



Report to: Health and Wellbeing Committee, 15 November 2021

Report of: Corporate Director - Operations, Homes and Communities

Subject: ACTIVE TRAVEL PROJECT

1. Recommendation

That the Committee:

- 1.1 Directs officers to undertake further work to develop an outline business case to support the recruitment of an Active Travel Officer; and**
- 1.2 Notes that a report detailing this business case will be presented to this Committee in February 2022.**

2. Background

- 2.1 This report presents members with information in respect of a potential role of Active Travel Officer having held conversations with a neighbouring District Council who employ such a post. The report sets out to seek Members views on whether such a role would be appropriate for Worcester City Council.
- 2.2 The Council that recruited to this role identified that section 106 allocations from some developments were not always being spent by the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Highways (WCC Highways). They also wanted to focus on Active Travel to encourage the modal shift of residents. The council decided to fund a project officer to:
 - i. identify opportunities to spend the WCC Highways unallocated section 106 funding on cycling infrastructure;
 - ii. work closely with WCC TIC (small highway works) Team, spending one day a week in the WCC offices to improve communication with Highways colleagues and the County Travel Plan Coordinator;
 - iii. to coordinate with WCC colleagues S106 spend, agree proposals, discuss responses to planning applications, identify opportunities for repairs to existing cycle routes, make improvements and declutter on street signage;
 - iv. to improve communication between parties where land ownership and ongoing maintenance needs careful consideration;
 - v. audit planning compliance, to ensure that travel plans have been implemented;
 - vi. to assist planners in reviewing new planning applications to ensure compliance with government guidance on Cycle infrastructure design (LTN 1/20) and contributing to development of planning policy for new developments, and

vii. to deliver active travel projects in partnership with parish councils and national organisations. Specifically, to remove barriers to active travel for all ages and abilities

3. Information

- 3.1 Since being in post the Active Travel Officer has delivered on the initial aspirations of the post, but also identified other opportunities and projects as a result of working with several businesses, schools and community groups
- 3.2 The officer is working with their own internal colleagues including Human Resources, Health and Wellbeing and Communications to improve public and employee messaging. To improve employee awareness of the Council's offering for active travel, they have revised their staff travel survey, promoted the cycle mileage claims process, raised the profile of the cycle scheme and instigating a modernised booking system for bike lockers.
- 3.3 Engagement with local schools has encouraged active travel, supporting school travel plans and initiatives such as Living Streets and walking to school. As a result of this engagement an academy trust added 'Travel Plan Coordinator' to a job description for a new employee.
- 3.4 The officer has prepared presentations, posters and information for parishes and communities to focus their attention on opportunities for active travel including a council aspiration to connect local travel networks together, to provide an alternative to private car ownership.
- 3.5 The role is reviewing how modes of transport link up and identify opportunities for improvements and potential for future challenges. For example, when long distance buses convert to electric, where will they re-charge and how will coordinated timetabling be achieved at key intersections.
- 3.6 From working with the Community Rail Partnership, they have accessed funds to deliver active travel events like 'Wheels to Rail'. They have linked with Dr Bike and the WCC Bikeability team to deliver innovative 'Family cycling' and local community groups. This includes setting up a 12-month trial for Brompton Lockers at two train stations.
- 3.7 The officer shares information on national policy and opportunities for funding (such as the Park that Bike and eCargo Bike Grant Fund) with relevant people and made a significant contribution to the successful bid to Cycling UK for substantial funding.
- 3.8 The officer is expecting to submit a bid to the Energy Saving Trust, for match funding to help purchase e-cargo bikes. The aim of the funding is to support the adoption of e-cargo bikes by businesses operating in England to provide a practical sustainable transport solution for last mile delivered.

4. Worcester City Council

- 4.1 Following the declaration of a Climate Emergency at Council in July 2019, the Council created and recruited to a new post of Environmental Sustainability Officer. This role has produced and coordinates delivery of the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan. A progress report on the plan was considered by Environment Committee in November.

- 4.2 The action plan includes three projects specific to active travel, namely ESS-03 Low emission business travel (for staff), ESS-04 Low emission commuting (for staff), and ESS-08 Active Travel (£4.5M Town Investment Plan project).
- 4.3 The November Personnel and General Purposes Committee will receive a report on 'Sustainable Travel to Work' which will include looking at options for showers, lockers and covered storage for cycles at locations where facilities are currently not provided.
- 4.4 Cycle covered storage facilities are provided at the Museum and Art Gallery and Sixways Depot. The Museum and Art Gallery has a shower and locker facilities for staff. Currently no covered bike storage facilities are provided at the Guildhall, St Martins Gate car park, Astwood Crematorium, Commandery or Trinity Street.
- 4.5 Two ebikes, on loan from the University of Worcester as part of their Woo bike scheme, have been available for staff to use for business travel since 2019. Due to the lack of secure bike storage at the Guildhall and capacity at the Museum and Art Gallery, these bikes are currently stored in the basement of the Guildhall, making access difficult. Promotion of these bikes to staff has been minimal.
- 4.6 Worcester City Council offers employees access to the Government's Cycle To Work scheme which reduces the cost of cycle purchase, and also offers a business cycling mileage allowance.
- 4.7 The Council has also committed to participate in the SHIFT scheme which will see a charitable donation be made by the Council for every kilometre that staff commute by bicycle.
- 4.8 The Council has part funded secure cycle storage in Crowngate Shopping Centre and is working with partners to identify and deliver additional locations.
- 4.9 A grant of £18k has been awarded by the LGA to run an employer led e-bike scheme in partnership with the University of Worcester. The objective of this project is to promote business travel by bike, e-bike and e-cargo bikes. This project is in an early stage having been delayed by the impacts of the pandemic on business travel.
- 4.10 Worcester's Town Investment Plan includes £4.5m for new and improved active travel routes across the city, a contribution to the new Kepax bridge and a public cycle hire scheme including e-bikes. A business case is due to be brought to Policy and Resources Committee in early 2022.

5. Preferred Option

- 5.1 This report recommends that further work is undertaken to liaise with internal services, partner agencies, WCC Highways and charities to establish if there is section 106 funding, resources and opportunity to develop a similar role in Worcester City.
- 5.2 That further work would assist officers in developing a business case for recruiting to such a post, and which would be presented to this Committee in February 2022 as part of Budget Setting for 2022/2023.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

There are no financial implications resulting from this current report as it directs officers to merely carry out further work in developing a business case. Subject approval however a further report will be presented to February Committee that is likely to recommend a budget allocation (for 2022/2023) that would support recruitment to such a post.

6.2 Legal and Governance Implications

There are no legal or governance implications associated with this report.

6.3 Risk Implications

There are no risk implications associated with this report.

6.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

This report supports the following themes in the new City plan and of course several of the projects contained with the Council's Environmental Sustainability Action Plan:

- Stronger and connected communities
- A healthy and active city
- Enhancing and sustaining our beautiful city for future generations.

6.5 Equality Implications

An equality impact assessment has not been carried out in association with this report. However subject to approval an EIA screening assessment will be undertaken whilst developing the February 2022 report.

6.6 Human Resources Implications

There are no human resource implications associated with this report.

6.7 Health and Safety Implications

There are no health and safety implications associated with this report.

6.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

The existing Worcester City Council Environmental Sustainability Action Plan contains significant opportunities to benefit residents and local businesses.

The Active Travel Officer referred to in this report has identified opportunities to encourage people to change modes of travel, exercise more and ultimately reduce the cost of travel and reduce air pollution.

Ward(s):

All Wards

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Background Papers: None