

Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

01 October 2015

Report title	Wolverhampton Active Travel Strategy	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Peter Bilson City Assets	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Nick Edwards, City Assets	
Originating service	Transportation	
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Report to be/has been considered by	Cabinet	09 December 2015

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Panel is recommended to:

1. Review and comment on the draft Wolverhampton Active Travel Strategy.

Recommendations for noting:

The Panel is asked to note:

1. This item is being considered as pre-decision scrutiny and will therefore not be available to call-in once a decision is made by the Executive.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report presents the draft Active Travel Strategy (the Strategy) for Wolverhampton to the Scrutiny Panel for comment. This will enable the Strategy to be finalised for presentation to Cabinet on 09 December 2015 for approval and adoption.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Concerns about the consequences of high levels of private motor traffic including the economic impact of congestion, safety, poor air quality and noise have been instrumental in encouraging Government policy to promote alternative means of transport through initiatives such as the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF).
- 2.2 Concurrently concern about obesity has grown on the national and local agenda, and Wolverhampton has adopted obesity as its principal public health focus. The role inactive lifestyles play in obesity has stimulated interest in promoting active travel.
- 2.3 On a related matter, provision for cycling in Wolverhampton was the subject of a Scrutiny Panel meeting on 09 January 2014. Later in that year the Government commenced consultation on its Cycling Delivery Plan to enhance provision for cyclists through collaboration with local authorities.
- 2.3 Consequently a proposal was developed to produce an Active Travel Strategy for Wolverhampton. In addition to providing direction for decisions on active travel issues this is intended to support the case for future bids to funding opportunities.
- 2.4 Resources for this project were secured from the Public Health Transformation Fund (PHTF) and supplemented by contribution from the LSTF. Consultants URS/AECOM were commissioned to carry out the project under Council direction in February 2015.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 The framework provided to the consultants for this project included
- i. development of an evidence base
 - ii. a comprehensive consultation exercise
 - iii. audit of the existing travel infrastructure, and
 - iv. production of the strategy to include action plans for walking and cycling.
- 3.2 The evidence base developed for the Strategy identifies certain key relevant facts. Participation in sport and recreational exercise locally continues to fall behind regional and national averages. Obesity continues to climb, affecting nearly 30% of adults and 25% of children. Meanwhile, 65% of all journeys to work are made by car despite 45% of all journeys being less than 5 km in length, and 40% of children travel to school by car while only 2% cycle.

- 3.3 A consultation was conducted to ascertain the views of stakeholders and the public. This was achieved through stakeholder group meetings, and questionnaires distributed online, through social media and email distribution and at the City Show. Information was sought on people's current travel patterns, on aspirations for improvements to the travel infrastructure, and on the perceived barriers to active travel.
- 3.4 The consultation identified a substantial interest from respondents in cycling more (54%), and a lesser interest in walking more (39%). However a range of barriers to doing so were cited. Concerns about cycling revolved mainly around the perception of danger from other traffic. A range of barriers to walking were identified, mainly regarding the unsuitability of walking for the travel needs involved.
- 3.5 The existing walking and cycling infrastructure was assessed to identify ways in which it might be made fitter for active travel. Key conclusions of this were the need for a clear and intelligible network of routes, connecting popular journey origins and destinations, and enabling easy transition between different travel modes. To achieve this, the travel environment needs to be made safe, accessible and inviting.
- 3.6 Particularly in the case of cycling, an aspiration was identified for a network of dedicated routes. The audit of infrastructure focussed on certain routes where the consultation had identified particular challenges for cyclists with a view to prioritising improvements. The Strategy proposes a top priority route following the A449 from the City Centre and connecting to facilities recently developed around i54 and Vine Island. A full future programme of routes remains to be identified using the same process.
- 3.7 The draft Active Travel Strategy has been developed based on the findings summarised in paragraphs 3.2-3.6. Adoption of the Strategy represents a long-term commitment to enhancing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in Wolverhampton. Implementation of the strategy will involve:
- Fully incorporating consideration of active travel into decision-making processes.
 - Securing enhanced resources for infrastructure and promotional projects relevant to active travel
 - Continued seeking of funding opportunities and partnerships to develop and deliver active travel improvements
 - Continued development of a comprehensive network of routes for cyclists and pedestrians leading to a deliverable programme of works.
 - Continued engagement with the community. For this purpose the Go Active brand has been developed. In addition, a "champion" with public profile has been identified to act as a figurehead for the Strategy.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 Funding for development of the Strategy totalling £90,000 was secured as follows:-

i.	PHTF 2014-15	£20,000
ii.	PHTF 2015-16	£10,000
iii.	LSTF 2015-16	£60,000

Commitments against this currently total £81,000. The remaining £9,000 is reserved for “pump-priming” activities to launch the Strategy during the 2015/16 financial year.

Adoption and implementation of the Strategy will consume capital and revenue resources yet to be ascertained. It is anticipated however that the Strategy will enable future bids for funding of active travel initiatives.

[TT/21092015/F]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 Implementation of the Strategy may involve changes to highway space allocation and speed limits, requiring Traffic Regulation Orders. [RB/21092015/Q]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 Implementation of the Strategy aims to create wider opportunities for travel which are low cost and open to all. It also seeks to address obesity issues most prevalent in areas of deprivation.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 Implementation of the Strategy aims to increase travel by environmentally benign modes.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 The Strategy is anticipated to sit alongside the Staff Travel Plan and further promote alternative travel modes to the private motor vehicle.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications in the development of the Strategy.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 None.