coordinate the different services to provide a single door-to-door service which would be easier to use. Gerry Devine answered that this was being looked at in Kensington and Chelsea assisted by their local community transport.

Hanif Islam mentioned that Harrow Council does run a volunteer based travel mentor scheme that develops people's ability and confidence in using public transport TfL provided funds the training of the volunteers and their travel. It depends on the individual how much assistance they require. Colin suggested liaising between the bus company and the Council and possibly use this scheme for training purposes for the bus companies, as there are often awareness issues. Hanif Islam offered to exchange information about the Council's mentoring scheme.

Tony Wood commented that on the coordination of transport following reorganisations in the NHS. Northwick Park Hospital now has a larger catchment area of patients. One of the priorities of the Northwick Park Hospital Transport Liaison Committee is to divert the route of the 395 bus to the hospital as many patients from Ealing use that route. Gerry Devine added that ideally the 395 route would also the hospital ring so patients get access to the rear of the hospital.

Hanif Islam added that Harrow community transport had asked for a specific stand in the town centre for their passengers. Gerry Devine added that he volunteers as a driver for community transport and many passengers request to be dropped off at the bus station, but there is no place to stop near by. The only alternatives are to break the law or stop a long way off.

- **Trains, underground and stations**

Tony Wood commented that Nicky Baker had indicated that she can't reach the buttons for the lift at Harrow and Wealdstone station as she can't get close enough to the buttons. There are metal barriers on the ground just in front of the buttons. Muhammad Hashmi would look into this.

Colin Izzard commented that the extra work done to provide lifts at Harrow and Wealdstone station had made a big difference to accessibility in the area.

Councillor Anderson wondered why staff at Harrow and Wealdstone station couldn't help passengers in wheelchairs on the slow trains. Muhammad Hashmi answered that passengers in wheelchair couldn't be helped on the Bakerloo line service, as passengers could not exit the Bakerloo trains further down the line. Health and safety concerns for customers and staff due to factors such as height, platform widths and ramp design are a crucial factor. There had been an existing agreement with staff and unions of London Overground about assisting passengers with ramps when London Underground Limited (LUL) had taken over the management of the station. In addition, there were not enough ramps on platforms 1 and 2 to be able to help people on the slow trains, and the location where the trains stop combined with existing architecture on the platforms also creates difficulties. Colin Izzard commented that especially in the run up to the Olympics, one would expect more ramps to be available. Muhammad Hashmi commented that such problems exist across the network. Wembley Central was an example of a station where lifts are installed, but there are difficulties around provision of ramps. Colin Izzard commented that unfortunately for many stations there was no suitable replacement via bus services. Tony Wood offered to send an email to the general manager of the Bakerloo Line and Gerry Devine offered to do the same with the general manager of London Overground. Tony Wood added that the complete journey was important so it would be good to know what was happening across the entire network.

Colin Izzard commented that accessibility at Stanmore station was a feat a human endurance for any person in a wheelchair. Tony Wood commented that funicular lifts could possibly be used at Stanmore to improve accessibility. Councillor Nickolay commented that only platform 3 was level with the train. If a person in a wheelchair arrives on platform 1 or 2, the method to notify staff is to ring a bell on the wall of the platform.

Colin Izzard commented that it was a positive development that so many stations on the Bakerloo line had improved lighting and new paintwork. This makes stations feel safer, which can be a great concern for vulnerable people who can feel scared to use dark and dingy locations. Scott Lester commented that those improvements had been part of £3bn investment in the entire underground network. It increases passenger reliability.

Tony Wood asked about the provision of toilets in stations as this issue is consistently raised by people via the Harrow Public Transport User Association. Many stations don't have toilets, many toilets close at 8PM and some bathrooms are permanently shut. Muhammad Hashmi commented that many toilets are closed at certain times to prevent vandalism. Passengers can always ask the staff for access. Tony Wood suggested putting a notice on the door to that effect. Gerry Devine added that TfL provides a map of the stations with bathrooms which can be downloaded from the TfL website. Scott commented that there is an App one can put on an Iphone called SatLav, which provides the same information. Muhammad Hashmi added that sometimes toilets have to be closed because the cost of keeping the toilet useable is too great. One example is the toilets at Wembley Park: the fast trains passing through the station make the bathrooms shake to such an extent that they are falling apart.

- **Travel information**

Councillor Anderson commented that one issue that was raised by residents was that travel information at bus stops was often only visible but not audible. There is no sound version of the bus countdown system, which displays the estimated arrival time of buses on a digital screen. Colin Izzard suggested linking the countdown system, people's phones and talking software. Hanif Islam recommended looking at smart phone apps.

