

# Holding to account

Following on from '[Sutton's councillors: welcome to the class of 2022](#)' and '[What was delivered for cycling in Sutton between 2010 and 2022?](#)', it is time to consider the final piece in the jigsaw. This third article in the trilogy is about holding the council to account over its lapsed reporting on the borough's former Sustainable Transport Strategy, and the sister document the former Cycling Strategy.

## Overview

- It has become evident that updates on two of Sutton Council's key policy documents (Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015-2021 and Cycling Strategy 2015-2021) have not been forthcoming since 2019. Furthermore, some of the objectives and targets contained within the strategies have either not been delivered or have not been met. Worse still, no one appears to have noticed! As a result, there is some doubt as to the current administration's ability to live up to the words of the borough's latest Sustainable Transport Strategy 2020-2025.
- Some targets set out in the Sutton's now retired Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015-2021 were subsequently changed, and then not met, with no explanation or acknowledgement of the failings.
- Only two of the twenty-five objectives set out in the borough's now retired Cycling Strategy 2015-2021 were met (and only one of them, the delivery of 'Bikeability', was fully met). No explanation for this lack of success has been forthcoming.
- The borough is unlikely to have met the 'proportion of residents' trips made by walking cycling and public transport' target of 48 per cent by 2021 as set out in Sutton's third Local Implementation Plan (and referenced in the borough's Environment Strategy in line with the Mayor of London's aspirations).
- This review also considers the effectiveness of the Sutton Cycle Forum, and concludes that there is room for improvement. Several examples of how the Forum has fallen short of expectations over recent years are provided, many with the general theme of officers failing to follow through on their actions. A clear lack of communication between Sutton Council staff, council officers and members of the Local Committees is also highlighted.
- In order to highlight these issues, twelve questions were put to Councillor Barry Lewis, Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee towards the end of November 2022. This review presents the twelve questions, provides context behind the questions, and details the responses to the questions that were received in April 2023. The responses confirmed that:
  - The Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee supports the foreword to the current Sustainable Transport Strategy 2020-2025 as written by his predecessor.
  - A closing report, outlining the successful (and less successful) outcomes of the retired Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015-2021 and its sister document the Cycling Strategy, is being prepared.
  - The work of the Sutton Cycle Forum is likely to be broadened, and its remit expanded.

## Introduction

On 28 November 2022, I wrote to **Councillor Barry Lewis** (Wallington North | Liberal Democrat | Chair: Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee (E&T))<sup>1</sup>, copied to **Councillor Ruth Dombey** (Sutton North | Liberal Democrat | Leader of the Council); Sutton West and East Cheam ward councillors (including **Councillor Christopher Woolmer** (Vice-Chair of the E&T))<sup>2</sup>, and Get Sutton Cycling supporters. My correspondence included comments and questions pertaining to five areas of interest:

- Sutton's current Sustainable Transport Strategy 2020-2025 (adopted in November 2021)
- Sutton's now retired Sustainable Transport Strategy (March 2015 to November 2021)
- Sutton's now retired Cycling Strategy (November 2015 to November 2021)
- Sutton's current Environment Strategy 2019-2025, third LIP, Mayor's Transport Strategy
- The Sutton Cycle Forum

A written response to my email was not forthcoming (beyond an acknowledgement of receipt, and occasional emails of apology for delay in responding). However, in April 2023, Councillor Lewis invited me to attend a meeting to talk through the points I had raised in the email. The meeting, which took place on 13 April 2023, was also attended by Councillor Woolmer and Ian Price (Sustainable Transport & Commissioning (Sutton) Team Manager).

This review provides an overview of the twelve questions asked for each of the five areas of interest, and the rationale behind them. Most of the questions remain largely unanswered (as of 11 May 2023), but where a definable response has been given by Councillor Lewis it is included in the commentary.

Note that links to updates and progress reports relating to the Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015-2021 and the Cycling Strategy 2015-2021 are provided in the Annex to this article.

## 1: Sutton's current Sustainable Transport Strategy and Supplementary Development Plan 2020-2025 (adopted November 2021)

*Context: The Foreword to the current Sustainable Transport Strategy was written by a councillor who is no longer in post.*

The borough's current **Sustainable Transport Strategy 2020-2025**<sup>3</sup> (STS) was adopted in November 2021, prior to the appointment, in May 2022, of Councillor Barry Lewis as Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Transport (E&T) Committee. The Foreword to the strategy was written by the former Chair of the E&T Committee, Councillor Manuel Abellan, who stood down in January 2022. It would be useful, therefore, to know whether Councillor Lewis, as current Chair, stands by the Foreword, or whether he has an alternative take. If the latter, an updated version of the Foreword, that reflects the views and aspiration of the current administration would be appropriate.

Some extracts from the Foreword to the STS:

- "How Sutton plays its part in adapting to and reducing the effects of climate change will be key to the necessary shift to more sustainable lifestyles."

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<sup>1</sup> Councillor Barry Lewis was elected to Sutton Council in a by-election for Wallington North in March 2019. Barry has been a member of the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee (E&T) since June 2021. In March 2022, Barry briefly took on the role as Vice-Chair, prior to being appointed Chair in June 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Councillor Christopher Woolmer was first elected to Sutton Council in May 2022, and took on the role of Vice-Chair of the E&T Committee in June 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Sustainable Transport Strategy 2020-2025 Supplementary Planning Document (LBS, November 2021): [https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/sustainabletransportstrategy2020-2025\\_spd\\_lbofsutton\\_november2021.pdf](https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/sustainabletransportstrategy2020-2025_spd_lbofsutton_november2021.pdf)

- “[The strategy] builds on the 2018 Sutton Local Plan and 2019 Local Implementation Plan, and lays the groundwork for higher levels of walking, cycling and public transport use by those who live, work and visit the borough, reducing the need for private car use.”
- “[The strategy] pushes forward the borough’s Ambitious for Sutton programme, contributes to the Mayor of London’s Healthy Streets objectives and complements the Council’s Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Response Plan.”
- “We want to become London’s most sustainable borough, and the potential is there.”
- “We need to find a new way of doing things if we want to meet our ambitions for growth, improved public health and environmental sustainability in our neighbourhoods.”
- “It is a mark of the strength of feeling among residents, businesses and local groups that the consultation for this new Sustainable Transport Strategy attracted such a high response rate for a planning document.”

Question for Councillor Lewis:

**1.1 Do you, as Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee, support the Foreword of the Sustainable Transport Strategy 2020-2025 (STS) as written by your predecessor?**

Response from Councillor Lewis (April 2023):

- Yes, I do support the Foreword of the Sustainable Transport Strategy 2020-2025 (STS) as written by my predecessor.
- The focus now will be mainly on public transport, including a continued push for the tram extension to the borough and looking at how the bus network can be improved.
- Expect to see more roads with the 20mph speed limit.

Some thoughts on the response:

*It is good to know that Councillor Lewis supports the Foreword to the (new) STS.*

*Whilst welcoming the continued drive for improvements to public transport, it is important that walking and cycling feature strongly in the borough’s future plans. The STS notes that “Sutton also has the highest number of potentially cyclable trips per resident that are currently made by a motorised mode of travel”, and “more people in Sutton choose to use their car for trips less than 3km than anywhere else in London”. Given the commitment to lay the groundwork for higher levels of walking and cycling to reduce the need for private car use, it would seem essential and appropriate to enable cycling as a grown-up, sensible, utility defined way of traveling. Then, of course, there is the Government’s ambition for half of all short journeys in towns and cities to be walked and cycled by 2030.*

*What rarely gets articulated, perhaps because it is seen as too politically difficult, is that to further incentivise the use of public transport, and increase the proportion of journeys by walking and cycling, the use of the car needs to be disincentivised at the same time. Hidden away in the Government’s Decarbonisation Plan ‘Decarbonising transport: a better, greener, Britain’ (July 2021) is this: “Over the last twenty years, in real terms, the cost of motoring fell by 15 per cent. Over the same period the cost of rail fares went up by over 20 per cent and bus and coach fares by over 40 per cent. Gradually, we will change this”.*

*There appears to be a turn around on council thinking on 20mph. More widespread introduction of 20mph will ensure that streets are safer, and will help shift the emphasis away from residential*

*streets as conduits for traffic, and somewhat more towards being places to live and enjoy. However, 20mph is not the single miracle solution for increasing cycling rates/levels. People are put off by a lack of subjective (perceived) safety. Slower speeds are one aspect, but mixing with high volumes of traffic is another. Essentially, there is no pushing of the boundaries here.*

## 2: Sutton's now retired Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015-2021

Context (1): *Annual reporting on the STS was discontinued (and councillors appeared not to notice).*

The borough's retired **Sustainable Transport Strategy (STS) 2015-2021**<sup>4</sup> was council policy between its adoption in March 2015 and its retirement in November 2021. Progress reports and updates on the strategy were to be made annually, typically in June<sup>5</sup>. However, the last time the STS was discussed by the **Environment and Neighbourhood Committee (E&N)** was in **June 2018**<sup>6</sup> (when the third annual update was reported). A fourth annual update (and, as it transpires, the last) was only made available at the end of 2019, following repeated requests made by Get Sutton Cycling at various meetings of the Sutton Cycle Forum throughout that year.

