

REPORT TO: PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 14 June 2018

**Report of: Cllr Keith Owen
Chair of the Green Travel (IKEA) Task and Finish Group**

Title: Green Travel (IKEA) 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) Support a review of the performance of the IKEA Green Travel Plan in 12 months' time.
- (b) Request early discussion of Green Travel Plans for larger schemes at Planning Member Working Group or at Delegated Briefing as appropriate.
- (c) Agree that green travel planning should be incorporated into the yearly Planning Induction Training for Councillors.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

- IKEA's travel plan is still in its infancy in terms of development but they remain committed and very keen to make it work and continue to engage with Exeter City Council.
- In 12 months' time it will become apparent as to how the IKEA Green Travel Plan is performing, what the successes are, what the challenges are, what can be improved, where and how.
- Early discussion of larger scheme Green Travel Plans will highlight key issues at a stage which will still allow time for the developer to adapt the scheme before it is submitted to Planning Committee.
- At present Green Travel Plans are dealt with primarily through planning conditions and reliant upon discharge. Early discussion with developers will ensure that they are fully aware of expectations and the standard of Green Travel Plan required. This will ensure more robust and aspirational Green Travel Plans going forward.
- Consistency of approach, both in terms of Exeter City Council and key partners, is also essential to successfully ensuring that more detailed and better quality Green Travel Plans are submitted to the Planning Committee.
- Specific training for Members will provide them with the information they need to review Green Travel Plans put forward by developers, raise the bar on expectations and to have a better knowledge as to what can be achieved with various schemes.
- The work of this Task and Finish Group will continue to contribute to the wider conversation around congestion and transport in Exeter.

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

The Centre for Cities Outlook 2018 report tracks Exeter as the second fastest growing city by population in the UK, with only Coventry ahead of the South West capital. In addition, Exeter continues to attract big companies, such as IKEA and John Lewis, as a location for business, bringing jobs and prosperity to the area.

To help sustain and further the current success and rate of economic growth and inward investment in Exeter, infrastructure and reliable transport links are key. Green Travel and achieving a Congestion Free City through provision of sustainable transport are key priorities and become more so as the rate of inward investment and economic growth rises. Improvements to infrastructure, raising the standard of air quality and the impact on general health and well being within the City are all interconnected.

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, expressing particular interest in reviewing the IKEA Green Travel Plan as a benchmark example, its potential for success and whether any lessons could be learnt going forward as to what could be improved upon whilst raising the level of expectations and thinking about how this could be achieved.

The work of the Task and Finish Group links 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.
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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 Owen
- Cllr Denham
- Cllr Foggin
- Cllr Gottschalk
- Cllr Harvey
- Cllr Lyons
- Cllr Mitchell
- Cllr Musgrave
- Cllr Sheldon
- Cllr Sills
- Cllr Wardle
- Cllr Robson

Devon County Councillors:-

- Cllr Atkinson
- Cllr Hannaford
- Cllr Leadbetter
- Cllr Croad

Exeter City Council Officers:-

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

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 review the IKEA Green Travel Plan as a benchmark example.
- (ii) To understand how future Green Travel Plans might be improved at the planning stage.

- (iii) To understand the interconnecting role of Devon County Council in terms of performance monitoring, review and enforcement.
- (iv) To ascertain whether this Green Travel Plan aligns with the aspirations of Exeter City Council and Exeter City Futures.

The Background

The Group met on four occasions, with the first meeting concentrating on an initial overview provided by Exeter City Council's City Development Manager and the second concentrating upon an overview from Devon County Council as to each Authority's respective responsibilities and roles within the planning process.

