

REPORT TO: PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meetings: 14 June 2018

**Report of: Cllr Sheldon
Chair of the Green Travel (Policy) Task and Finish Group**

Title: Green Travel (Policy) Task and Finish Group Report

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

To report the findings and recommendations of this Task and Finish Group to the Place Scrutiny Committee.

2. Recommendations:

The Place Scrutiny Committee:-

- (a) Approve the principle of a best practice guidance note to accompany the Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document.
- (b) Agree to the re-launch of the Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document in conjunction with a best practice guidance note subject to further Committee approval.
- (c) Acknowledge and support the suggestions contained within this report aimed to enhance and improve collaborative working between Exeter City Council, key partners and organisations.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

- Compilation of a best practice guide in conjunction with partners (such as Exeter City Futures and Devon County Council) will assist developers and applicants in understanding the City Council's Green Travel aspirations, ambitions and the direction of the Policy.
- An inspirational and educational best practice guide will demonstrate to applicants the various benefits of adopting an innovative green travel approach.
- To re-launch the Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document against a best practice guide will raise the profile of Green Travel together with the associated aims and ambitions of the City Council, clearly setting out expectation and level of aspiration for Green Travel Plans.
- Future and existing Green Travel Plans can be improved by aligning aspirational targets and improving collaborative working with key partners, organisations and the wider business community of Exeter. Positively promoting green travel with key organisations and communities across the City will also help achieve this.
- More robust Green Travel Plans going into the future will assist in achieving targets around better air quality and a reduction in congestion.

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

Officer time.

5. Section 151 Officer Comments:

There are no additional financial implications contained within 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:

The Context

Green Travel continues to be high on the list of priorities both locally and nationally.

At the Interim Scrutiny Work Programme meeting in November 2017, Members identified the topic of Green Travel as a priority for Task and Finish Group investigation specifically in relation to the City Council's policy and in connection with planning applications.

The proposed review of the topic would link in with the Council's aims and priorities as follows:-

The Council's Core Strategy

8.6 (Transport) states that patterns of movement and modes of travel can...be influenced by a range of other measures at the local level through the planning system:

- (e) requiring that the design and layout of new development encourages access on foot and by bike and for people with disabilities, including provision of supporting facilities such as cycle parking;
- (f) requiring that development provides for, and contributes towards, the improvement of the city's footpath, cycle and public transport networks, including Park and Ride, and towards enhancing the highway network;
- (g) encouraging innovative measures, where appropriate, introduced as a result of green travel plans, to promote the advantages of sustainable transport modes such as car pools, car clubs and car sharing;

10.1 (Environment) states that the planning authority can make important changes at the local level that can contribute to addressing the wider issues of climate change.

The two principal opportunities are mitigation, including reducing greenhouse gas emission from energy, transport, waste, the built environment and new development.

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 Group

Membership of the Group consisted of:-

Exeter City Councillors:-

- Cllr Denham
- Cllr Foggin
- Cllr Gottschalk
- Cllr Harvey
- Cllr Lyons
- Cllr Mitchell
- Cllr Musgrave

- Cllr Sheldon
- Cllr Sills
- Cllr Wardle
- Cllr Brimble

Exeter City Council Officers:-

- Alex Bulleid (Senior Environment Technical Officer)
- Andy Robbins (City Development Manager)

Devon County Council Officers:-

- Will Pratt (Principal Transport Planner)
- Marjolein Rijken, (Business Engagement Co-ordinator, Travel Devon Team)

Exeter City Futures:-

- Dr Liz O'Driscoll (Head of Innovation)
- Jemma Hodgkins (Relationship Manager)

Objectives:-

- (i) To explore the possibility of a short guidance note to accompany the Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document.
- (ii) To identify how the City Council can encourage City based organisations and communities to work together to meet the City's Green Travel aspirations.
- (iii) To encourage improvements to existing Green Travel Plans.
- (iv) To identify ways in which Exeter City Council and Devon County Council can enhance their collaborative working to further improve the quality of Green Travel Plans going into the future.

The Background

The Group met on three occasions.

At the initial meeting, Exeter City Council's City Development Manager provided an overview in respect of the Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document explaining that it provides the planning policy background and gives some understanding of the framework through which it is delivered.

The Group considered questions such as:-

- How much can the City Council achieve through the traditional planning system?
- How much can the City Council achieve outside the planning process?
- How ambitious does the City Council want to be with regard to travel plans?
- Does the City Council work closely enough with Devon County Council and other key partners?

