

**Report to: Health and Wellbeing Committee, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024**

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

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**Subject: PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE DELIVERY OF THE ACTIVE TRAVEL ACTION PLAN**

## **1. Recommendation**

**1.1 That the Committee note the content of this report.**

## **2. Introduction**

2.1 This report sets out the twice-yearly update on the progress to deliver the Active Travel Action Plan 2023-25. A summary of the internal and external actions is provided in report section 4 and an action-by-action update is provided in **Appendix 1**.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 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. 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.
- 3.2 The two year Active Travel Action Plan was approved by this Committee in June 2023. The plan includes actions internal to the Council and external actions, where the Council can influence, directly or indirectly, the transition to active travel by residents, visitors and those who work in the city.
- 3.3 A cross-party member steering group was established to oversee the development of the Active Travel Action Plan and the subsequent progression of the actions within the plan. This group has met regularly in the development of the plan and since it was approved.
- 3.4 In order to ensure effective governance of the action plan it was agreed that this Committee would receive progress reports on the delivery of the action plan twice yearly. This report is the first of those twice-yearly progress updates.
- 3.5 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.

- 3.6 A modal shift away from motorised vehicles to walking, wheeling and cycling will contribute to the Council's ambitions for carbon reduction outlined in the Sustainability Strategy 2020-30 and improvement in air quality following the declaration of the city as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).
- 3.7 Active travel has a wide range of health benefits arising from physical activity, including improving physical and mental health.

#### **4. Progress of actions in the Active Travel Action Plan**

- 4.1 Details for each action within the action plan are provided in the performance report in **Appendix 1**. The following sections of this report provide a commentary on the progress made to date.

##### **Internal**

- 4.2 Internal actions are focused on increasing active travel amongst staff for both business travel and commuting. 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.

##### The SHIFT Scheme

- 4.2.1 The Council adopted the SHIFT scheme in September 2022, a locally promoted initiative, to incentivise staff to cycle to work and for business travel by donating to the Mayor's charity for every kilometre cycled. In the first two quarters of 2023/24 this amounted to £59, which has been funded from within existing budgets. Since the scheme started it has been expanded to include elected members and more recently to include walking and wheeling.
- 4.2.2 Significant work has been undertaken to promote the scheme internally and engage with users. Monthly achievement emails are sent to all users to congratulate them on the distance travelled, money raised, and carbon saved by choosing to travel actively. There are posters in all staff cycle shelters with a QR code to the mileage form and it is regularly featured in weekly updates for staff.

##### Staff Travel Survey

- 4.2.3 In September 2023, the council carried out a staff travel survey to gather data on staff travel patterns, current usage of active travel initiatives and views about current staff travel policies. There were 134 responses in total, reflecting a response rate of around 50%.
- 4.2.4 A detailed analysis of the results of the survey has been conducted and presented to the Active Travel Steering Group, as well as to officers.
- 4.2.5 The survey showed that business travel has reduced to a very low level since the pandemic with the use of remote meetings now commonplace.
- 4.2.6 The two main barriers to active travel for commuting are distance and confidence. Whilst the former is not something that the Council can address, work is ongoing to support staff in being confident to cycle.

- 4.2.7 Whilst the total number of respondents was very positive, and demonstrated good engagement with active travel communications, the relatively low response rate from staff at the Warndon depot illustrates a need to better engage with these front-line workers. Active travel is a popular mode of transport to this site, supported recent Town Investment Plan funded improvements to the canal towpath, but further engagement will be undertaken.
- 4.2.8 The small number of staff who reported they are aware of SHIFT scheme highlights the need to continue to promote this as an incentive to change behaviour.
- 4.2.9 The survey will be repeated in 2025 to assess the impact of initiatives over time.

### **External**

- 4.3 External actions are focused 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.
- 4.4 These external actions included in the Action Plan reflected the Government report 'Gear Change', which set out the responsibilities of local authorities to increasing the number of active journeys particularly within cities. For the Council to take action on 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.

### Travel to School

- 4.4.1 Modeshift STARS is a school travel accreditation scheme supported by the Department for Transport and Active Travel England and funded by Worcestershire County Council. The scheme rewards schools over five levels (Green, Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum) for increasing the number of young people who regularly walk, wheel, cycle and use other forms of sustainable transport to get to and from school.
- 4.4.2 Officers have been working with elected members to introduce active travel initiatives and encourage participation in the Modeshift STARS scheme at several schools.
- 4.4.3 As part of the Council's Environmental Sustainability Community Grants fund Bike Worcester were awarded £1000 in January 2023 to expand their Bike Bus scheme, with bike buses in operation at eight different primary schools.

### Communications

- 4.4.4 A number of key active travel campaigns have been promoted to residents and businesses through the Sustainable Worcester Instagram page and other Council social media channels, including the Big Walk and Wheel, Cycle to School Week and National Walking Month.
- 4.4.5 Campaigns such as National Walking Month in May were promoted internally, encouraging staff to include walking in their daily routine by having walking meetings, walking for business travel and as part of their commute. There has also been promotion of the Wild about Worcester Way, a 13-mile wildlife corridor which incorporates key active travel and leisure routes around the city.

4.4.6 A webpage dedicated to active travel in Worcester is being developed. This will include key information about the Active Travel Action Plan, local cycling and walking groups and cycle parking maps and bench location maps.

#### Community Engagement and Events

4.4.7 As the two largest Council events, the Worcester Show and the Victorian Fayre have been the focus for incorporating and promoting active travel. A communication plan was developed in the lead up to both events to encourage and promote active and sustainable travel to the event through appropriate channels. Planned cycle parking was assessed to ensure it was sufficient and was promoted.

#### Partnership working

4.4.8 As set out in the Government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, all local authorities are encouraged to have Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) to enable a long-term approach to planning cycling, walking and wheeling improvements. The key outputs from the LCWIP will be creating a network plan which identifies key routes and areas for improvement and an infrastructure programme for future investment opportunities.

4.4.9 Earlier this year, Worcestershire County Council received funding to develop LCWIPs across Worcestershire including for Worcester. Worcester's LCWIP is being developed by Jacobs Consultancy on behalf of Worcestershire County Council. An initial key stakeholder engagement event took place in September 2023 to gather views on key routes, with more engagement with key stakeholders including City Councillors on emerging routes planned for Spring 2024 and public consultation set for summer 2024. The Worcester LCWIP is due to be published at the end of 2024.

4.4.10 Following approval by this Committee in October the contract to operate the Bikeshare scheme has now been awarded to Beryl, and the scheme is programmed to go live at the end of May 2024. Current work is focussed on identifying locations of parking bays, and a communication in the Member's weekly messages invited suggestions. Further Member engagement will be undertaken early in the new year before the locations are finalised.

## 5. Metrics for the Active Travel Action Plan

5.1 Following the approval of the action plan it was agreed that a set of metrics would be developed to assess progress with actions. Discussions with Members in the Active Travel Steering Group has identified useful management information around usage of the various schemes such as SHIFT, Cycle to Work and Modeshift STARS, monitoring the use of the staff e-bikes and uptake of Bikeability sessions. These metrics will be reported to the steering group to inform discussions and guide the progression of actions.

**Ward(s):**

**All Wards**

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**Background Papers:**