

REPORT TO: PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting: 4th January 2018

Report of: Cllr Harvey:
Member of the Green Travel Plans and Planning Conditions
Spotlight Review Group.

Title: Green Travel Plans and Planning Conditions
Spotlight Review Report.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

To report the findings and recommendations of this Spotlight Review Group to the People Scrutiny Committee.

2. Recommendations:

The People Scrutiny Committee:-

(a) Acknowledge the work of this Spotlight Review Group.

(b) Share this report and its findings with:-

- the (yet to be formed) Transport Board;
- Devon County Council in respect of the Sustainable Urban Movement Plan;
- With Exeter City Council officers responsible for implementing the Parking Strategy;
- Greater Exeter Strategic Partnership.

(c) Support the formation of a Task and Finish Group to expressly monitor the IKEA green travel plan and ascertain what improvements to Green Travel Plans could be made in future.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

(a) To improve the way in which the Council deals with green travel plans at the planning stage.

(b) To engage with key partners and other authorities to ensure the success of green travel plans going into the future.

(c) To monitor the progress and success of a recently implemented green travel plan.

(d) To identify and measure the potential for improvements to future green travel plans.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources:

None.

5. Section 151 Officer Comments:

There are no financial aspects to this report.

6. What are the legal aspects?

None identified.

7. Monitoring officer Comments

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report Details:

This topic was identified as a priority for Spotlight Review investigation by Members.

Membership of the Group:-

Cllr Foggin
Cllr Brimble
Cllr Hannan
Cllr Harvey
Cllr Musgrave
Cllr Sutton
Cllr Wardle

Andy Robbins, City Development Manager
Ross Hussey, Principal Project Manager (Infrastructure Delivery)
Will Pratt, Principal Transport Planner, Devon County Council

Context:-

To set the context for this report, an initial concern was that the amount of new building taking place in Exeter is adding to the issues surrounding congestion and car parking (particularly residents' parking) and the Group wished to investigate the following key issues:-

- What happens to Green Travel Plans post planning?
- How effective are they and do they work?
- Do we need to look at how we handle planning applications as a local authority?

How this fits in with the Council's aims and priorities:-

The Council's Core Strategy (1.3) states that there is a need to make significant reductions in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and adapt to changes in climate, already underway as a result of past emissions.

To support and deliver the Exeter Vision, the Core Strategy sets out ten objectives, one of which is to promote development that contributes to a healthy population - by implementing the Green Infrastructure Strategy and ensuring that environmental quality and air quality is protected and enhanced.

CP11 states that developments should be located and designed so as to minimise and if necessary, mitigate against environmental impacts in line with proposals set out within the Local Transport Plan and Air Quality Action Plan to reduce pollution and meet air quality objectives.

The Air Quality Strategy 2015 – 2020 (9.5 and 9.6) states that officers liaise with City Development to ensure that air quality issues are taken into consideration at both the development and adoption of the Council's Development Plan documents and policies, and when Members consider planning applications. Officers within Environmental Health and Licensing are also involved in programmes of work concerned with important sustainability issues such as climate change and that all play an integral role in ensuring that aims and aspirations of the Exeter Vision and the Councils' Strategic Objectives are met.

Exeter City Futures "Congestion Free by 2025"

Exeter City Council has signed up to this initiative and the Leader of Exeter City Council is also supportive of further work in relation to the Transport Strategy.

National Planning Policy Framework

At a national level the National Planning Policy Framework states that planning should contribute to reducing pollution and that Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements can positively contribute to:-

- encouraging sustainable travel;
- lessening traffic generation and its detrimental impacts;
- reducing carbon emissions and climate impacts;
- creating accessible, connected, inclusive communities;
- improving health outcomes and quality of life;
- improving road safety; and
- reducing the need for new development to increase existing road capacity or provide new roads.

National planning policy sets out that planning should actively manage patterns of growth in order to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.

The Background

The Group met on two occasions. The first meeting focussed on a presentation provided by the Principal Transport Planner, Devon County Council and the City Development Manager (ECC). It was explained that both Authorities have always worked in partnership in this area but with quite different roles. The City using planning powers on applications and conditions on the back of policies (for example, the Core Strategy), essentially providing the planning framework, whilst the County Council deal with implementation.

St Lukes was referred to as an example of a travel plan working well, where monitoring reports are received regularly. EDF was held as a very positive example of an employer who is exceptionally supportive of green travel and who embraces and implements their green travel plan very effectively.