Requests for annual updates and/or a closure report on the STS continued to be made at the Sutton Cycle Forum meetings up to and including March 2022, when it was advised that the idea of a closure report had been shelved.

It would appear that the former Sustainable Transport strategy has not, as far as can be ascertained, been discussed or mentioned at any E&N Committee, or E&ST Committee, meeting since June 2018, nearly five years ago. In which case, **not one of our fifty-four elected councillors (fifty-five since May 2022) has asked why there has not been an update since 2019, or questioned the poor performance on the trends in targets that were evident at the time of the publication of the fourth annual update**, as discussed below.

Context (2): *Progress on the short-term STS targets for walking and cycling was (is) falling short.*

The most recent '**Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy Targets**' document, made available in October 2019 (see Figures 1a and 1b below (also available as pdf [here](#)), and the Annex (4 October 2019) for the direct link), provides updated figures for the period 2015/16-2017/18. These figures indicate that the **short-term target (2021)** for increasing the proportion of journeys residents make by public transport to 18% (from around 16% in 2010 and 2011) had already been met (at 19.6%). However, the equivalent **data for the proportion of walking and cycling trips in the borough at 24.2% and 1.3% respectively, suggests that the targets (29.6% and 2.2%) are highly unlikely to be met** (by a considerable margin). More recent figures for the period 2017/18-2019/20, obtained from the 'Local Implementation Plan 3 Mayor's Transport Strategy outcomes borough data pack for December 2021' (see Annex), paints an even bleaker picture. Whilst **walking remains at 24.2%, cycling is down to just 0.8%**.

Context (3): *The council consulted on a replacement STS in early 2021, and subsequently adopted the new strategy in November 2021, without providing a final report on the 2015 STS.*

Given that it was clear from the first four annual reports of the STS that certain targets and objectives were not being met, it could be suggested that further updates were not provided in order to try and bury bad news. Furthermore, even if the promised annual updates were either too

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<sup>4</sup> Sustainable Transport Strategy (LBS, June 2015): [https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/suttonsustainabletransportstrategy\\_june2015.pdf](https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/suttonsustainabletransportstrategy_june2015.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> These updates were usually made through the [Environment and Neighbourhood Committee](#), latterly the [Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee](#). The functions of the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee were transposed to the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee from 23 November 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Agenda for Environment and Neighbourhood Committee on Thursday, 28th June, 2018, 7.30 pm: <https://modern.gov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=452&MId=5022&Ver=4>

difficult to produce during Covid-19, or it was felt not necessary to provide updates when the replacement Draft Sustainable Transport Strategy and Supplementary Planning Document was published for consultation between 14 January 2021 and 25 March 2021, a final closure report on outcomes and lessons to be learned would seem appropriate.

Appendix C

Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy Targets							
Target	Target Detail	Baseline	Last Year Figures	Updated Figures	Short Term Target (2021)	Long Term Target (2025)	
T1 Modal Share	T1.1 Increase cycling mode share	1% 2009/10-2011/12 average	2% 2013/14-2015/16 average (Source: Borough LIP performance indicators)	1.8% 2014/15-2016/17 (Source: TIL)	1.3% 2015/16-2017/18 (Source: TIL) 0.8% 2017/18 to 2019/20*	2.2%	4%
	T1.2 Increase walking mode share	28% 2009/10-2011/12 average	24% 2013/14-2015/16 average (Source: Borough LIP performance indicators)	25.9% 2014/15-2016/17 (Source: TIL)	24.2% 2015/16-2017/18 (Source: TIL) 24.2% 2017/18 to 2019/20*	29.6%	32%
	T1.3 Increase public transport mode share	16% 2009/10-2011/12 average	17% 2013/14-2015/16 average (Source: Borough LIP performance indicators)	18.4% 2014/15-2016/17 (Source: TIL)	19.6% 2015/16-2017/18 (Source: TIL) 20.0% 2017/18 to 2019/20*	18%	20%
T2 Road Traffic Casualties	T2.1 Reduce KSIs (Killed or Seriously Injured)	74 2010-2014 average casualties	42 2015 casualties (Source: LIP3 MTS outcomes borough data pack)	47 2016 casualties (Source: LIP3 MTS outcomes borough data pack)	61 2017 casualties (Source: LIP3 MTS outcomes borough data pack) 43 68 2019*	43	25
	T2.2 Reduce total casualties	457 2010-2012 average casualties	426 2013-2015 average casualties (Source: DfT Metadata)	406 2014-2016 average casualties (Source: DfT Metadata)	444 2015-2017 average casualties (Source: DfT Metadata)	400	370
T3 Bus Service Reliability	T3 Limit increase in excess wait time for high frequency buses (minutes)	0.9 2011/12 average	1.1 2015/16 (Source: Borough LIP performance indicators)	0.9 2016/17 (Source: Borough LIP performance indicators)	0.8 2017/18 (Source: TIL)	0.8	0.8
T4 CO2 Emissions	T4 Reduce CO2 concentrations from ground based transport in the borough	124 (kilo-tonnes) 2010	115 (kilo-tonnes) 2013 (Source: Borough LIP performance indicators)	115 (kilo-tonnes) 2013 (Source: Borough LIP performance indicators)	112 (kilo-tonnes) 2016 (Source: Borough LIP performance indicators)	99	80
T5 Air Quality	T5.1 Reduction in PM10 annual mean concentrations and in annual exceedances of daily mean across all monitoring sites	2010 Base Year: For details of baseline see the Council's LIP (3 monitoring stations).	2015: At all monitoring stations the targets in annual mean concentrations have been achieved.  At Worcester Park the annual exceedances of daily mean were 13 whereas the target is 7. At all other monitoring stations the targets in annual	2017: At Beddington Lane (north) the annual mean concentration was 31µg/m3 whereas the target is 27µg/m3. Also, at Beddington Lane (north) the annual exceedances of daily mean were 21 whereas the target is 14.	2018: The targets in both annual mean concentrations and annual exceedances of daily mean have been achieved in all monitoring stations. (Source: <a href="https://www.londonair.org.uk/">https://www.londonair.org.uk/</a> )	See Council's LIP for short term targets	10% reduction in annual mean concentrations and 50% reduction in annual exceedances across all monitoring sites (To be reviewed)

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\* LIP3 MTS outcomes borough data pack December 2021

Figure 1a: Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy Targets (May 2019) - page 1 of 2 (LBS, October 2019) - annotated by author [Full document as pdf [here](#)]

