

**Report to: Health and Wellbeing Committee, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**Report of: Deputy Director, Corporate Policy and Strategy**

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**Subject: ACTIVE TRAVEL ACTION PLAN**

**1. Recommendation**

**1.1 That the Committee approve the proposed Active Travel Action Plan (Appendix 1); and**

**1.2 That the Member Steering Group meets regularly to review progress in delivering the Action Plan.**

**2. Background**

2.1 In July 2022 this Committee agreed that, following the recruitment to the new post of Sustainability Support Officer (Active Travel), an Active Travel Action Plan would be developed and reported to this committee. The Action Plan sets out proposed actions to be implemented by the Council with the aim of improving opportunities for, and the take up of, active journeys within Worcester city.

2.2 In June 2019 the Council declared the city of Worcester an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) due to likely breaches of the average annual objective for nitrogen dioxide.

2.3 In July 2019 the Council declared a Climate Emergency and pledged to work towards a target for the city to be carbon neutral by 2030.

2.4 Whilst there is a move away from fossil fuel vehicles towards EV, underpinned by the government's pledge to ban the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles from 2030, a modal shift away from motorised vehicles to walking, wheeling and cycling will contribute to significant and much earlier improvements in air quality alongside carbon reductions.

2.5 Although most often linked to walking and cycling, Active Travel also encompasses journeys made by adapted cycles, e-cycles, scooters, wheelchairs and mobility scooters; with adapted cycle referring to bicycles, handcycles, tricycles, four wheelers and recumbents.

2.6 Active travel also has a wide range of health benefits arising from physical activity, including improving physical and mental health.

2.7 The Department for Transport advise that "local authorities are well placed to plan and provide space for inclusive active travel infrastructure and accompanying behavioural change programmes. For Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and combined authorities, doing so is part of their responsibilities on highways and road

safety”<sup>1</sup>. Worcestershire County Council are the LTA, but as the City Council still has a significant role to play with a particular focus on influencing local behaviour change through a wide range of initiatives and collaborating with the County Council on existing and future walking and cycling infrastructure where appropriate.

- 2.8 The new post of Sustainability Support Officer (Active Travel) was filled in September 2022 and currently sits within the Sustainability Team, managed by the Sustainability Team Leader and reporting to the Deputy Director, Corporate Policy and Strategy.

### Current Status

- 2.9 Data from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy shows transport was responsible for 30% of all carbon emissions in 2020 in Worcester, equivalent to 89,520 tonnes of carbon dioxide<sup>2</sup>. Having declared a climate emergency in 2019, the Council is seeking to achieve carbon neutrality for the city by 2030. Reducing emissions from transport usage is therefore a key part of this.
- 2.10 The Government has set several key national targets in relation to active travel in their policy document, 'Gear Change', including that 50% of all journeys in towns and cities are undertaken via active means by 2030, with this increasing to 55% in 2035<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.11 Data is not available to show the current number of all journeys under 2 miles undertaken via active travel means. However, 2021 census data shows that the percentage of those who cycle and walk to work is currently at 3% for cycling and 11% for walking<sup>4</sup>, similar to the 2011 census data<sup>5</sup>. This gives an indication as to the scale of the modal shift which is required to meet the Government's policy objectives, and Worcester's own carbon reduction targets.
- 2.12 Within Worcester 50% of over 16s travel to work by car or van<sup>4</sup>, a 4% increase since 2011<sup>5</sup>. Currently Worcester is performing better than other districts in Worcestershire however when compared to other neighbouring cities such as Cheltenham (39% commute by car<sup>4</sup>) the potential for significant modal shift is clear.
- 2.13 An 'Active Lives' survey<sup>6</sup> undertaken by Sport England (Nov 21-Nov 22) found that in Worcester only 27% of over-16s made two active journeys in the previous 28 days. This figure has been steadily dropping from 47.2% in 2015-16. More positively, in

