

Report of the Assistant Director Governance and ICT

School Travel Plans Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee – Final Report

Summary

1. This report presents the final report of the School Travel Plans Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee and asks the Executive to approve the resulting recommendations. Councillor Potter, Chair of the Ad-hoc Scrutiny Committee, will be attendance to present the report.

Background

2. In coming to a decision to review this topic, the Committee recognised certain key objectives and the following remit was agreed:

3. **Aim**

To identify an integrated approach to travel plan development that recognises the relationships between active travel and health, sustainability (particularly air quality and climate change issues) and traffic congestion and community cohesion.

Objectives

Having regard to the impact of traffic congestion (based on external evidence and those measures already implemented in LTP1 or proposed in LTP2), recommend and prioritise specific improvements to:

- i. Understanding what works and what doesn't work in York, and best practice elsewhere.
- ii. Understanding the costs and challenges, in order to identify how the council, schools and their communities can do school travel planning better.
- iii. Identifying the best way to support schools with travel planning, either through the role of School Travel Plan Co-ordinators (subject to available funding being provided/identified), or providing support to schools through an alternative mechanism.
- iv. Identifying any key messages for wider travel planning in York

Consultation

4. Officers from the council's Transport Planning Unit (TPU) provided support throughout the review and officers from Planning, Network Management and Development Control were consulted.
5. In addition, the Committee invited a representative from Sustrans¹ to attend a meeting to provide advice on national best practice, and members of the Committee visited a number of schools to meet with Head Teachers, other members of staff responsible for school travel plans, and pupil representatives.

Options

6. Having considered the findings contained within the final report and its annexes attached, Members may chose to support all, some or none of the recommendations shown in paragraph 9 of this cover report.

Analysis

7. In regards to the aims and objectives of this review, the School Travel Plans Ad-hoc Scrutiny Committee analysis of all of the information gathered, is shown within their final report at Appendix 1.
8. In December 2010 the final report and recommendations were considered by the Scrutiny Management Committee. Members stressed the importance of ensuring that the recommendations were actioned and gave examples of several near-miss incidents that had occurred in the vicinity of schools.
9. Overall, they agreed with the recommendations but suggested that in respect of recommendation 11, more than one exemplar School Travel Plan should be made available on-line, and that the final report would benefit from some more detailed financial implications information. As a result of their comments, the financial implications have been reassessed as requested and additional information has been incorporated into this cover report.

Summary of Recommendations Arising from the Review

10. The Ad-hoc Scrutiny Committee agreed the following recommendations:

| Recommendation | Executive Comments |
|---|--------------------|
| 1 - Improve collaborative working across service areas and Directorates to allow for improved forward planning in Schools | |
| 2 - Include in best practice guide for schools - 'encourage year 6 pupils to cycle/walk to | |

¹ Information on Sustrans can be found in a foot note in the Final Report attached at Appendix 1.

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| <p>secondary schools on induction days to build pupil/parent confidence, in time for starting at secondary school' (Linked to Rec.10)</p> | |
| <p>3 - Instruct officers to investigate sources of sustainable funding for initiatives and incentives for future financial years</p> | |
| <p>4 - Instruct officers to investigate the introduction of a 'one-off' cycle allowance for use in purchasing a bicycle and equipment and/or a loan scheme for bicycles and equipment, in place of free bus travel for those that want it and are eligible</p> | |
| <p>5 - Reprioritise the work of Civil Enforcement Officers to allow for an increase in the amount of time they can spend enforcing the parking restrictions outside schools</p> | |
| <p>6 - Instruct Communities & Neighbourhoods Parking Services to investigate and provide future report to the Executive on the use of a CCTV car and sharing the costs with other local authorities and/or public agencies</p> | |
| <p>7 - Revise council policy to ensure Development Control can only accept an STP in support of a school planning application if it adheres to the DfT minimum standards contained within the 'School Travel Plan Quality Assurance - Advice Note' issued by the DfT & DCSF in 2007. In cases where an STP does not meet those standards, instruct Development Control to make it a condition of planning consent, or successor documents.</p> | |
| <p>8 - Identify a clear strategy for resolving inter-directorate issues to ensure enforcement of conditions of planning consent relating to STPs</p> | |
| <p>9 - Include in best practice guide for school 'that a Travel Plan Champion be identified within the school' (Linked to Rec.10)</p> | |
| <p>10 - Transport Planning Unit to develop and issue a best practice guide for York schools, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a toolbox of measures for schools to pick and choose from when producing/revising their STP | |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promotion of the involvement of all relevant parties i.e. governors, parents, children and staff champions • Information on what has previously proved successful in York and what has not, to inform school's choices (in support of objective (i)) • a school travel plan template | |
| <p>11 - To support the work of the Transport Planning Unit, the following to be made available online via the forthcoming schools portal (referred to in paragraph 73 of the final report):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Practice Guide (see Rec.10) • exemplar School Travel Plan | |
| <p>12 - Identify framework for reviewing and monitoring STPs</p> | |
| <p>13 - Recognise the value of the work and transferable skills of STPCs through the forthcoming budget process to ensure the continuation of the post for the year 2011/12</p> | |
| <p>14 - Promote safe routes to school through schools and Best Practice Guide (see Rec.10)</p> | |
| <p>15 - Provide access to information on safe routes to school (or links to external sites providing that information) via the new Education Portal</p> | |
| <p>16 - Increase publicity by emphasising within existing/future schemes the health benefits of walking and cycling</p> | |