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			exceedances of daily mean have been achieved. More information is available on the <a href="#">London Borough of Sutton Air Quality Annual Status Report for 2016</a>	At all other monitoring stations the targets in both annual mean concentrations and annual exceedances of daily mean have been achieved. (Source: <a href="https://www.londonair.org.uk/">https://www.londonair.org.uk/</a> )			
	T5.2 Reduction in NO2 annual mean concentrations and in annual exceedances of daily mean across all monitoring sites	2010 Base Year: For details of baseline see the Council's LIP (4 monitoring stations).	2015: At Worcester Park the annual mean concentration was 52µg/m3 whereas the target is 51µg/m3. At all other monitoring stations met their targets in annual mean concentrations have been achieved.  At Worcester Park the annual exceedances of daily mean were 11 whereas the target is 6. At all other stations the targets in annual exceedances of daily mean have been achieved.	2017: At Worcester Park the annual mean concentration was 52µg/m3 whereas the target is 51µg/m3. Also, at Worcester Park the annual exceedances of daily mean were 11 whereas the target is 6.  At all other monitoring stations the targets in both annual mean concentrations and annual exceedances of daily mean have been achieved. (Source: <a href="https://www.londonair.org.uk/">https://www.londonair.org.uk/</a> )	2018: At Worcester Park the annual mean concentration was 52µg/m3 whereas the target is 51µg/m3. Also, at Worcester Park the annual exceedances of daily mean were 7 whereas the target is 6.  At all other monitoring stations the targets in both annual mean concentrations and annual exceedances of daily mean have been achieved. (Source: <a href="https://www.londonair.org.uk/">https://www.londonair.org.uk/</a> )		
T6 Children's Travel to School	T6 Increase the percentage of children travelling to school by sustainable transport	76% (2009)	80% (2015) (Source: One Planet Sutton 2015-16)	75% (2016) (Source: One Planet Sutton 2016-17)	77% (2017) (Source: One Planet Sutton 2017-18)	80%	85%
T7 Council Staff Travel	T7 Increase the percentage of council staff travelling to work by sustainable transport	42% (2011)	50% (2015) (Source: One Planet Sutton 2015-16)	46.5% (2016) (Source: One Planet Sutton 2016-17)	46.5% (2017) (Source: One Planet Sutton 2017-18)	52.5%	66%

Note: The baseline figures for CO2 and Council Staff Travel have been reviewed.

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Figure 1b: Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy Targets (May 2019) - page 2 of 2 (LBS, October 2019) - annotated by author [Full document as pdf [here](#)]

A full timeline pertaining to the 2015 STS annual updates is provided in an annex to this article.

Questions for Councillor Lewis:

**2.1 What happened to all the wonderful aspirations declared in Sutton's Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015-2021?**

**2.2 Why have the 2020 targets for increases in the share of walking and cycling trips detailed in the STS not been met (and why has this lack of success not been reported on)?**

**2.3 Do you agree that, without some sort of recognition of the existence of the former Sustainable Transport Strategy, confidence in a replacement or updated strategy may be undermined?** There is concern that the current STS (2020 - 2025) will go the same way as its predecessor - simply forgotten about when it is replaced by a new document with no questions asked. Therefore,.....

**2.4 Please can a final report on Sutton's Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015-2021 be published?**

Response from Councillor Lewis (April 2023):

It has been agreed that a final report on the retired Sustainable Transport Strategy will be published. It is acknowledged that we could do things better.

Some thoughts on the response:

*Good news on the report. However, no timeframe was given for its publication. Whether the final report will provide answers for the first two questions, beyond citing lack of delivery due to a lack of funding, coupled with changing travel patterns as a result of Covid, remains to be seen.*

*Meanwhile, an independent auditors' report of the combined Highways & Transport departments (Kingston and Sutton), entitled 'Shared Environment Service (SES) Review'<sup>7</sup> (November 2020), has been brought to my attention. In Chapter 3, which reports on 'Highways & Transport - How is the service performing?', it is noted that **"The service has reported limited ability to work in an agile way in response to the shorter timeframe of the more recent TfL schemes. This has been reiterated in Member and Senior Officer feedback. Stakeholder groups highlighted this as a more entrenched issue but exacerbated over the Summer. Analysis of previous reviews indicates reactive service delivery (rather than proactive) has been a consistently identified theme"**. Four months later, and in response to the publication of the independent review, members of the Scrutiny Committee meeting were presented with a report entitled 'Shared Services - Highways the Improvement Plan'<sup>8</sup>. This report notes that **"The service has struggled when delivering agile projects/schemes. The current structure has poorly defined roles and responsibilities and allowed silo working to develop. The service has also struggled with capacity and capability in major programme delivery"**. As a result, "EY recommendations have now been incorporated into the service improvement plan and turned into a set of key objectives", with a recommendation to reduce 'silo working'. So, yes, things could be done better (and hopefully, by now, the recommendations outlined in the review have been fully incorporated to ensure that better outcomes will be (or already are) evident).*

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<sup>7</sup> Shared Environment Service (SES) Review (Ernst and Young (EY), November 2020): [https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s73811/11a%20Appendix%20A%20-%20SES\\_Final%20Report\\_v2.0\\_27Nov20\\_Final%201.pdf](https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s73811/11a%20Appendix%20A%20-%20SES_Final%20Report_v2.0_27Nov20_Final%201.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Agenda for Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 17th March, 2021, 7.30 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ielistDocuments.aspx?CId=443&MId=5497&Ver=4> Agenda item: 'Shared Services - Highways the Improvement Plan', <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s74635/5%20Highway%20Service%20Improvement%20Plan.pdf>

### 3: Sutton's now retired Cycling Strategy 2015-2021

*Context (1): Annual reporting on the Cycling Strategy Action Plan was discontinued in June 2018 (and councillors appear not to have noticed).*

The borough's **Cycling Strategy 2015-2021**<sup>9</sup>, which was a sister document to the borough's Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015-2021, was all about “**delivering a step-change in cycling**”. The draft document for consultation, in the summer of 2015, even had “delivery” in its title.

The Cycling Strategy's Action Plan (Table 4.1) detailed a total of thirty-three specific items listed across six objectives<sup>10</sup>. The 'Monitoring and Review' section (section 4.5) stated that **the strategy was to be "monitored on a regular basis, with the support of internal and external stakeholders"**, and would **"be considered a 'live' document .... subject to regular review."**

Despite this commitment, and despite the fact that the strategy remained active council policy from adoption in November 2015 until retirement in November 2021, **only three annual updates were produced**. The first annual update was presented to members of the E&N Committee in June 2017 (along with the second annual report of STS), and the second annual update a year later in June 2018. The third - and, as it transpires, final - annual update of the Cycling Strategy Action Plan was only made available at the end of 2019, following repeated requests made by Get Sutton Cycling at various meetings of the Sutton Cycle Forum throughout that year.

As a result, the former Cycling Strategy has not, as far as can be ascertained, been discussed or mentioned at any E&N Committee, or E&ST Committee, meeting since June 2018. In which case, it can be assumed with confidence that not one of our fifty-four elected councillors (fifty-five since May 2022) has asked why there has not been an update since 2019, or questioned the lack of success in delivery of the strategy's stated objectives when the document was retired in November 2022.

*Context (2): Many of the Cycling Strategy's objectives and actions for delivery have not been achieved.*

A review of the May 2019 (most recent) update of the Cycling Strategy has been carried out (see Figures 2a to 2d below (also available as pdf [here](#)), and the link in the Annex (23 December 2019)). Each of the twenty-five specific items for delivery has been categorised under a 'traffic light system', where red is 'undelivered'; amber 'partially delivered'; green 'delivered'.

One conclusion from this review of the most recent Cycling Strategy Update is that, to date, only two items from the Action Plan, an Action Plan that was part of delivering a step-change in cycling, can be considered as successful. These are: (1) **'Bikeability cycle training'**; (2) **'working with external stakeholders'**. However, on the latter point, working with the Sutton Cycle Forum as 'external stakeholders' has not been a particularly successful delivery item. Furthermore, the Cycle Forum was in existence a long time before the publication of the 2015 Cycling Strategy, so the 'working with external stakeholders' objective was essentially already a given. As such, it was not (or should not have been) a difficult objective to deliver. Essentially, therefore **the only tangible delivery from the borough's Cycling Strategy, the only action that could be considered as being successful, was Bikeability cycle training**. Note that the effectiveness of the Sutton Cycle Forum is discussed later, in section 5 of this report.