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<sup>1</sup> Active Travel: A local Authority Toolkit, Department for Transport, April 2022 ([Active travel: local authority toolkit – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-a-local-authority-toolkit))

<sup>2</sup> Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2020 ([UK local authority emissions data - Local Authority Emissions Data \(mysociety.org\)](https://www.mysociety.org/infocentre/entry/2020-07-14-uk-local-authority-emissions-data))

<sup>3</sup> Gear Change, Department for Transport, 2020 ([Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/90436/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf))

<sup>4</sup> Method of travel to Workplace, Census 2021, Office for National Statistics ([Census Maps - Census 2021 data interactive, ONS](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandcare/census/2021/census-2021-data-interactive))

<sup>5</sup> Method of travel to Workplace, Census 2011, Office for National Statistics ([CT0325 2011 Census – Method of travel to work – Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandcare/census/2011/census-2011-data-interactive))

<sup>6</sup> Active Lives Data, Sport England ([Active Lives | Sport England](https://www.sportengland.org/active-lives))

the academic year 21-22, 68.9% of pupils travelling to school reported making at least one journey per week using active modes, an increase from 51.4% in 2017-18. The 2021-22 'Active Lives' data shows that walking was the most popular form of active travel for both adults and children travelling to school and work.

- 2.14 2021 census data shows that on average, 21% of households in Worcester do not own (or have access to) a car or a van, compared to a national average of 23%<sup>7</sup>. Between 2011 to 2021 there has been a 2% decrease in the average number of households with no vehicle in Worcester City.
- 2.15 Walking and cycling regularly can help to prevent over 20 chronic conditions including some cancers, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and depression. It is estimated that physical inactivity is responsible for 1 in 6 deaths in the UK, costing over £7.4 billion annually<sup>3</sup>.

### **3. Preferred Option**

- 3.1 The Active Travel Action Plan in **Appendix 1** outlines the Council's proposals to increase the number of journeys done through Active Travel in the city.
- 3.2 The objectives of the Action Plan include enabling and increasing the uptake of active journeys within Worcester City Council making walking, wheeling and cycling accessible and attractive forms of transportation particularly for shorter journeys.
- 3.3 The Action Plan has been developed through significant consultation with stakeholders and members. An Active Travel Action Plan Steering Group consisting of Councillor Denham, Councillor Hodgson and Councillor Cockeram has guided the overall objectives and the proposals included within the action plan.
- 3.4 The Action Plan considers both actions that the Council will take within the Council (internal), and actions that are aimed at improvements in Worcester more broadly (external).
- 3.5 Whilst the action plan naturally has a strong focus on cycling, walking is the most sustainable, low-cost and accessible form of active travel, and is included in over half of the actions.

#### Internal Actions

- 3.6 As a large employer, the Council is well positioned to implement active travel policies and initiatives for its employees, setting a strong example for other businesses in the city. Internal actions will focus on increasing active travel amongst staff for both business travel and commuting, through promotion and engagement within the Council. This includes continuing improvements to cycle facilities for staff at all sites in line with demand and the promotion of ongoing schemes and initiatives including the Cycle to Work scheme, the Sustainability and Health in Future Transport (SHIFT) scheme (also open to Members) and the Council's e-bikes.

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<sup>7</sup> Number of cars or vans, Census 2021, Office for National Statistics ([Number of cars or vans – Census Maps, ONS](#))

- 3.7 An updated staff travel survey will be carried out to establish a baseline of current levels of active journeys amongst City Council staff. The data collected will allow progress to be monitored and the effectiveness of actions measured.
- 3.8 The Council has made significant improvements to staff cycle facilities at the Museum and Art Gallery and Guildhall. Changing facilities have also been provided and improved at these locations and at the Warndon depot and Astwood.
- 3.9 The Council has several schemes to encourage active journeys by staff including the Cycle to Work Scheme, the SHIFT scheme and e-bikes available to book for all staff. To highlight the benefits and opportunities for staff regarding active travel, a new set of induction information will be created and distributed.

