

Report to: Health and Wellbeing Committee, 29th July 2024

Report of: Deputy Director, Corporate Policy and Strategy

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

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Committee notes 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 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.

3.2 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. Membership of this group has been updated to reflect the changes to membership of this committee and will meet again following this committee cycle.

3.3 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.

3.4 Active Travel is most often linked to walking and cycling; however it 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.

3.5 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 Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2020-30 and a reduction in air pollution as set out in the Draft Air Quality Action Plan 2024-29.

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. The actions include continuing improvements to cycle facilities for staff and the promotion of ongoing active travel related schemes and initiatives. Some of these initiatives are the Cycle to Work scheme, the Sustainability and Health in Future Transport (SHIFT) scheme (which is also open to Members) and the council's e-bikes.

Staff and Member Engagement

4.2.1 An Elected Members Sustainability Newsletter was launched in November which includes messaging around active travel.

4.2.2 In March, a staff Sustainability Newsletter was launched, sharing information on key projects, useful resources and sustainability campaigns. The newsletters include regular updates and information promoting active travel for staff, such as the bikeshare scheme staff trial and National Walking Month.

4.2.3 Following the launch of the bikeshare scheme in June, a staff active travel themed engagement week has taken place, promoting staff schemes such as the Cycle to Work, the SHIFT scheme and the Beryl Bikes through staff communications. To encourage staff to commute actively throughout the week, a donation was made to the Mayor's charity for each staff member who walk, wheeled or cycled to work.

4.2.4 During the staff engagement week, the new Staff Sustainable Travel resources were launched which includes a dedicated SharePoint page and route information for staff travelling between city council sites.

The SHIFT Scheme

4.2.5 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. Since the scheme started it has been expanded to include elected members and more recently to include walking and wheeling.

4.2.6 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 posters around entrances to offices to promote the scheme to those who walk. It is also regularly featured in weekly updates for staff and in both the staff and member newsletters.

4.2.7 A yearlong staff competition was held from May 2023 to May 2024, with two prizes available for most kilometres travelled and most improved. Overall staff members

and councillors travelled 6275 kilometres in total, raising £157 and preventing 1071kg of carbon being emitted.

External

- 4.3 External actions in the Plan are focused on activities to encourage modal shift for those travelling around the city including the implementation of the bike share scheme funded by the Town Investment Plan, and engagement with key stakeholders.

The 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.

Communications

- 4.3.1 A [webpage](#) on the Council's website specifically about active travel in Worcester was launched earlier this year. This page contains key information about the Active Travel Action Plan, local cycling and walking groups and a cycle parking map. A bench location map is currently being developed and will be uploaded onto the webpage in the coming months.
- 4.3.2 Active travel has been fully embedded into the Sustainable Worcester communications plan which includes the new [Sustainable Worcester Facebook page](#) as well as the existing [Instagram page](#). Most recently this included promoting National Walking Month, Walk to School Week and the bikeshare scheme.

Community Engagement and Events

- 4.3.3 There is ongoing work to encourage and promote active travel for events in Worcester. The updated website information and cycle parking map is a good resource for events organisers in the city. Engagement will continue with the Community Engagement team in the lead up to the Worcester Show to ensure there is sufficient communications encouraging people to travel actively.

Travel to School

- 4.3.4 A set of 30 hi-vis vests has been purchased to loan to schools looking to pilot active travel initiatives. Loaning the vests allows schools with limited resources to trial initiatives before making a financial commitment. If initiatives are successful and the school wishes to continue, they would then purchase their own.

Partnership Working

- 4.3.5 In May 2023, Worcestershire County Council set up an Active Travel Stakeholder Group with officers from all district councils and local cycling, walking and wheeling groups. There have been four meetings so far, attended by officers. Topics discussed include the LCWIPs and local infrastructure improvements.
- 4.3.6 As part of the stakeholder group, a number of subgroups have been developed to discuss aspects in more detail and then report back to the Active Travel Stakeholder

Group. Earlier this year a Worcester sub-group was formed and is meeting regularly, providing a forum for co-ordinating and collaborating on active initiatives and an opportunity for partnership working. The sub-group will report to the Active Travel Stakeholder Group at the quarterly meetings.

4.3.7 Worcestershire County Council have received funding to develop Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) across Worcestershire including for Worcester. Worcester's LCWIP is being developed by Jacobs Consultancy on behalf of Worcestershire County Council. The timeline for delivery of Worcester's LCWIP has been delayed, with the second phase of stakeholder engagement now planned for early 2025.

Bikeshare Scheme

4.3.8 The 'Beryl Bikes' bikeshare scheme was launched on 17th June by operator Beryl, with 225 bikes (175 e-bikes and 50 pedal bikes) distributed across the city in 40 days.

4.3.9 The scheme has had a very positive start, with upwards of 5,525 journeys having been made by 2,700 registered users (as of 9th July).

4.3.10 Feedback from users on the scheme has been excellent, with many users commenting on the ease of use of the scheme and the improved opportunity to move actively around the city which the scheme gives them.

4.3.11 Whilst there have been a few issues of vandalism, these have been fairly isolated.

4.3.12 The number of bays will increase to a minimum of 53. Key gaps in the network have been identified and Beryl are working closely with the Council to address these.

4.3.13 The bikeshare scheme has been funded through the Towns Fund as part of a set of active travel projects. The scheme aims to provide access to members of the public who wish to use bikes and to encourage cycling as a viable sustainable travel option.

4.3.14 Parking bays are "geofenced", with locations of the bays correlated with GPS (Global positioning Satellite) technology integrated within the bikes.

4.3.15 The bikes are primarily operated by an app on the user's mobile phone, which will lock and unlock bikes and manage payment. Non-smartphone access is also available using SMS. To access by SMS, users will be required to register an account through the services website in advance of hiring a bike. Riders can then text the unique unlock code for a bike to a dedicated number.

4.3.16 As part of their social value commitment, Beryl will run a Community Champions Initiative for their schemes, allowing local community groups and charities to apply for free or subsidised minutes for use by the local community.

4.3.17 Beryl have committed to providing 500 hours of bike rides for social prescribing in Worcester.

4.3.18 There is also the possibility of introducing e-cargo bikes at a later date. Beryl have introduced these in other schemes such as in Hereford and Hackney. This is being considered as an alternative to the previously discussed idea of a city council owned cargo bike as there would be additional benefits to residents and businesses.

4.3.19 A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed earlier this year which included consultation with Sight Concern and the council's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group. A number of mitigations were identified and actions implemented to ensure negative implications were limited.

Ward(s): **All Wards**
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Background Papers: **Active Travel Action Plan 2023-25**