<sup>9</sup> Cycling Strategy (LBS, November 2015): [https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/cyclingstrategy\\_november2015.pdf](https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/cyclingstrategy_november2015.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Note that eight of the thirty-three specific items listed had essentially already been delivered prior to the adoption of the strategy in 2015, so the focus is really on twenty-five items.

**Appendix B**

Action Plan Updated May 2019 **Borough Cycling Strategy: Updated**

Ref	Item	Action	Action Owner	Funding Source	UPDATE	
<b>Objective 1: Make Sutton a more attractive borough and create a high quality cycle route network</b>						
	O1.1	<b>Quietway : Worcester Park to Sutton Town Centre</b>	Work with TfL to plan and deliver Worcester Park to Sutton Town Centre Quietway route	TfL/LBS	TfL	Route alignment agreed between Worcester Park and Sutton Town Centre. Informal consultations with residents and stakeholder groups in Summer 2019
	O1.2	<b>Quietway : Sutton to Morden</b>	Work with TfL to plan and deliver Sutton to Morden Quietway route.	TfL/LBS	TfL	Informal consultation to be undertaken in June 19. Measures to be implemented by April 2021.
	O1.3	<b>Wallington North / South Cycle route</b>	Deliver a cycle route on quieter roads parallel to Woodcote Road	LBS	TfL LIP 2019/20	Due to the length of the proposed route the project has multiple phases. Phase 1 is currently in the informal consultation phase. LIP funding is available for further phases and a local member driven public workshop is being planned for June 2019 to ensure future phases meet objectives.
	O1.4	<b>Audit of existing network and infrastructure</b>	Audit network and infrastructure using LCDS good design outcomes to identify links and junctions at which provision for cycling could be improved.	LBS, with support from stakeholders	LBS	As with 4.4 below, staff turnover has impacted our progress on this action. Recent recruitment means we now have a borough cycling officer who will work with engineers, stakeholders and TfL to identify, agree and deliver such improvements. We will be working with Sutton Cycling interest groups to identify key locations for improvements, utilising where appropriate TfL's cycle infrastructure database. Suggested locations will be included in the appropriate LIP funding bids.
	O1.5	<b>Identify opportunities for quick-win enhancements and extensions to the cycle network (informed by audit)</b>	Quick-win enhancements to network, including junction improvements, protected space for cyclists, rationalisation of car parking and loading bays and more cycle parking.	LBS	LBS/TfL/ S106/CIL	We aim to identify schemes and implement enhancements if funding can be secured. As above, staff turnover has impacted our progress on this action. Recent recruitment means we now have a borough cycling officer who will work with engineers, stakeholders and TfL to identify, agree and seek funding for such improvements.
	O1.6	<b>Further Quietways</b>	Work with TfL to support implementation and delivery of initial Quietways within London Borough of Sutton, and identify additional routes to be considered for following phase of Quietways delivery.	LBS/TfL	TfL	No further Quietway schemes being progressed at this time
	O1.7	<b>Major scheme</b>	Beddington Lane. Introduce a shared use pedestrian / cycle facility on the footway along the length of Beddington Lane.	LBS/TfL	TfL/S106	Works currently underway with completion expected in Autumn 2019
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Figure 2a: Cycling Strategy - Action Plan updated May 2019 - page 1 of 4 (LBS, December 2019) - annotated by author [Full document as pdf [here](#)]

**Appendix B**

Action Plan Updated May 2019 **Borough Cycling Strategy: Updated**

<b>Objective 2: Make Sutton a safer borough for cycling</b>						
	O2.1	<b>20mph zones</b>	Continue to implement 20mph zones.	LBS	TfL LIP 19/20	20mph zone introduced in Church Hill Road area North Cheam in June 2018 20mph zone in Butter Hill introduced in August 2018 20mph zone introduced in Ridge Road area in Jan 2019 20mph zones being considered in Windsor Avenue area, Kingsmead Avenue area
	O2.2	<b>Neighbourhood improvements</b>	Deliver improvements to an area using the TfL Healthy Streets Approach to encourage active travel on foot, cycling or public transport	LBS	TfL LIP 2019/20 Liveable Neighbourhoods bid	Wanham Court Road area Wallington consulted on in 18/19 delivery in summer 2019 Windsor Avenue area North Cheam consulted on in 18/19, delivery in summer 2019 Liveable Neighbourhood bid centred on town centre planned Nov 19
	O2.3	<b>Contra-flow cycle lanes</b>	Identify additional locations where contra-flow cycle lanes are appropriate, or require improvements, and deliver more and improved contra-flow cycle lanes to enhance permeability in residential areas.	LBS	LBS/TfL	No stand alone schemes identified for 2019/20
	O2.4	<b>Filtered permeability</b>	Identify locations where filtered permeability is appropriate to create reduced or traffic free environments in residential areas.	LBS	LBS/TfL	Road closures and / or no entry plugs are part of the Quietways schemes, Liveable Neighbourhood bid and some of the area based schemes
<b>Objective 3: Encourage a shift from the car for shorter journeys</b>						
	O3.1	<b>Cycle parking</b>	Respond to requests or identify demand for more cycle stands across the borough Require secure cycle parking and provision for cyclists as part of new developments, including residential developments. Review minimum cycle parking quantities associated with new developments and consider case for adopting TfL's cycle parking standards and developing borough-specific cycle parking design guidance.	LBS	TfL/S106 CIL S106/CIL	Reliant on funding - Local Transport Funding £100k for the borough divided between committees, CIL mechanism not in place yet. 18/19 - Cycle stands provided at Westmead Corner & Florian Avenue. 19/20 - New cycle stands proposed at Beddington Lane Tram Stop. With other locations to be identified Higher cycle parking standards adopted
	O3.2	<b>Town centre cycling improvements</b>	Identify suitable infrastructure improvements such as contra-flow cycle lanes and implement contraflows.	LBS	LBS/TfL/ S106/CIL	Mayors Air Quality Funding improved the walking / cycling improved access at the Throley Way / Benhill Avenue 18/19 Progressing in 19/20 under Quietways and Town Centre
2						

Figure 2b: Cycling Strategy - Action Plan updated May 2019 - page 2 of 4 (LBS, December 2019) - annotated by author [Full document as pdf [here](#)]



Appendix B						
		Work with developers to secure additional or improved provision for cyclists within town centres.	LBS	LBS/TIL/ S106/CIL	Masterplan	
✓	O3.3	<b>School travel plans</b>	All London Borough of Sutton schools to continue to be supported in the development, review and update of their travel plans. School travel plans should include actions to encourage and facilitate cycling to school.	LBS	TIL	34 schools with accredited travel plans achieved over 18/19. (18 Gold, 2 Silver, 14 Bronze)
		Continue with safer walking and cycling routes to school schemes to improve cycling provision on routes to schools.	LBS	TIL LIP 19/20	Cheam Park Farm Academy (Area Scheme Windsor Avenue 20mph zone to be implemented in summer 2019)	
		Secure developer contributions as part of planning process for schools expansion for enhanced and extended cycle network, and provision of facilities for cyclists at schools.	LBS	S106/CIL	Funding secured for each expansion for sustainable transport improvements	
✗	O3.4	<b>Cycling to stations</b>	Continue to work in partnership with station operators to support cycling to stations and bike-rail journeys, including a review of cycle parking at stations and work to identify required improvements on key routes to stations.	LBS/Rail and Station Operators	Rail and Station Operators	There are no current stations identified but the borough will continue to work with Rail and Station operators to identify potential improvements.
<b>Objective 4: Encourage safe and considerate behaviour by all road users</b>						
✓	O4.1	<b>Bikeability cycle training</b>	Continue to deliver programme of cycle training for adults and children, and extend Level 3 / intensive offer.	LBS	TIL	2019-20 Allocations LIP £92K expectations: Level 1&2 courses, 1,100 unique children Level 3, 50 unique children  Additional Funding Bikeability (Level 2 and above): £33,000, 480 children Cycle Skills: £25,000, 618 adults
?	O4.2	<b>Safer Urban Driving (SUD) training</b>	Continue SUD training.	LBS	TIL	No funding identified in 18/19. This initiative has finished so will be removed as an action
✗	O4.3	<b>Technology to assist safety</b>	Investigate technology to assist safety of cyclists	LBS	TIL	No funding identified in 18/19. This initiative has finished so will be removed as an action
✗	O4.4	<b>Segregated routes</b>	Identify locations on heavily trafficked arterial routes within the borough where segregation is appropriate, and work with local residents and	LBS/TIL	TIL/LBS/ S106/CIL	Staff turnover has impacted our progress on this action. Recent recruitment means we now have a borough cycling officer who will work with engineers.