Hanif Islam also commented on the standard LCD screens at bus stops. The screen itself is a standard model but the data feed can be customised to the specific location of a stop. Hanif Islam asked whether the announcements on the bus about the arrival at stops would be audible outside the bus at the bus stop itself. Colin Izzard answered that the announcements on buses are coordinated so that the route number and final destination of the bus is announced at each stop, but that there is a lot of variance in the volume between different buses. There also needs to be an account of how comfortable it is for passengers in the bus if the announcements are meant to be audible outside the bus. Gerry Devine commented that work is being done at the main entrance to the hospital at Northwick Park to have a countdown screen of the local buses displayed so passengers don't have to wait outside.

- **Council policy**

Colin Izzard commented that it was to good to see in the report an outline of the Council's policies and where they are derived from. He also complimented the Council on its proactive stance regarding transport and accessibility and hoped it would maintain this approach. Hanif Islam commented that the LIP contained key bullet points and the Council had separate policies in place for each of the key items, which he offered to send round to anyone interested.

- **Coordination between Council and partner organisations (incl. funding)**

Colin Izzard commented that he valued that the Council continued to host the transport liaison meetings as he's aware it takes up officers' time and that some councils have actively disengaged from transport providers. Officer engagement with operators is needed to produce good transport policy. Councillor Nickolay complimented the good work done by Tony Wood as the chairman of Harrow Public Transport User's Association had certainly contributed to this as well as the good work done by officers. Hanif Islam commented on the good relationship between the Council and TfL.

4. Any other business and next steps

Gerry Devine invited everyone to attend a lunch organised by Harrow Community Transport on Tuesday 16th July regarding Accessible Transport. The lunch was organised as part of a consultation on the accessibility of Public Transport.

Councillor Anderson explained what the next steps for the review are. Notes of the meeting would be included in the evidence of the review. In the next two months the review group would complete their report, which would focus on recommendations to Harrow Council Cabinet. The report would be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in September and Harrow Council Cabinet meeting in October.

7. NOTES VISIT TO STANMORE STATION TUESDAY 4TH JUNE 2013

Present: Councillor John Nickolay and Councillor Stephen Wright

Members parked in the service road off London Road to the east of Stanmore Station to examine the so-called "step-free" access to and from the station.

Members walked down the slip road into the car park, finding it uneven and really rather too steep for anyone in a wheelchair wanting to enter or leave. The presence of a mini road hump at the exit from the car parking area also presented a hazard. Mounting the well inclined series of slopes from the car park level to the booking hall seemed to present no problem to the members, although people in manual wheelchairs have indicated the slope is too long and steep. From the booking hall with a special gate onto and from the platforms, it all appeared satisfactory.

Members walked onto the platforms where we could see for ourselves the varying levels for getting to and from the train and the platforms. Platform 3 had been constructed so that it was level with the floors of the trains for its entire length, but platforms 1 & 2 were up to four inches (10 centimetres) above the floor levels of the trains. Members asked a member of staff what would happen to someone in a wheelchair who did not arrive on platform 3. The member of staff explained that it would be necessary for someone to press a button and ask for a member of staff to provide a ramp. Since the button was on the wall of the platform a wheelchair user either needed someone in attendance or a helpful fellow passenger to press the button for them. Members felt this situation should be reviewed.

Having climbed the 40 or so steps providing direct access from the booking hall to the street level, members estimated that anyone wanting to reach the bus stops by way of the "step-free" route would be using a route of about a quarter of a mile (400m), assuming they had the stamina to manage the bumpy and rather steep slope from the car park to London Road.

Just as a matter of interest members asked a bus driver if one could get to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital by bus. The bus driver informed members there was an occasional shuttle bus (which, according to the timetable, seemed to be at least no more frequent than every 45 minutes) but made no reference to the 615 which, despite a more circuitous route, did seem to be more frequent.

Members concluded that the "step-free" access at Stanmore Station was in reality only satisfactory for anyone going to and from a vehicle in the car park. To claim it enables people to get to and from the bus stops on either side of London Road is a gross exaggeration that only pays lip service to what is stated on the Underground maps.

Members did wonder if the Greenford Station funicular lift might serve a purpose at Stanmore.

8. ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT REVIEW

RESPONSES TO POINTS SEMINAR TfL CONSULTATION DELIVERY SURFACE PLANNING

Points raised including responses

1) Experiences of Public Transport

A) Positive comments

- H18 bus service is superb. **We'll let the operator know.**
- Bus lines serve as a lifeline for one participant
- All buses have disabled access.
- General public are helpful when they see a person using a white cane
- Metroline provides a good response to problems. **We'll let them know.**
- Accessibility of public transport is getting better. **Good for them to acknowledge this.**

B) Negative comments

Stations

- Harrow on the Hill station is not step-free

Trains and underground

- One participant in a wheelchair does not use the train, underground or overground at all.
- It can be stressful waiting for assistance at a train station and not knowing whether the assistance will be there on time.
- Train stations require people in wheelchairs to book for assistance 24 hours in advance. Even at stations where there is always enough staff.

Buses and bus stops

- Especially when a bus has been delayed, the bus tends to leave the bus stop very quickly. This makes it difficult to find a seat in time. **Drivers should give everyone time to hold on or get to a seat before moving off. Older and disabled bus users who monitor the service independently and under cover consistently report they are given time to hold on/get to a seat 90% of the time. We will continue to work with bus operators on the other 10% of drivers who don't.**
- The bus stop outside Harrow and Wealdstone station on Masons Avenue isn't accessible with a ramp. One participant has gotten stuck on a bus as the ramp broke while entering the bus at this particular stop. **We will examine this.**
- Bus stop in Wealdstone high street has been moved, but the digital display doesn't reflect this. **Again we will examine this.**
- The notice that this bus stop had been moved was only visible if you faced away from the road. **Thank you for letting us know. We will make sure that we take note of this in any similar situation in the future.**
- Notices about bus stops that have been moved, don't contain information about how long the disruption is scheduled to be. **I agree that the information needs to be more**

explicit where this is possible. Sometimes exact timescales are not always known and in those circumstances it is better to say nothing than to give a date which in the event is inaccurate.

- Buses don't always stop next to the kerb. Sometimes it genuinely isn't possible as the driver needs space to manoeuvre the bus in to the kerb and if something is blocking the path then it can be difficult. Again, our monitoring shows that drivers do pull up to the kerb around 95% of the time and we are continuously working with the bus companies to improve this. It remains a fundamental part of initial and ongoing training for bus drivers.
- To exit a bus while in a wheelchair, often one has to yell at the driver to get the ramp extended. There is dedicated 'blue' bell push in the wheelchair area which lets the driver know you need to exit the bus. It makes a distinctive sound and operates a light on the dashboard so the driver knows a wheelchair user needs to get off. You shouldn't have to yell, but we know sometimes situations aren't ideal. We will continue to incorporate this into driver training and information.
- Bus drivers often say kerbs aren't suitable for using the ramps. It would be useful to understand how often. Generally this shouldn't be the case and whilst we know some stops make it difficult for ramps to deploy successfully, drivers should try and if necessary they can move the bus to a different piece of the kerb. They have been trained to do this. Again, our monitoring shows that the vast majority of wheelchair users (98%) successfully board their first bus which suggests these incidents are rare.
- Often, kerbs at bus stops have bins and signs that don't leave enough space for the ramp to be used. 71% of London's 19,000 bus stops are what we call fully accessible, that is the kerb is at the right height, the approach is clear and there are no obstructions at the stop. This figure is set to rise to 95% by 2016. In Harrow, the figure currently is 84% of bus stops, so clutter should gradually reduce over the next couple of years.
- The bus stop across from the Waitrose in Harrow and Wealdstone had its shelter removed. Comment was added that this was done to put in a replacement, but due to technical problems the replacement shelter had been delayed. **We will come back to you on this.**

Pavements and street works

- The Rayners Lane estate has a lack of dropped kerbs. The dropped kerb near the H12 bus stop on one side of the road has even been removed.
- Road works in Wealdstone high street reduce accessibility.

Travel information

- The announcements on buses are often either visible or audible – not both. **Our survey's show that on 97% of all buses the signs & announcements worked properly.**
- Signs and announcements can be improved to reflect accurate travel information in multiple ways. **We are working on a range of improvements to pre-journey and real-time information, including a revamped website, on street information and training bus drivers to make good quality, timely public address announcements.**
- Announcement regarding cancelled trains are often only audible and don't show on the displays.
- Announcement concerning the gap at platforms need to be visible as well as audible.
- Displays should provide real time travel information.
- Making complaints can be difficult as there are many different companies and providers involved.
- When a complaint is made to TfL, there is no option to get feedback on the complaint.

