

**Decision Session – Executive Member for
Transport**

8 September 2020

Report of the Assistant Director, Transport, Highways and Environment

E-scooter and e-bike trial (Department for Transport initiative), in the context of the COVID-19 Economic Recovery and Transport Recovery plans

Summary

1. This paper sets out a proposal for a small-scale trial of e-scooters and e-bikes in York for a 12-month period from the end of September 2020 involving City of York Council, York Hospital and the University of York, with the trial being operated by a preferred supplier.
2. The reason for the urgency of the decision is:
 - a) To be able to meet the Department for Transport’s trial window, and for the preferred supplier’s ability to mobilise a service within these timeframes;
 - b) To enable a decision to be made in public rather than through the use of emergency measures.

Recommendation

3. The recommendations in this report relate to the City of York council’s response to the Department for Transport’s micro-mobility trial. The decision relates to the Council’s participation in the trial working with the identified preferred supplier, York Hospital and the University of York;

Option 1: Agree to participate in the trial as outlined in the body of the report. This would see an implementation of e-scooters and e-bikes across a number of small-scale parking bays across the City. The trial would start at the end of September 2020 and run to September 2021, with review taking place throughout. [this is the option recommended by Officers];

Option 2: To not participate in the trial.

4. If the trial is approved, it is proposed to take a small-scale phased approach, to allow for lessons to be learned and for feedback to inform future phases of implementation. It is proposed that the first phase of implementation would focus on working in partnership with York Teaching Hospital and the University of York.
5. There will be a regular review process (at least 2 monthly) where performance will be discussed. This process will review the successes and challenges and prepare reports for Economy & Place Policy & Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Member to consider, where appropriate. The trial could be paused or halted at any time if significant issues (defined as those that could not be resolved as part of the trial by the project team) were to arise.

Background

6. The Department for Transport (DfT) has brought forward and expanded e-scooter trials to support a 'green' restart of local travel and to help mitigate the impact of reduced public transport capacity. York has the opportunity to become a carefully managed trial site for e-scooters, with the proposed addition of the facility for hire of e-bikes which may be the preferred mode for a wider customer base including older cyclists.
7. The narrow window for a decision to be made on whether to sign-up for this trial is dictated by DfT deadlines and the need to provide the supplier, with sufficient time for planning and implementation in line with DfT requirements.

How would e-scooters work?

8. Users would require a smartphone app to unlock the e-scooter. As part of DfT requirements, users must hold at least a provisional driving licence to ride an e-scooter and would be covered by insurance. The preferred supplier are able to ensure that no-one can use an e-scooter without having a verified licence. This effectively guarantees a minimum age of 16.
9. E-scooters would be treated similarly to electrically-assisted pedal cycles as they have a similar road presence. E-scooters would therefore be allowed on roads and cycleways but not pedestrian footways. The preferred supplier would use 'geo-fencing' to prevent riding in specified

locations and to slow the speed of e-scooters in certain areas such as shared spaces and footstreets. The maximum speed of an e-scooter would be capped at 15.5mph (this is a legal requirement set by the DfT). The speed would also be limited for new users and in areas identified as requiring a lower speed for safety reasons.

10. E-scooters and e-bikes would only be able to be parked in designated parking bays which the preferred supplier would identify as parking locations in-app, with visual aids on-street to help users identify parking locations. Geo-fencing would also be used to ensure a user cannot end their trip and will continue the hire cost if left outside of these locations.
11. Pricing for e-scooter users would be competitive with other UK cities that have already implemented e-scooters. Milton Keynes and Cambridge have recently launched trials with other operators, where users are charged £1 to unlock and £0.20 per minute to ride. There are also options to reduce price for frequent users or other identified groups.