Figure 2c: Cycling Strategy - Action Plan updated May 2019 - page 3 of 4 (LBS, December 2019) - annotated by author [Full document as pdf [here](#)]

Appendix B						
		stakeholders to propose and implement solutions. Where these locations are on TLRN (TIL routes) we will work with TIL on the recommendation and implementation of improvements.			stakeholders and TIL to identify, agree and seek funding for such improvements. On-going reviews will be made as part of the annual scheme submission to TIL.	
<b>Objective 5: Create a cycling culture by promoting cycling to a wider range of people</b>						
?	O5.1	<b>Bike maintenance for young people (Cytech qualification)</b>	Deliver this project in 2015/16 and investigate opportunities for match-funding and continuation in future years.	LBS	TIL	Bike maintenance courses delivered to 4 young offenders in 2016 but none able to continue on to Cytech courses. No bike maintenance courses delivered since due to lack of funding and interest from partners.
?	O5.2	<b>Travel awareness initiatives</b>	Work with major employers to encourage employees to cycle to work. This will include workplace events such as Dr Bike and cycle training opportunities.	LBS	TIL	Dr Bike events took place in ICR, Royal Marsden, St Helier Hospital and Subsea 7 between May and October 40 bikes checked. New travel planning initiative called Workplace Scorecard offered to hospitals includes online staff survey and audit. Low take up so far so will be looking to amend the offer to be more user friendly for shift patterns. Analysis by LBS officer will identify measures and up to £1000 made available to hospitals to implement measures.
?	O5.3	<b>Cycling Events</b>	Deliver town centre cycling events – Dr Bike, bike marking	LBS	TIL	184 bikes marked and checked at 20 events across the borough over 18/19
?	O5.4	<b>Develop cycling events calendar/programme of travel awareness events</b>	Develop a calendar of events to promote cycling and instill a cycling culture within the borough. Events could include led cycle rides through the borough, car free event days, workplace cycle/active travel challenges and cycle races in partnership with British Cycling.	LBS	TIL/LBS/ S106/CIL/ Other	Women on wheels is a LBS monthly ride from Carshalton which runs for 11 months of the year, aimed at a new or returning female cyclists
<b>Objective 6: Actively promote cycling within the Council's Sustainable Transport Strategy</b>						
✗	O6.1	<b>Improve working with internal stakeholders</b>	Set up internal Cycle Advisory Group to identify opportunities for collaborative working	LBS	LBS	Starting April 2019 programme meetings are now held with internal stakeholders and cycling issues are discussed, as they are at STS meetings
✓	O6.2	<b>Working with external stakeholders.</b>	Engage with external stakeholders to identify a more collaborative approach	LBS	LBS	Continue with Sutton Cycle Campaign forum meetings, held quarterly. Next meeting scheduled for 11/6/19

Figure 2d: Cycling Strategy - Action Plan updated May 2019 - page 4 of 4 (LBS, December 2019) - annotated by author [Full document as pdf [here](#)]

Questions for Councillor Lewis:

**3.1 Why have so few of the objectives set out in the borough's Cycling Strategy been delivered?**

**3.2 Why has the council failed to report on the objectives set out in the Cycling Strategy since 2019?**

**3.3 Why has the council seemingly ignored to acknowledge the failure to deliver on the Cycling Strategy, and what does this tell us about the ability of the current administration to live up to the words of the latest Sustainable Transport Strategy?**

Response from Councillor Lewis (13 April 2023):

All will be revealed in the final closure report of the STS.

## **4: Sutton's current Environment Strategy 2019-2025, third LIP, Mayor's Transport Strategy**

Context: Sutton needs to play its part in achieving targets for walking, cycling and public transport use set at a national and regional level.

The borough's **third Local Implementation Plan**<sup>11</sup>, the current **Environment Strategy 2019-2025**<sup>12</sup>, and the latest **Sustainable Transport Strategy 2020-2025**<sup>13</sup> all look to, and reference, the outcomes outlined in the **Mayor's Transport Strategy 2018** (MTS)<sup>14</sup>. In addition, the Government has an aspiration to see half of all short trips made in towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2030 ('**Gear Change: one-year-on review**' (DfT, July 2021) )<sup>15</sup>.

The outcomes in the MTS, part of the Healthy Streets approach, include metrics around the proportion of Sutton's residents doing 20 minutes of active travel a day, and the proportion of Sutton's population within 400 metres of the strategic cycle network (noting that a definition of a strategic cycle network is not provided). An attempt has been made to make an assessment of where Sutton stands on these specific areas, using open data provided by TfL., as shown in the image below.

In order to meet the MTS target of 80% of all trips across London to be made by foot, cycle or public transport by 2041, the equivalent proportion in Sutton (in the same time frame) is 63%. To reach 63% in 2041, interim targets of 48% by 2022, and 56% by 2025, have been set. The most recently available figures<sup>16</sup>, covering the period 2017/18 to 2019/20, suggest that around 45% of journeys in Sutton are made by walking, cycling and public transport (see Figure 3).

For the whole of London to achieve 50% of trips to be made by walking and cycling in this way by 2030, it is likely that the borough of Sutton will need to reach around 35% or 40% by 2030. Over the

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<sup>11</sup> Transport plans (LBS, accessed 7 April 2023): <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/-/transport-plans>

<sup>12</sup> Our environment strategy (LBS, accessed 7 April 2023): <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/-/what-is-the-council-doing>

<sup>13</sup> Sustainable Transport Strategy 2022-2025 Supplementary Planning Document: [https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/sustainabletransportstrategy2020-2025\\_spd\\_lbofsutton\\_november2021.pdf](https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/sustainabletransportstrategy2020-2025_spd_lbofsutton_november2021.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Mayor of London's Transport Strategy (GLA, Mayor of London, March 2018): <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/the-mayors-transport-strategy>

<sup>15</sup> Gear Change: One year on review (DfT, 30 July 2021): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gear-change-one-year-on-review>

<sup>16</sup> LIP3 MTS outcomes borough data pack - Dec 2022.xlsx (TfL open data, accessed 13 April 2023): <http://planning.data.tfl.gov.uk>

period 2017/18 to 2019/20, around 25% of the trips that residents of Sutton currently made are walked or cycled. Clearly, to meet even 35% of trips by walking and cycling in Sutton by 2030 a step-change is going to be required in the next seven or eight years.