Other

- Full access doesn't just relate to physical accessibility. We fully understand this and are working with a broad range of user groups representing people with hidden impairments so we can better understand and meet their needs.
- Using public transport can be intimidating. We understand this and we offer a Travel mentoring service for people who need help in being more confident using the public transport network. Full details here: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/26330.aspx>
- Travelling during rush hour is very difficult. We understand this and we know this is a barrier to travel for many older/disabled transport users. Regrettably, crowding is an issue for us all and London's population is set to grow. What we can do to ease crowding as much as possible is to run a reliable service and both the Tube and bus networks are at their most reliable.
- People with invisible disabilities don't get the same helpful response from the general public. See above. We understand this but TfL cannot reasonably educate the public at large. What we can and are doing is to train our staff to understand the issues and behave in a polite and professional way.
- One participant felt restricted to venues that were local.

2) Improvements

Stations

- Harrow on the Hill should be made step free.
- Maybe the lift shafts of the post office could be used to make Harrow on the Hill step-free
- Rayners Lane should be made step free
- Maybe the private sector could fund cable cars or lifts at stations.
- Currently, funicular lifts are being installed at Greenford station, which is a cheap method of providing step free access. They do require wide staircases. They could be used at more stations.

Trains and underground

- There should be more moveable ramps on trains and at stations.

Buses and bus stops

- Some bus seats are placed so high that it is difficult to use for short people. Can you confirm if this is at shelters or on buses please? **If on buses are there any particular seats and / or types of buses where this is a problem?**
- Often, people place their buggies in the space for wheelchairs. The existing policy is that people are requested to remove their buggy, but they are not required to. The new policy would be that wheelchair users are priority, but this still doesn't require people to remove their buggy. **Bus drivers and operators cannot insist people with buggies or other passengers move out of the space for wheelchair users. This has recently been 'tested' in the courts who determined the space is a 'designated' one not a 'dedicated' one. That said TfL has undertaken extensive research to help formulate a recent public campaign with posters on stops, buses and shelters asking "buggy users to please make space for wheelchair users". Any message more forceful than this runs the risk of alienating those people who willingly give the space who would be persuaded by the campaign. We believe the tone of the campaign is right and we will continue to train staff to ask those in the space to move for wheelchair users and use the correct boarding procedure to create priority access.**

- Make buses so that two wheelchair users could use the same bus at the same time. This could also solve some of the problems around wheelchair space in buses being used for buggies. **This would require the removal of seats, which will seriously impact other older/disabled bus users, especially those who would find it difficult to climb stairs or even a step. It is not a realistic solution unfortunately. Remember London's buses are often very frequent and in independent surveys, 98% of disabled passengers successfully board the first bus.**
- Many bus stops are cluttered with fixed bins, lamp posts and signs. They should be audited by bus drivers. **It's not practical for bus drivers to do this but stops are audited and "clutter" is removed wherever possible.**
- If a ramp on a bus fails during a journey, the bus should immediately be taken to a garage. **Our current procedure is that it should be repaired or replaced as soon as practical, very often at the end of that trip or the next one. We believe this is a reasonable timescale which impacts the fewest passengers. Bus operators are not paid for trips where they operate with a faulty ramp, so they have every incentive to sort the problem out as quickly as possible.**

Pavements and street works

- Kerbside works in the borough are on a three year programme – this needs to be quicker.
- The pavement between the town centre and Morrisons underneath the main road is placed in a circle, is uneven and very textured. It is incredibly difficult to use in a wheelchair, with a rollator or with a buggy.

Travel information

- Comments and complaints to London buses can be improved as there are so many different bus companies. It is unclear where to complain.
- Travel information should be accurate, real time and always both visible and audible.
- In stations, there is often a lack of sign posts to the 'disabled access area', e.g. the elevators.

Other

- Bus companies require wheelchair users to back into the pad in the space for wheelchairs due to health and safety requirements. However, other adults can decide themselves whether they want to sit, stand, hold on to any handles or not. Wheelchair users aren't allowed to assess those risks themselves. **This is a legal requirement which TfL cannot change.**
- When in a wheelchair in public transport while it's crowded, it can feel like you're being overrun. **We understand this. Please see note above on crowding generally.**
- Dial-a-Ride offers a great service. However it is difficult to book as the phone lines are generally overwhelmed with calls between 9am and noon.
- The Taxicard scheme is easy to use in Harrow. When farther out of the borough, taxis can be more difficult to arrange. You can get charged for long waits of the taxi.
- There should be a holistic approach to accessibility, for instance with bus stops are accessible and where dropped kerbs are placed. We do try and achieve this where we can/. **Please see the document "Your Accessible Transport Network" which attempts to approach accessibility and an integrated way.**
<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/transportaccessibility/1167.aspx>