It became apparent through discussions that the framework for planning decisions can be limiting and that the IKEA Green Travel Plan document seemed to adopt a very formulaic approach which is typical under the requirements of the national policy framework. At present green travel is dealt with as part of planning conditions and subsequent discharge, so very much at the end of the current process and out of Exeter City Council's control. Similarly, Devon County Council are restricted as to what they can do, mainly due to central government policy and funding. However, over the last 5 years the County Council have introduced the requirement of a financial contribution from developers of £500 per dwelling (on developments with over 50 dwellings) so that green travel can be delivered together with vouchers towards sustainable travel, cycle vouchers and rail cards. The Travel Devon Toolkit is available for smaller businesses to access on line so that they can carry out their own travel survey/audit and devise a green travel plan and there is currently an Access Fund which supports ongoing engagement with businesses on green travel. In so far as review and monitoring is concerned, the County Council do not monitor every site but assess the need to do so on a site by site basis (for example, St Luke's campus). Rather than enforce, a more pro-active and educational approach is favoured – modal shift and changing behaviours are seen as the key components to long term success of sustainable transport options.

Members understood the challenges and restrictions faced but generally felt that the IKEA Plan, on the face of it, did not align with the aspirational targets of the Council and Exeter City Futures in relation to congestion targets or vision. Bristol was held as a positive and aspirational example of what could be achieved in terms of green travel and Members concluded that Exeter City Council and Devon County Council need to work more closely together on aspirations for the City and County as both have involvement with the planning process although both have different responsibilities. Therefore it was decided that the Task and Finish Group should become more of a collaborative Group between Devon County Council Councillors and officers, the Travel Devon Team and Exeter City Futures.

As the IKEA Green Travel Plan was already signed off, in place and couldn't now be altered, it was decided that IKEA representatives should be invited to attend so that the Group could find out whether they would be willing and able to improve upon the existing plan and what their aspirations were for the future, which was difficult to see from the paper document.

On the 15th March 2018 IKEA's Marketing Manager for the Exeter Store, together with the Travel Coordinator attended the Group meeting to answer Members' questions and discuss the current position. It was explained that the plan was

formulated as specifically to the area as possible and relevant to the local market, taking into account maps, cycle routes and public transport. The Travel Devon Team continue to work with IKEA to bring the Green Travel Plan forward.

It was of interest to Members to know that IKEA are putting together a strategy dealing with non peak trading to incentivise 3,500 households within a 6 minute drive time to visit the store after 6 pm by offering, for example, a free meal after this time.

It was established that data collection would also be key to monitoring success of green travel – postcodes will be recorded at the till points four times a year and IKEA representatives were keen to provide that information to the Exeter Data Mill which is in its pilot phase. (The purpose of the Data Mill is to collect more highways and transport data and put it in a central place for everyone to access).

At this stage of this report, I feel it would be of benefit to Members of the Place Scrutiny Committee to understand the full range of questions posed by Members to IKEA representatives and the responses, since the paper document of IKEA's Green Travel Plan does not particularly make clear the work in progress or the aims and ambitions for the future:-

- (a) Individual tailored Travel Plans fall into 3 general categories – employees' travel to work, customers travelling in and delivery of goods. Customers who used to visit IKEA in Bristol may now visit Exeter instead. The City of Exeter has a smaller catchment area by IKEA's usual standards so how will IKEA deal with the Exeter store in terms of it being a long way away from customers?

The Market Penetration Plan aims to reach more people. Research indicates that people are frustrated that they have to travel as far as Bristol. Financially, the South West is one of the fastest growing economies in the country and will continue to grow. Primary market areas are within a 45 minute drive time. Every IKEA store is relevant to the area and doesn't have to be a gigantic store. Exeter's IKEA will be one of the smallest stores but will still stock a full range. IKEA consider the demographics of Exeter as perfect for their business.

- (b) Does IKEA consider the targets set out in their plan for increases in sustainable travel are sufficiently challenging?