#### External Actions

- 3.10 External actions will focus on activities to encourage modal shift for those travelling around the city, including through implementation of a bike share scheme under the Town Investment Plan, and engagement with key stakeholders. The government report 'Gear Change'<sup>3</sup> clearly sets out the responsibilities of local authorities in increasing the number of active journeys particularly within cities. For the Council to achieve this, engagement of key groups is vital including schools, businesses, interest and community groups, in addition to ongoing collaboration with the County Council and surrounding district councils.
- 3.11 It is well established that journeys to school can create significant issues including congestion, air pollution and unsafe roads for pupils. Worcester City Council will encourage schools to become ModeSHIFT star accredited; this scheme is a national Travel Plan accreditation scheme run by ModeSHIFT, a non-profit membership organisation. Access for schools within Worcestershire is currently funded through the County Council. This action supports current government targets of increasing the number of children walking to school to 55% by 2025.
- 3.12 Currently there is little online information regarding cycle parking in Worcester. To align this with the information on car parks, all information for Council run facilities such as parks, leisure centres and attractions will be updated with details of available cycle parking. Additionally, cycle parking within the city centre will be mapped on the Council website enabling residents and visitors to easily locate them.
- 3.13 The Council will continue to engage with the County Council and other stakeholders and partners to champion active travel within the city and maximise the number of active travel journeys made.

#### **4. Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 The Action Plan is required to help fulfil the active travel related aims and objectives of this Committee including increasing levels of active journeys within the city.
- 4.2 Whilst there are other actions that could be considered, the proposed action plan is recommended as including the optimum actions that the Council can reasonably progress in the immediate future.

#### **5. Partners**

- 5.1 The Council benefits from strong relationships with partners who are also involved in increasing active travel across Worcester. The Council will be seeking to continue to work with these partners as the action plan is implemented and to strengthen relationships where possible. A key part of this will involve participation with the countywide Active Travel Stakeholder Group which is being facilitated through Worcestershire County Council. Participants of the group include walking, cycling and wheeling groups from across the county and officers from the district and county councils.
- 5.2 Key active travel partners for the City Council include Worcestershire County Council, Worcester Environmental Group, University of Worcester, Heart of Worcestershire College, BIKE Worcester, The Canal and River Trust, Onside Advocacy and Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

## **6. Existing Projects**

- 6.1 There are several actions carried over from the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan including external projects such as the Town Investment Fund Active Travel Projects and the Wild about Worcester Way. A number of projects internal to the Council including the promotion and expansion of the SHIFT scheme, introduction of Bikeability lessons for all staff and promoting the Council's staff e-bikes for business travel have also been carried over. Some of these projects have started, others are yet to begin.

### Examples of existing projects included under the Action Plan

- 6.2 Worcester Environmental Group in partnership with Onside Advocacy and supported by Worcester City Council launched the Wild about Worcester Way in April 2023. This consists of a 12-mile wildlife corridor around the city encouraging residents to become more connected to the environment with the hopes of improving both mental and physical health and awareness of biodiversity issues. Environment Committee have approved grant funding that has supported this project.
- 6.3 In 2022 the Council received funding from the Town Investment Fund, £4.5m of which was allocated to Active Travel projects alongside additional funding from both the City and County Council. The projects include resurfacing and creation of active travel routes, construction of the Kepax bridge and the introduction of a bike share scheme. These projects are all on track and are being reported to this committee separately, with a detailed report previously presented [on Monday, 30th January, 2023](#).

## **7. Implications**

### 7.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

Many of the actions included within this plan can be undertaken through existing staff resources, with no requirements for further funding required. Several actions, such as those carried across from the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan, where they relate to active travel, have budgets already established. Other actions do not have funding requirements established yet. To progress these actions, if they are agreed through this committee, will require funding to be identified.

