



## Croydon council moves away from the traditional fleet car model to cut costs

In 2010, Croydon council carried out a staff transport review. In addition to a need to cut costs and lower carbon emissions, this review highlighted a range of issues with the existing service. The combination of lease vehicles provided to staff and employee-owned vehicle use (grey fleet) meant the staff car park was over-subscribed and the large number of vehicles was adding to local traffic congestion.

It was also difficult to evaluate how fit for purpose these vehicles were at any one time. It became apparent that we should do more to encourage public transport among our employees, given the array of transport options in the area.

Realising there must be a more efficient alternative to the traditional fleet approach we launched a competitive tender. It quickly became apparent that a pay-as-you-go approach might be the solution we were looking for.

Later that year we kicked off a pilot scheme with the UK's largest pay-as-you-go car network, Zipcar. The idea is simple: rather than owning a car outright or leasing a fleet, we have exclusive access to 23 vehicles during standard working hours, which is when we actually need them.

As with any new policy, there was initially a concern among staff about losing an annual car allowance or lack of workplace parking, but once up and running, these concerns were quickly allayed. The service performed very well and the benefits we saw during this trial period were substantial:

- Annual travel costs were cut by 42% from £1.3m to £756,000.
- Employee business miles fell by 42% each year, from 1.1m to 642,000 miles.
- We encouraged more of our employees to use public transport or walk to work and council employee car users have fallen by more than half.
- The pay-as-you-go approach has also proven to be more sustainable, with council employee's Co2 emissions footprint decreasing by more than a third.



As well as saving money and proving more environmentally friendly, we were also able to use the cars to help out local residents. The additional 23 vehicles were available outside of council working hours to Croydon's 1,300 Zipcar members. Using the cars for both public and private use is a great example of how a single investment in an innovative service can bring about benefits that go beyond the council to directly help the community we serve.

We now plan to deploy this approach to transport until 2016. It's only a small part of a larger transport overhaul, but shows just how much can be achieved if councils are prepared to take a forward-thinking and progressive approach to traditional systems and services. Private sector partnerships should be part of this approach. Some local authorities move faster than others to adopt new ways of working, but these relationships can best be made a success by conducting well thought out trial periods and sharing the lessons learned – something we will be doing with any local authorities that are keen to hear more.

I'm proud of what we've achieved; we've enhanced the transport offering for our employees and Croydon residents. We have also saved the taxpayers money, and reduced carbon emissions. We can only encourage other councils to apply the same innovative approach to their own services, and challenge them to keep up with Croydon as we strive towards our 2040 vision to make Croydon London's most enterprising borough.

*Sarah Tulej is a sustainability advisor at [Forum for the Future](#). The organisations will be holding a [webinar on the product to service shift at 3pm on 25 November](#).*