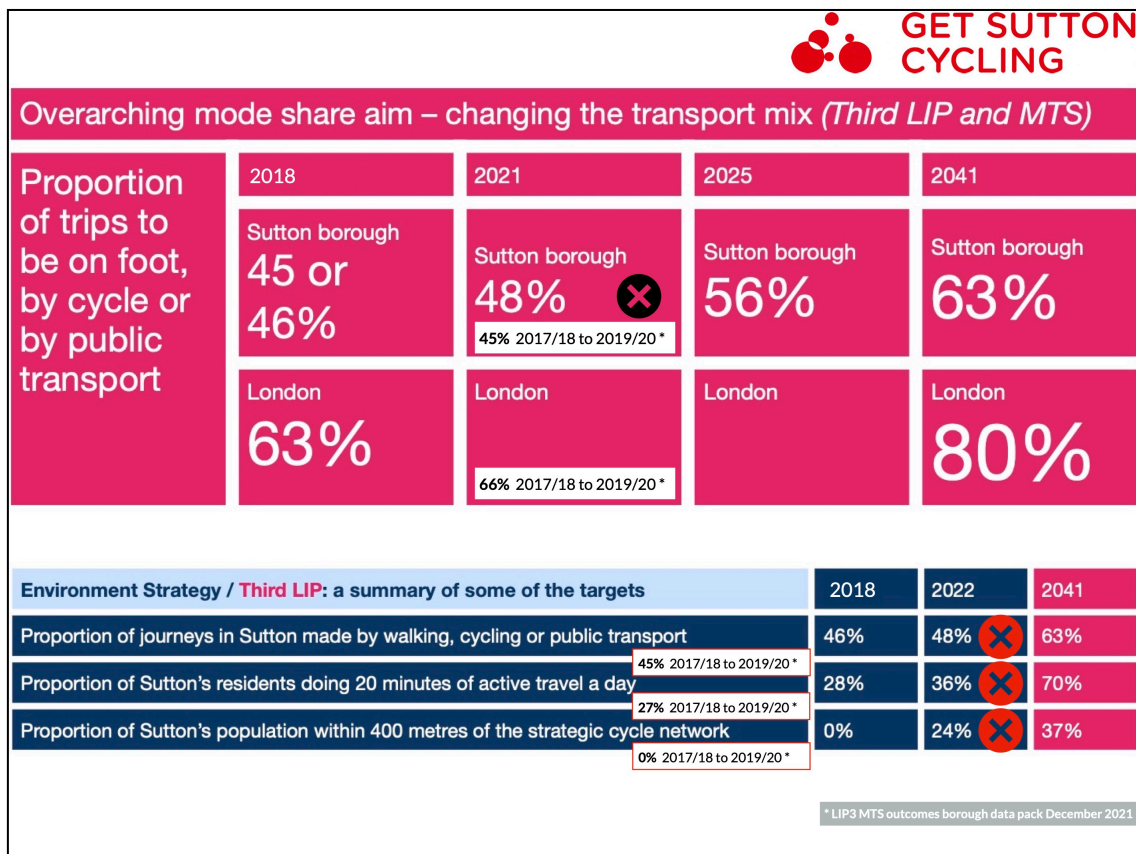


Figure 3: Extracts from the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy (GLA, March 2018), the borough's Environment Strategy (LBS, June 2019 updated 2020), Sutton's third Local Implementation Plan (LBS, April 2019) and TfL (December 2021/2022) - annotated by the author

Questions for Councillor Lewis:

**4.1 How confident are you that Sutton will play its part in delivering the Mayor of London's Healthy Streets Approach?**

**4.2 What will Sutton need to do in order for the Government's commitment, to see half of all short journeys in towns and cities walked, scooted or cycled by 2030, realised?**

*No specific response was given to these questions. The officer present suggested that specific target levels were less likely to be relevant post Covid, due to changed travel patterns. Fair point, but Sutton's population continues to rise too. This anticipated increase in population could result in increased pressure on the road network and on parking, unless there is less reliance on the car for some short journeys. Furthermore, the shift away from regular commuting to working from home could potentially see an increase in more locally based journeys which, in theory, may help enhance or boost the proportion of journeys made on foot, by bicycle, or by public transport and so help the targets be reached.*

**5: The future of the Sutton Cycle Forum**

Context: *The long-established Sutton Cycle Forum has not been as effective as would be expected, bringing its future in to doubt.*

It has become increasingly obvious over time that the Sutton Cycle Forum appears to be achieving very little. Meetings, and then outcomes, have highlighted some evidence of a lack of capacity, and possibly ability, within the council when it comes to certain aspects of delivery. Examples of how the Cycle Forum has fallen short of expectations over recent years are provided in many of reports published on the Get Sutton Cycling website since March 2016<sup>17</sup>. These include:

- The failure to establish an internal Cycling Advisory Group (a commitment to do so was given in the cycling strategy in 2015) - noting this was agreed in February 2019, but then went into hiatus by September 2019
- The clear lack of communication between Sutton Council staff, council officers and members of the Local Committees
- The failure of officers to provide feedback to Get Sutton Cycling's consultation responses, and the failure to provide reasons (or publicly state) as to why the group's views went unheeded
- The failure of officers and councillors to disseminate information in a timely manner (for example, despite Get Sutton Cycling asking for an update on the borough's Sustainable Transport Strategy at several consecutive meetings, and despite officers and councillors knowing this was an important issue, when the information became available it was only passed on months later)
- The failure to develop a Sutton Cycle Network Plan (borough audit), a proposal originally announced to the Cycle Forum in April 2018
- The failure of officers to respond, in writing, to the disappointment expressed by Get Sutton Cycling in relation to the installation of another barrier on the Wandle Trail
- Agreeing to monitor cycling levels, then simply not doing so
- Agreeing to include a report on the borough's Air Quality Action Plan at each meeting of the Cycle Forum, then not doing so

#### Questions for Councillor Lewis:

##### **5.1 What are your views on the Sutton Cycle Forum?**

##### **5.2 What could the Sutton Cycle Forum do better?**

##### **5.3 Does the Sutton Cycle Forum have a future?**

#### Response from Councillor Lewis (13 April 2023):

I believe that the Sutton Cycle Forum has been effective. I think it would be helpful to expand it out, and broaden its remit. Perhaps rename it the 'Active Travel Forum', and tie in with the Public Transport Liaison Group.

#### Some thoughts on the response:

*Broadening the remit of the Cycle Forum could be advantageous. Active Travel fits well with Healthy Streets and the wider ambitions of the MTS and Government policy. Regardless of its name, it will be important to ensure that the new forum is transparent, and that the meetings are a good use of peoples' time. The short-comings of the existing (or former) Sutton Cycle Forum, the primary purpose of which could, in reflection, be considered as a tick-box exercise (i.e. the council is doing something for cycling), were not addressed in Councillor Lewis' response.*

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<sup>17</sup> Sutton Cycle Forum Notes: <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/category/cycle-forum/>

## Some closing thoughts

It is recognised that this article, along with the first two in the trilogy, is a little negative. It would be difficult to be otherwise given that, by definition, the topic highlights evident shortcomings. The intention overall, though, is to be constructive rather than critical. It is about taking note, trying to do better, and to go that extra mile. It is about applying a little extra pressure in order to cross the finishing line. It is about the borough succeeding. Being successful means not only following policy, but also being open about any shortcomings in delivery. Shortcomings in delivery are not, necessarily, the same as failure in delivery. Equally, though, shortcomings in delivery should not be swept under the carpet and forgotten.

Good news stories have been recognised in these articles too. The School Streets programme is a fabulous initiative, although it is rather unfortunate that it has taken a global pandemic to get this initiative up and running in our borough. Ideas around neighbourhood placemaking also look promising, although there is a lot of catching up to do.

Clearly, the last three years or so have been very difficult (and continue to be so in many ways). Nevertheless, during a period when highway schemes were not progressing (due to Covid, lockdowns, and uncertainty of funding), one would have thought that the focus for officers could have been on the publication of a closing report on the Sustainable Transport Strategy; on the development of street audits (cycle network plan); on making the case, and on building a vision, for active travel in the borough. All of which are in-line with policy. Furthermore, the lapse in reporting on the strategies cannot be fully blamed on Covid, as the updates stopped the year prior to the arrival of the pandemic.

Ultimately, if the borough does not have the capacity, or the political will, to go for gold when it comes to active travel, then all the associated strategies and policies should essentially be re-written to reflect a lesser ambition. Otherwise, what is it all for? Mind you, a lesser ambition is far from ideal for all sorts of reasons. Chief amongst them, perhaps, could be the possibility that future generations may not thank us.

However, and crucially, what all of this discussion clearly proves is that until action is seen, the words are meaningless.

And that takes us full circle back to the need for 'political will' outlined in the first article of the trilogy '[Sutton's councillors: welcome to the class of 2022](#)'. Our incumbent councillors essentially shape the future, lay the path, for the next generation. No one can foresee precisely what that future holds, and everyone makes mistakes. But when it comes to current policy (policy that is there for a reason), the incumbent councillors need to be held to account on delivery.