Through discussion, the Group identified various challenges with regards to the quality of green travel plans and a variety of difficulties which can hinder successful implementation, as set out below:-

- The Council has to make planning decisions within its policies and government guidelines which makes it difficult to refuse an application if it complies with these, even if Members are not entirely satisfied with the extent of the green travel plan provided.
- Changing people's behaviour with regards to car –v- walking or cycling.
- Changing pre-conceptions – some people will not use public transport.
- Making sure that travel information is readily accessible to the general public so that they particularly know what is available to them within their area.
- The enormous variation between big companies in terms of their policies and outlook on green travel and what priority it is given.
- Monitoring the implementation of travel plans is very resource intensive.
- For Exeter, the travel to work area is vast.
- Making green travel/public transport a more attractive option in terms of being cheap and easy to use.
- The law can be used to prohibit but a Green Travel Plan actively requires the developer to do something. The problem is that plans seem to progress initially but over time there tends to be a step back from that level of commitment. The requirement to have a Green Travel Plan remains in place, but over the passage of time the question is, does it remain sufficient?

The second meeting of the Group took place on the 16th October, to which the Chair of the Planning Committee (Cllr Gottschalk) was invited together with the Portfolio Holder for City Transformation, Energy and Transport (Cllr Denham) and the Principal Project Manager, Infrastructure Delivery (ECC).

The Chair of Planning explained that it was usual practice for large planning applications to have a condition attached requiring the developer to submit a Green Travel Plan and although ECC take part in the process, it is DCC Highways who take the lead with the developer. At present a “soft measures” approach is adopted to incentivise green travel, for example, promoting bus routes and cycle paths rather than adopting an enforcement approach. Planning officers in particular are trying to encourage a “modal” shift which they see as having the most potential for long term success. Green travel conditions are specifically tailored to each application and it is about looking at the individual application and what sort of impact the development is likely to have in direct relation to Exeter. With that said, the Chair did suggest that there needs to be a wider acknowledgment from both ECC and DCC that a more extensive policy package is required and this could be the subject of a separate Task and Finish Group investigation.

There is a lot of working going on behind the scenes between ECC and DCC, particularly in respect of the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan which is linking developments built and looking at how travel is measuring up to the planning applications – the emphasis being on research rather than enforcement so that both Authorities can plan realistically for the future.

DCC is now enforcing travel plans on large planning applications in Exeter. The first tranche involved developments at Pinhoe and Monkerton which saw personalised travel planning and taster tickets made available to households with a 50% uptake and developers were happy to support this.

Through the Group's enquiries and discussions, it was agreed that the following suggestions should be highlighted to the People Scrutiny Committee and thereafter to the relevant forums as follows:-

Suggestions for Devon County Council, Sustainable Urban Movement Plan under the Direction of the Transport Board

- Make modes of public transport easier and more attractive option to employers as well.
- Working with employers to support green travel – focussing on journeys to and from work.
- Employers need to accept that they create part of the problem and they can be part of the solution.
- Explore setting a higher standard for Green Travel Plans.
- Encouraging staggered start and finish times to ease congestion, targeting schools, work places in the City together with existing and established businesses.
- Promoting home working with employers.
- Improve bus travel – for instance off bus ticketing.
- Changing habits and encouraging people to use public transport instead.
- Looking at large businesses to work with small businesses on car sharing and green travel initiatives.
- Having a travel plan scheme that small and medium employers could buy into – this could pay for a travel plan officer. Worth exploring a business model which might support it.
- Oxygen House have 60 car parking spaces and 170 staff. They pay their staff extra to incentivise green travel by not driving to work and this has worked well.
- Oxygen House could promote what they are doing – educating others and encouraging them to try the same.

Suggestions for the Transport Board

- Explore the Work Place Levy in respect of Exeter (this concept worked well in Nottingham but was linked in with tram infrastructure).

Suggestions for Greater Exeter Strategic Partnership

- Residential applications – looking at infrastructure, funding and design guidance for residential applications.
- Think radically about how to design in a parking scheme.
- Review policy on green travel – a wider policy may be required.

*The Development of Exeter City Council's Parking Strategy

- More dynamic charging policies for car parks.
- Peak time car park charges – at present people are currently charged less if they leave between 4 pm/5 pm than after 6 pm and this needs to change to assist in reducing congestion at peak times. It will not only help the transport network but also the City Centre economy. It will incentivise people to drive more but will encourage them to stay longer.
- Increase charges for parking at 9 am and leaving at 5 pm.
- Find ways of generating revenue to go back into different transport methods.

*The points were considered in the recent Parking Review and newly adopted Parking Strategy. Enquiries are currently underway to establish whether the parking machines that are in situ are able to differentiate between different times of parking and adjust charges accordingly. Therefore, implementation is very much dependent upon the capabilities of the technology already in place.

9 What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, Economy safety and the environment?

**Cllr Harvey: Member of the Green Travel Plans and Planning Conditions
Spotlight Review Group**

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:**

None

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