Corporate Strategy

11. This review related to a number of the themes within the Council's Corporate Strategy e.g. that the Council will make York a Healthy and more Sustainable City.

Implications

12. **Financial** There are financial implications associated with recommendations 3 – 6, 13 & 16.
13. **Recommendation 3** - The overall cost of carrying out the initiatives carried out this financial year (2010-11) was £24,255. £16,655 of that sum came from external sources such as Cycle City, and £7,600 was provided by the council (this included a one-off set up cost for 'Walk with Wilf' event of £3,800).

14. The cost to the council of carrying out the same initiatives in future years would therefore be £3,800. No formal budget existed for the financing of those initiatives and therefore the money was accumulated by drawing from other budgets elsewhere within City Strategy (mainly from the road safety budget). Due to the minimal costs involved, it would be possible for City Strategy Directorate to absorb this pressure within their base budget.
15. **Recommendation 4** - The idea of moving pupils from buses to bikes is something that the Access & Community Transport Team would support in principle and there are good examples of where this type of approach could be trialed. However, the current position in York (based on 09/10 data) is that 1632 pupils are transported by dedicated contracted home to school bus/coaches. This means the Access & Community Transport Team do not purchase individual passes but contract a number of vehicles to transport these pupils on a day to day basis. Moving these pupils to bicycles would mean the Access & Community Transport Team purchasing a bicycle voucher but not necessarily reducing the number of contracted vehicles. So this may mean rather than reducing costs it could result in an increase in costs.
16. Potential savings could be made for the 411 pupils that the Access & Community Transport Team currently buy bus passes for (from the likes of First, & Pullman etc). By moving these pupils to bicycles, it would reduce the cost as a bicycle voucher would be cheaper than a bus pass. We currently spend about £151k a year on bus passes. (The average cost per child per year of being transported on a dedicated home to school transport bus or being provided with a bus pass to travel on a public service route to a mainstream school is £495).
17. To make it financially viable to the council, there may need to be a minimum period set before pupils could go back to a bus pass, say 12 months or 24 months. There may also be a financial impact in regard to the administration of any scheme and staff training, and this would need to be identified as part of the investigation work, should the recommendation be approved.
18. **Recommendation 5** – Last year 30 Penalty Charge Notices were issued around York schools which is a higher number than some other authorities. Any change to the amount of time spent enforcing parking restrictions elsewhere in the city (i.e. not outside schools) may effect the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued. At this stage it is not clear what effect this will have on the amount of revenue gathered annually from these.
19. **Recommendation 6** - The cost of providing a CCTV vehicle and the necessary staffing is likely to be between £50,000 and £100,000. However, at this stage the scrutiny committee are only recommending that this be fully investigated and have suggested that sharing the use of a vehicle or hiring a suitable vehicle for a limited time, maybe be a possibility.
20. **Recommendation 13** –Since 2004 the Government has financed the initiative to deliver STPs in all of the nation's schools. During that time, the onus has

been on local authorities to deliver and promote STPs, and in York this money (£40k per annum) has funded one full time equivalent member of staff (usually, as at present, two members of staff on a job-share basis). This cost could be reduced by half if a decision was taken to reduce the post to part time.