- Is the policy basis sufficient?
- Can the City Council become more aspirational in negotiations when it comes to green travel plans?
- Are ambitions aligned?
- How do we collectively find solutions?

During the second meeting the Principal Transport Planner, Devon County Council provided the Group with an overview of the County Council's current approach to travel planning since it is the County Council who liaise directly with developers and applicants on proposed green travel plans.

There were discussions around the fact that it seemed unfair that developments which are created on the outskirts of the City attract people to travel in by car, yet green travel is encouraged as a requirement for those businesses operating within the City. Members agreed that this illustrates a difference in expectation and that green travel policy requirements need to be applied in the same way across both areas.

It was accepted that the Sustainable Transport Plan sets out the minimum requirements for businesses to provide and encourage their staff to get to work using sustainable travel but that both the City Council and the County Council could call for stricter adherence to that requirement.

Engagement with interested organisations and community groups was recognised as essential to gain a different perspective, take on board ideas and comments and to assist in encouraging employers to sign up to the green travel approach. Working with schools and the community to change the culture together with collective ownership of ideas and objectives were seen as key to improving success as was encouraging businesses to engage with each other, raising awareness of positive examples of innovative Green Travel Plans such as Oxygen House.

Guidance analysis as to how much green travel could save businesses and research into what revenue businesses could lose if car parking spaces are lost to workers might encourage businesses to adopt more of a green travel approach with staff. Engagement with the BID was seen as key to reaching local City based businesses and encouraging their cooperation, but it was also recognised that the City Council should lead by example, through their own green travel plans. The City Council are making progress in improving green travel facilities, for example, offering electric pool cars, replacing Council vans with electric vans and offering staff a green travel discount.

The third meeting of the Group concentrated upon how collaborative working between the City Council and County Council could be improved and the City Development Manager (ECC) and Principal Transport Planner (DCC) identified the following areas:-

- To work more closely with key site developers during the determination period, to identify key points to be included in their proposed Green Travel Plans and overall report to the Planning Committee. This will raise the profile of Green Travel and the City's aspirations.
- Raising awareness will produce better outcomes.
- Making it clear to people what is being proposed very early on in the planning process.

- Various groups provide very detailed responses to planning applications/green travel plans which are welcomed and essential in order to fully inform the proposed Travel Plan.
- Avoid a “disconnect” in trying to deal with areas through discharge of planning conditions in favour of identifying opportunities at an early stage.

These ideas are relatively easy for officers to implement procedurally now.

Members also commented as follows:-

- It is important to continue with efforts to ensure public engagement.
- If Green Travel Plans were discussed much earlier in the process this would ensure a better result for everyone concerned.
- To ensure that developers and organisations realise that once a Green Travel Plan is in place, if the site is expanded in future, it would be possible to re-assess requirements in conjunction with green travel opportunities available. This should not be precluded from initial discussions with applicants/developers.

Where are we now?

Objectives (i), (ii) and (iii)

If the Place Scrutiny Committee approve a guidance note in principle, once drafted, this will be submitted to Place Scrutiny Committee for approval prior to implementation.

Officers from Devon County Council, Travel Devon Team, Exeter City Council and Exeter City Futures met on the 16th April to discuss formulating a guidance note to accompany the SPD (subject to Committee approval) and to discuss, in more detail, how we all might be able to help encourage City based organisation and communities to work together to meet the City’s green travel aspirations.

It was established that local case studies would be an essential component of a guidance note and that presentation would also be key. The four main sections should relate to:-

- (a) Planning Policy background
- (b) Devon Toolkit
- (c) Three good examples/case studies
- (d) A “did you know page” covering data statistics on air quality impact on knowledge workers/working days lost, for example.

Exeter City Futures and the Travel Devon team will link up to work on business engagement, research and analysis.

Key Objective (iv)

Exeter City Council and Devon County Council officers have discussed and established how collaborative work may be improved to achieve more robust green travel plans going forward (as detailed in this report) and officers are able to implement this procedurally now.

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?

Any improvements to existing and future green travel plans will help to improve the health and well being of the residents of Exeter and the environment in which they live by reducing congestion and improving air quality.

Cllr Sheldon: Chair of the Green Travel (Policy) Task and Finish Group

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None

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