It is hoped that the borough's current Sustainable Transport Strategy, and its related policy documents, will put Sutton on a path that will make our borough an even better place in which to live, go to school, work and retire. Not just for today's residents, but for those yet to come. Let us also hope that when residents are given the opportunity to comment on the borough's next draft Sustainable Transport Strategy (or its equivalent), their time and effort in doing so is not seemingly ignored by the subsequently approved document being left on the shelf and forgotten.

For now, it is good to know that the current Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee, Councillor Barry Lewis, stands by the Foreword to the Sustainable Transport Strategy as written by his predecessor, Councillor Manuel Abellan. For now, there is, at last, the expectation that a closing report on the former Sustainable Transport Strategy will be forthcoming and from which, hopefully, lessons will be learned. For now, those tasked with delivery have been held to account. That gives hope for a fresh start, hope for the future, and the green light to move on.

*Charles Martin, 11 May 2023 (v1)*

## **ANNEX: Timeline to Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015 (19 March 2015 to 22 November 2022), and Cycling Strategy (26 November 2015 to 22 November 2022)**

### **19 March 2015 - Environment and Neighbourhood Committee - proposed changes to (draft) STS approved [18]**

- Report: 'Sustainable Transport Strategy - feedback on consultation'
- Appendix A: Main changes proposed to the Strategy
- Appendix B: Sustainable Transport Strategy
- Appendix C: Questionnaire
- Appendix D: Integrated Impact Assessment

### **26 November 2015 - Environment and Neighbourhood Committee - publication of the Cycling Strategy approved [19]**

- Report: 'Cycling Delivery Strategy'
- Appendix A: Delegate feedback from the Cycling Delivery Strategy Consultation Workshop breakout sessions (23/07/2015)
- Appendix B: Cycling Strategy Consultation Questionnaire
- Appendix C: Summary of Cycling Strategy Consultation Questionnaire Responses
- Appendix D: Schedule of comments received in response to the Draft Cycling Strategy Consultation
- Appendix E: Draft Cycling Strategy with changes resulting from consultation
- Appendix F: Cycling Strategy Integrated Impact Assessment
- Minutes: Agenda item 26 'Cycling Strategy' - resolved to proceed with publication

In his presentation of the 'Cycling Delivery Strategy' report to the E&N Committee on 26 November 2015, Principle Transport Planner, Alex Forrest, noted that the title of the document had been changed as a result of some comments received during the consultation. It was now to be called a **Cycling Strategy** rather than a **Cycling Delivery Strategy**. The dropping of the word 'delivery' from the title subsequently proved to be fortuitous, as we now know pitifully little was actually delivered during the strategy's seven-year life span.

### **27 June 2016 - Environment and Neighbourhood Committee First review of Sustainable Transport Strategy (STS) [20]**

- Report: Update on Sustainable Transport Strategy (27 June 2016)

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<sup>18</sup> Agenda for Environment and Neighbourhood Committee on Thursday, 19th March, 2015, 7.30 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=452&MId=3637&Ver=4>

"Future transport policy consultations would seek the views of younger residents more, through the Youth Parliament and other similar organisations, given that this age group are heavy users of public transport and are more likely to be pedestrians."

<sup>19</sup> Agenda for Environment and Neighbourhood Committee on Thursday, 26th November, 2015, 7.30 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=452&MId=3972&Ver=4>

"...it was notable from the consultation that the infrastructure of Sutton is seen by many as the key to getting people cycling. The strategy aims to encourage a shift from journeys being taken by motor vehicles to cycling, and sets out what is currently being done and what the council proposes to do. The Action Plan will be updated frequently as a separate document to the strategy, and there would be amendments to the timeframe."

<sup>20</sup> Agenda for Environment and Neighbourhood Committee on Monday, 27th June, 2016, 7.30 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=452&MId=3975&Ver=4>

"Councillor Paul Wingfield asked if there was anything that could be done to alleviate the air quality issues in Worcester Park."

"In relation to the Quietways project, [it was agreed to] continue partnership working with TfL, Sustrans and London Borough of Merton and the process to deliver a good quality Quietways cycle route between Sutton and Morden" [?].

- Appendix A Revised Summary of Targets (2012/13-2014/15)
- Quietway Proposal - Morden to Sutton (Map - 26 January 2016)

## **22 June 2017 - Environment and Neighbourhood Committee** **Second review of STS; first report on Cycling Strategy Action Plan (updated May 2017) [21]**

- Report: Update on Sustainable Transport Strategy (22 June 2017)
- Appendix A Update progress on the STS Action Plan
- Appendix B Action Plan Updated May 2017 Borough Cycling Strategy: Updated
- Appendix C Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy Targets (2013/14-2015/16)

## **28 June 2018 - Environment and Neighbourhood Committee** **Third review of STS; second report on Cycling Strategy Action Plan (updated May 2018) [22]**

- Report: Update on Sustainable Transport Strategy (28 June 2018)
- Appendix A *untitled, but essentially* Update progress on the STS Action Plan Action Plan
- Appendix B Action Plan Updated May 2018 Borough Cycling Strategy: Updated
- Appendix C Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy Targets (2014/15-2016/17)

## **11 June 2019 - Sutton Cycle Forum [23]**

A further annual update of the STS was expected in the spring, or early summer, of 2019. However, when it became clear that an annual update was not an agenda item at the E&N Committee meeting on the 20 June 2019 (see below), the matter was raised at a meeting of the Sutton Cycle Forum on 11 June 2019.

The written notes to the Sutton Cycle Forum meeting of 11 June 2019, include the text: “Annual review of Sustainable Transport Strategy (and Cycling Strategy) delayed.... Unfortunately, this will not be presented at the June [2019] committee meeting as the agenda is too full. It is hoped it will be on the agenda for the E&N meeting on 17th October 2019..... The delay in providing the annual review of the STS is believed to be due to the priority having been given to discussions pertaining to the borough’s Parking Strategy.”

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<sup>21</sup> Agenda for Environment and Neighbourhood Committee on Thursday, 22nd June, 2017, 7.30 pm: <https://modern.gov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=452&MId=4304&Ver=4>

“Members asked what measures were being considered for Beddington Lane. Ian Price, Team Leader Strategy & Commissioning noted that a separate off road cycleway was being created, new pedestrian crossings, an access link to Beddington Park for walkers and cyclists, measures to improve bus reliability and better freight vehicle access to the Beddington industrial site, were all being looked into.”

“In conclusion members discussed travel to school, and how to reduce the number of parents who took their children to school by car, including for short distances. The Assistant Director said work was being carried out to encourage schools to implement higher level gold standard travel plans, which encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport.”

<sup>22</sup> Agenda for Environment and Neighbourhood Committee on Thursday, 28th June, 2018, 7.30 pm: <https://modern.gov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=452&MId=5022&Ver=4>

“Members raised the issues of high car use in the borough, the Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) Policy, public transport provision by Transport for London and the nature of school travel plans.”

“Consideration was again given to air quality within the borough, while concerns were raised over road conditions for cyclists. The Assistant Director referred members to ongoing improvements for cyclists in the borough in line with the strategy and acknowledged national concerns about deteriorating road conditions.”

<sup>23</sup> ‘Sutton Cycle Forum June 2019’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 21 August 2019): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2019/08/21/sutton-cycle-forum-june-2019/>

## **20 June 2019 - Environment and Neighbourhood Committee [24]**

Agenda items included 'Beddington Park car parking and environmental enforcement proposals', 'Parking Strategy Progress Report' and 'London Borough of Sutton Signing Strategy'. However, despite a report on the STS having been presented to the E&N committee in the spring of each of the four preceding years the STS and the cycling strategy, no one asked this year "where is the STS and Cycling Strategy update?".

## **2 October 2019 - Sutton Cycle Forum on location (Worcester Park)**

When it became clear that the 2019 update on the STS was not an agenda item at the E&N Committee meeting on the 17 October 2019 (see below), the opportunity was taken to raise this directly with Councillor Manuel Abellan during a ride of Sutton Cycle Forum members. Two days later, on 4 October (see below), Appendix C (Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy Targets (2015/16-2017/18)) of the report was provided.