21. For 2010/11, the area based grant was reduced by 25% and is set to continue until March 2011. The provisional settlement has confirmed that the grant for School Travel Advisors will cease from 1st April 2011 therefore there is no future funding available for the posts.
22. York's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) is intended to shape transport policy for the next twenty years with an action plan which will set specific, deliverable, objectives for 2011-2014/16. This delivery will be within the context of a greatly reduced Capital budget which means there will be reduced funding for infrastructural schemes. As a result LTP3 is likely to include more low cost schemes and initiatives demonstrating value for money to influencing travel behaviour, as this is likely to be high up the coalition government's agenda.
23. Therefore, in recognising that the current area based grant used to fund the STPC post will cease at the end of March 2011, and at a time when resources are become increasingly scarce, the Scrutiny Committee recognised that the future of York's STPCs may well be in question. However they recognised the transferable knowledge, skills and expertise of the post holders and identified that there is still sufficient work for the post holders to warrant the funding of the post for another financial year, particularly in light of the changing focus of LTP3 from infrastructural schemes to low cost initiatives designed to influence travel behaviour.
24. For this to be financially viable, the committee agreed the focus of the STPCs work could be expanded to include working with schools within the context of the wider community. For instance, working with local businesses to encourage and promote sustainable travel for residents e.g. how parents can walk their children to school then continue to walk, cycle or take the bus to their place of work. Their work could also support other key drivers in the city. For example, the council has set a target to reduce carbon emissions by 40% by 2020 and 80% by 2050. As the 'school run' contributes 20% of the vehicles on the road during term time, it is clear that by encouraging more walking and cycling to school and onwards, could play an important part in reducing carbon emissions through transport and contribute to a low carbon lifestyle.
25. The financial implications of the recommendation would be for the council as part of its budget setting to set aside £40k one-off funding for the financial year 2011/12. This could be considered by funding from reserves for one year however it would not be prudent to reduce reserves at a time that the council is facing severe financial pressures.
26. **Recommendation 16** – The majority of funding sources for publicity have been either cut or withdrawn. The funding from Cycling City has been very beneficial in relation to cycling publicity and initiatives. The cessation of this grant support will limit any future activity.

27. **Human Resources** – There are HR implications associated with recommendations 4 & 5
28. **Recommendation 4** – the Access & Community Transport Team would need to carry out the proposed investigation of a bicycle scheme. If a decision was subsequently taken to implement the scheme, staff training would be required. However, is unlikely to result in a significant impact on their workload as it would reduce the work currently being undertaken to administer the issue of bus passes.
29. **Recommendation 5** - Communities & Neighbourhoods Parking Services Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) undertake the enforcement of parking restrictions throughout the City. These include loading restrictions, bus stops, cycle lanes and traffic routes, designated parking spaces including Respark, car parks and paid on street parking, yellow lines and specific scheduled schools patrols. Parking restrictions are applicable to 38 schools in the local authority area. These are scheduled at 2 patrols per week given current resources and duties of CEOs. Additional enforcement patrols and responses to parking hotline calls relating to particular problems are also carried out. In 2009/10 the average number of specific school patrols was between 3 and 4 per week.
30. CEOs - of which there are 22 - cover the City between 7.45 am and 9.30 pm 7 days a week - working in shifts to cover those hours. In effect this means that Monday to Friday, the early shift will be comprised of a maximum of 8-10 CEOs and the late shift a maximum of 6 CEOs at anyone time. Any increase in the number of schools with enforceable parking restrictions or any agreed increase in the number of patrols outside schools, could not be accommodated with the current enforcement resources and duties, without effecting the patrols elsewhere across the city.
31. **Equalities** – In regard to Recommendations 10 & 15, a mechanism will need to be identified that enables individuals to request information provided either direct by the Transport Planning Unit or via the Education Portal, in alternative formats subject to their individual needs, and be made accessible for parents who have no access to the internet.
32. **Legal** – In regard to Recommendation 4, legal issues related to the introduction of a Bicycle Voucher/Loan scheme would need to be addressed as part of the investigative work undertaken, should Recommendation 4 be approved.

Risk Management

33. There are no known risks to the Council associated with the recommendations arising from this review.

Recommendations

34. The Executive are recommended to approve the recommendations arising from the School Travel Plans Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review.

Contact Details

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Report Approved**Date**

30 November 2010

Specialist Implications Officer(s):

Financial – Patrick Looker

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Appendix 1 – Final Report

- Annex A** – DfT Paper - 'Making School Travel Plans Work: Effects, Benefits and Success Factors at English Schools'
- Annex B** – 'School Travel and Evidence data - Case Studies August 2010: A) Examples of LA wide mode shift improvements'
- Annex C** – Information on Pilot Cycle Voucher Scheme from Hull City Council
- Annex D** – Examples of Best Practice in York
- Annex E** – Feedback from School Visits