Discussion

12. Whilst the council is under no compulsion to allow this trial to go ahead in York, it would provide an opportunity to explore how e-scooters might add to the mix of sustainable transport options available to residents with a supplier who has been selected as meeting the needs of York. It could also align with existing policies such as the recently-adopted clean air zone, the expansion of EV charging infrastructure and work on intelligent transport systems (STEP). The trial could also form part of the city's Covid-19 response in terms of for example providing sustainable alternatives to support capacity on public transport for key workers at the hospital.
13. The proposed arrangements with the preferred supplier would also, importantly, offer an opportunity to introduce an e-bike hire scheme for the city in a controlled way. It has been an ambition of the council for some time to introduce a bike-hire scheme similar to that used in London and other cities, with e-bikes potentially proving attractive for those residents for whom a traditional pedal cycle may not be suitable.
14. The FAQs at **Annex 4** to this paper set out the challenges and potential issues that may arise through any trial. It is important for there to be transparency on these issues and how they might be managed. Also provided at **Annex 1** is a summary Community Impact Assessment (CIA) which includes an assessment of the risks that e-scooters may pose to people with sight impairments. The CIA notes that preliminary discussions

have been held with local organisations representing blind and partially sighted residents to enable the council and the preferred supplier to understand their concerns and how these might be addressed.

15. Should the trial go ahead, clear and effective channels of two-way communication will be critically important to get early warning of any issues that need to be addressed, to assess the impact of the trial and to learn lessons. Ongoing engagement is envisaged with the key initial City partners (York Hospital and University of York) and also with others including disability rights groups, bus operators, the Business Improvement District, the Retail Forum and groups representing the needs and interests of cyclists.
16. It is also proposed that the Economy & Place Policy & Scrutiny Committee receives regular reports on the trial, and is invited to scrutinise implementation and inform future policy development in this area.
17. At a time when there are multiple demands on the time of council officers, it is recognised that there may be concerns around capacity to manage new initiatives such as this. Council officers have been in contact with colleagues in York's German twin city, Münster (who have an e-scooter rental scheme) and the Tees Valley (where an e-scooter trial by a different operator is currently underway) to understand the impact on officer time. The proposed approach that the preferred supplier would take in York does provide some assurance that the trial would not consume a large amount of officer resource.
18. The preferred supplier would be responsible for funding and managing all operational aspects of the trial in conjunction with local partners. This would include providing, operating and maintaining the e-scooter fleet. It would also include ensuring the e-scooters are charged and in good working condition; ensuring correct parking of e-scooters and responding to any reports of poor parking; rebalancing e-scooters to ensure there is adequate provision across the parking locations; and working with the police on reports of misuse. The preferred supplier would employ their own local staff to manage these operational aspects. There is therefore no cost to the Council for participating in this trial.
19. The phased and controlled trial with this operator offers opportunities for learning and increased uptake of sustainable transport which are not outweighed by the potential challenges. Ongoing engagement throughout the year would be a priority. Should issues arise which cannot be

effectively managed, the option to pause or halt the trial would always remain open.

Council Plan

20. The need for the council to be an “efficient, open, transparent, democratically-led and accountable organisation” identified by the Council Plan 2019-2023 means that historic failings identified by the LGO are being rectified by the measures set out in this report.

Implications

Financial

21. The arrangement with the preferred supplier, if approved, will be a concession contract. The trial will be managed and deliver within existing resources.

Human Resources (HR)

22. There are no human resource implications. This work will continue to be managed within existing staffing levels.

Equalities

23. The Communities Impact Assessment (CIA) is attached in **Annex 1**.

Legal

24. The arrangement with the preferred supplier, if approved, will be a concession contract. Legal services staff have been involved in the procurement process

Crime and Disorder

25. There are no crime and disorder implications

Information Technology (IT)

26. There are no IT implications. ICT staff have been consulted as part of the process.

Property

27. There are no property implications

Risk Management

28. The risks related to the trial are outlined in the body of the report.

Contact Details

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Report **Date** 02.09.20
Approved

Wards Affected: All wards.

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Annex 1: Community Impact Assessment
Annex 2.1: University of York letter of support
Annex 2.2: York Teaching hospital letter of support
Annex 3: Supplier meeting with York organisations
Annex 4: Frequently Asked Questions