## **4 October 2019 - Email link to Appendix C *only* of fourth review [25]**

In an email received from Helen Millier, Sustainable Transport Officer, with the subject heading 'Sutton Cycle Forum meeting actions points and documents from 16th September 2019' an attached document providing update and actions from the meeting included a link to:

- Appendix C Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy Targets (2015/16-2017/18)

The report itself, and Appendix A and B, were not made available at this time

## **17 October 2019 - Environment and Neighbourhood Committee [26]**

Although, an 2019 update on the STS was yet again not presented to the E&N committee in October 2019, the 'Local Implementation Plan Allocation 20/21' was an agenda item. The notes to this include: "Members remarked that the visit to the Liveable Neighbourhoods scheme in Waltham Forest was useful." "Councillor Shields requested that the opposition parties be given at least 10 working days before submission of the Liveable Neighbourhoods bid to ascertain what is envisaged in the bid and to provide members with an opportunity to have consultation with the residents whom a successful bid would affect. The Chair clarified that Transport for London were not seeking final proposals at this point of submission but agreed to share the bid before submission with the opposition."

Other agenda items included 'Developing a plan to achieving zero carbon' and 'London Borough of Culture Bid, 2022/23'. But, yet again, no committee members asked "what about the 2019 STS and Cycling Strategy update?", or "why is there a delay on reporting the STS?".

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<sup>24</sup> Agenda for Environment and Neighbourhood Committee on Thursday, 20th June, 2019, 7.00 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=452&MId=5213&Ver=4>

<sup>25</sup> Appendix C 'Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy targets': <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1j9IEzNR4ojMW-k5wVBWfP9ISUXw27JrI50gqTfmamW0/edit>

<sup>26</sup> Agenda for Environment and Neighbourhood Committee on Thursday, 17th October, 2019, 7.00 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=452&MId=5264&Ver=4>



## **23 December 2019 - Email link to fourth annual review of STS Fourth review of 2015 STS; third report on Cycling Strategy Action Plan (updated May 2019) [<sup>27</sup>, <sup>28</sup>]**

The remaining documentation relating to the 2019 update of the STS and Cycling Strategy were finally made available on 23 December 2019 when Councillor Manuel Abellan wrote to say:

“We uploaded the report to the website at the end of October, see the STS links at [https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200464/planning\\_policy/1660/evidence\\_base\\_by\\_topic/13](https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200464/planning_policy/1660/evidence_base_by_topic/13) . A direct link to the STS monitoring report is at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q8TX2V6HSes9hvddeCucdTwzr1zMa-AS/view>.”

The links provided access to the following four documents:

- Report on progress against objectives and targets for the year ending May 2019
- Appendix A - Action Plan Reporting
- Appendix B Action Plan Updated May 2018 Borough Cycling Strategy: Updated
- Appendix C Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy Targets (2015/16-2017/18)

If it was the case that the report(s) had been uploaded to the Council’s website at the end of October 2019, as Manuel suggested (and good luck to anyone actually finding it without the links), why didn’t officers make this information available to members of the Sutton Cycle Forum at the time? Especially given that it was known that the availability of the report was important to us, as we had repeatedly discussed the matter at previous meetings. (Section 5 of the main report above, notes this as one of the filings of the Forum).

It subsequently transpired that this 2019 annual review of the STS (the fourth to be produced), and this annual review of the Cycling Strategy (the third), were to be the last updates of these policy documents. Given that both documents continued to be active council policy for nearly a further two years, further annual updates would have been expected in the spring of 2020, 2021 and 2022. Clearly, at the time, no one foresaw what was about to happen next...

## **2020 and 2021 - Covid-19**

### **17 November 2021 - Sutton Cycle Forum [<sup>29</sup>]**

A request for an update (or closing/final report) on the 2015 STS was made, with the minuted response being: “The [2015] STS closure report would be published when the draft [new] STS is agreed. It [the new draft STS] was adopted at the full Council Committee meeting on 22/11/21 and Dimi’s team will update their relevant webpage and write a closing report for the old STS soon”.

### **22 November 2021 - Council [<sup>30</sup>]**

The new (2021) Sustainable Transport Strategy and Supplementary Planning document was (finally) adopted by the Council on 22 November 2021. (An overview of the document’s torturous journey to get this far, is discussed in ‘Sutton’s Councillors: welcome to the class of 2022’).

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<sup>27</sup> Evidence Base by Topic (LBS, accessed 12 April 2023): <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/-/evidence-base-by-topic-transport>

<sup>28</sup> STS ‘Report on progress against objectives and targets for the year ending May 2019’: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q8TX2V6HSes9hvddeCucdTwzr1zMa-AS/view>

<sup>29</sup> ‘Sutton Cycle Forum November 2021’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 17 November 2021): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2021/11/17/sutton-cycle-forum-november-2021/>

<sup>30</sup> Agenda for Council on Monday, 22nd November, 2021, 7.00 pm - agenda item ‘Requisition - Adoption of the Sustainable Transport Strategy’: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ielistDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MId=5643&Ver=4>

## **2 March 2022 - Sutton Cycle Forum [31]**

A closure report for the STS was discussed again by the Sutton Cycle Forum. Notes to the meeting report that there was disappointment that this idea had been shelved, but officer Ian Baker would “investigate possibility of a closure report and keep Cllrs Lewis & Burke informed of the outcome”.

## **14 June 2022 - Sutton Cycle Forum [32]**

A closure report for the STS was discussed again by the Sutton Cycle Forum. Notes to the meeting report: “Kevin Williams advises that it is a live document and it is consulted whenever new schemes come in”. No idea what that means, as it would be difficult to still describe the 2015 to 2021 STS as a live document).

## **11 October 2022 - Sutton Cycle Forum [33]**

It appears that no further update regarding the ongoing Action to produce a final report on the 2015 STS was made at the October 2022 Sutton Cycle Forum, and nothing has been shared since. All a little demoralising. Regrettably, it is difficult not to see the Cycle Forum as simply a 'tick-box' exercise. “Currently there’s no date set for the next Sutton Cycle Forum meeting.” [34]

**28 November 2022** - Email sent to Councillor Barry Lewis with the subject ‘Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015 | Cycling Strategy 2015 | Sustainable Transport Strategy 2020’.

**30 November 2022** - Acknowledgment received from Barry in thanks for my comprehensive email, and in recognition that I had raised a number of questions which required consideration. He would endeavour to reply in full over the next couple of weeks.

**14 December 2022** - Another email received from Barry, in which he advised that it was taking longer than anticipated to pull all the various bits together in order to provide a full and personally considered response, but with Christmas coming it may not be until the New Year.

**12 January 2023** - A gentle reminder sent to Barry, noting that a full reply to the email of 28 November was still awaited.

**17 January 2023** - Apologies received again from Barry for the delay, but with the assurance that a full response should be forthcoming shortly (worse case by the end of the month).

**31 March 2023** - Apologies received again from Barry for the delay in responding. Barry asked me to give him a call.

**3 April 2023** - We spoke on the ‘phone. Barry said that having spoken to officers, he thought it would be a good idea to meet and have a conversation.

**5 April 2023** - Email received from Barry suggesting two possible dates for a meeting. Replied to say my preference would be for 13 April.

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<sup>31</sup> ‘Sutton Cycle Forum March 2022’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 2 March 2022): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2022/03/02/sutton-cycle-forum-march-2022/>

<sup>32</sup> ‘Sutton Cycle Forum June 2022’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 14 June 2022): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2022/06/14/sutton-cycle-forum-june-2022/>

<sup>33</sup> ‘Sutton Cycle Forum October 2022’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 11 October 2022): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2022/10/11/sutton-cycle-forum-october-2022/>

<sup>34</sup> ‘Sutton Cycle Forum ideas for 2023’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 11 February 2023): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2023/02/11/sutton-cycle-forum-ideas-for-2023/>

**13 April 2023** - Met with Councillor Lewis, Councillor Woolmer and Ian Price (Sustainable Transport & Commissioning (Sutton) Team Manager, London Borough of Sutton).

**16 April 2023** - Draft copy of this article forwarded to Councillor Lewis for comments.

**23 April 2023** - Councillor Lewis gave notice that he approved the draft version of this article.