External funding will be applied for wherever this is available.

Where actions are aligned to the Environmental Sustainability Strategy it may be appropriate to request an allocation from the Environmental Sustainability Enabling Budget which is delegated to the Environment Committee.

Officers will continue to apply for external funding where opportunities exist.

## 7.2 Legal and Governance Implications

Under section 82 of Part IV of the Environment Act, the Council has a duty to carry out periodic review and assessment of air quality within Worcester, setting out the results in Annual Status Reports. Under section 83 and 84 the Council must declare Air Quality Management Areas for areas not in line with air quality objectives and create and implement an Air Quality Action Plan. Currently this is implemented by Worcestershire Regulatory Services in partnership with the City and County Council.

A small Member steering group was established to oversee the development of the Active Travel Action Plan. It is recommended that this Steering Group continues and supports the Committee with the monitoring of progress of this plan. This approach has proved valuable in developing and overseeing the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan through the Environment Committee.

Governance of the delivery of the action programme will be through performance reports to Health and Wellbeing Committee.

## 7.3 Risk Implications

At this stage there are no specific risks identified with the projects proposed in this action plan.

## 7.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

The Action Plan is aligned to the Council's adopted Environmental Sustainability Strategy and the City Plan Themes of "a healthy and active city", which has an objective of "Helping more people make healthier choices, more easily" and a desired outcome of increased physical activity for all age groups and increased provision and use of cycle/walking routes. The Action Plan is also aligned with the Worcester Town Investment Plan, including previously approved active travel projects under the plan.

## 7.5 Equality Implications

The introduction to the report identifies that there are currently many accessibility barriers for some people to traveling actively. The Sustrans and Arup Cycling for Everyone report<sup>8</sup> found that significant numbers of people with protected characteristics do not cycle for example that 85% of people aged over 65 and over 70% of disabled people, women, people at risk of deprivation, and people from ethnic minority groups never cycle, but would like to start.

Sustrans' Bike Life 2019 survey<sup>9</sup> found that only 9% of women cycled at least once a week compared to 21% of men. Similarly, only 7% of over-65s cycled compared to 17% of 16-65 year-olds. For those with a disability 78% never cycle, with only 9% of

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<sup>8</sup> Cycling for everyone, Sustrans and Arup 2020 ([cycling for everyone-sustrans-arup.pdf](#))

<sup>9</sup> Bike Life, 2019 ([bikelife19\\_aggregatedreport.pdf \(sustrans.org.uk\)](#))

cycling at least once a week compared to 17% of non-disabled people. Additionally, only 12% of people from ethnic minority groups cycled at least once a week compared to 16% from white groups. For those likely to be at risk of deprivation, a similar pattern was reflected with only 10% cycling at least once a week compared to 16%.

The primary barriers cited were road safety, lack of confidence in cycle skills, cost of a suitable cycle and ingrained societal ideas and stereotypes of 'who cycling is for'<sup>8</sup>.

The major projects within the plan will be subject to equality impact assessment before progressing to inform the reduction of barriers to participation.

#### 7.6 Human Resources Implications

There are no human resources implications arising directly from the content of this report. No additional staff resource is proposed.

#### 7.7 Health and Safety Implications

There are no health and safety implications identified with the projects proposed in this action programme.

#### 7.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

This work closely links to the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and associated Action Plan and will have a direct and positive environmental impact including supporting improving air quality. Increased physical activity is proven to improve both mental and physical health, preventing chronic conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and depression. Active Travel is linked to other economic benefits including increased footfall within the city centre, significant savings to the local NHS trust (from both the increase in physical activity and reduction of air pollution) and reduced rates of absence for employers.

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#### **Background Papers:**

**1** [Active Travel, Health and Wellbeing Committee Report, July 2022 \(\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Health and Wellbeing Committee, 18/07/2022 19:00 \(worcester.gov.uk\)\)](#)