IKEA are not sure at the present time. The main target is to bring down single occupancy vehicles by 5% year on year. The Travel Plan sets out a goal but will need review in 3 months' time after the store has opened – with surveys being undertaken in relation to co-workers and spot checks for customers. After the surveys are carried out there will be a clear idea of the baseline figure to review again after a year (the interim review on the plan is stated as 2 years). At that stage performance can be assessed and lessons learnt as to what could be done better and develop those areas – so it is not a fixed approach but a flexible approach – the main target is to continue to reduce car usage.

- (c) With regards to baseline figures (2011) it says that the targets can be agreed with the Highways Authority prior to the survey – will this be the case here?

The IKEA Marketing Manager was not sure if that had been done yet – in any event baseline figures would have to be available first in order to do that.

- (d) When the results of the co-workers' survey is known – will IKEA mould/tweak the travel plan if required?

This is a possibility. IKEA want to encourage co-workers to travel more sustainably. They will be running campaigns to get this message across and to reduce congestion and promote health and well being. When the data is known the approach can be tailored further. The survey cannot be carried out at this moment in time because IKEA haven't employed all the staff they need yet.

- (e) Are there any incentives for IKEA staff to use green travel?

Yes – bike hire and cycle to work schemes are available. Interest free loans are offered (£1000 to £1500) over a period of 1 to 2 years for purchase of bikes and 15% off season tickets for buses and trains are offered. The focus is on staff so that parking spaces are free for customers (who may be purchasing larger items/flat packs). There will also be a lot of customers buying smaller items who can use buses and trains.

- (f) Is there scope for making the link with the railway station better for both staff and customers (as in Bristol)?

The investment in Bristol was specifically to improve a very run down area whereas this hasn't been considered for Exeter as Newcourt/Digby and Sowton are very new, neat and tidy and very well lit. The idea behind the investment in Bristol was to renovate, provide signage and make the journey easy. Exeter could be reviewed in future if this was thought to be necessary.

Real time train and bus information will be available at the store exit for both co-workers and customers.

- (g) Will there be free delivery of items in Exeter to incentivise green travel? This is likely to have a massive impact on travel.

The cost of free delivery is too expensive at the moment. To consider this in future, IKEA would have to review demand. However, another option would be to offer a free meal in the restaurant to incentivise green travel.

"Biklio" (a company which has worked with local businesses in Lisbon very successfully) has come to Exeter because of the innovation in this area. They have a cycle app which people can use encouraging green travel and provides access to rewards such as 10% discounts in participating stores/businesses. IKEA would be interested in following up this opportunity direct with Biklio to see what could be achieved.

- (h) As part of the recruitment process and support for new staff will travel plan advice be readily available?

- A powerpoint presentation is provided to new staff as part of the induction process. This concentrates on the need for a travel strategy and encourages staff to help IKEA to protect the environment and be good neighbours for example.
 - E-mails are also sent to staff with links to information about bus routes/trains/maps and signing up to "Travel Devon". The Travel Coordinator's contact details appear on the e-mails so that staff can get in touch direct in relation to any questions or personal assistance they may require.
 - Various campaigns will take place during the year such as "bike week" in June and "leave your car at home day".
 - The Travel Devon Team Business Engagement Coordinator is liaising with travel advisors and IKEA in relation to the follow up work to their Green Travel Plan.
 - All staff will receive a travel pack within one month of the store opening.
- (i) What happens if people park in IKEA's car park and then leave their car there after shopping at the store to go into the City?

There is nothing that IKEA could do at the current time. However, if it is apparent that this is becoming a problem, the Exeter store can look at securing investment to tackle the problem.

- (j) Did the cargo bike trial (2014) expand?

In Holland it is very successful but there is a very different type of consumer there and a very good bicycle network compared to the UK. In this country there are also legal difficulties at present particularly around bike trailers.

The final meeting of the Group took place on the 16th April where the key objectives were discussed and recommendations settled upon for the purpose of this report. It was suggested that, in relation to future significant schemes, it might be helpful for the accompanying Green Travel Plans to be raised at the Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (HATOC) highlighting key issues for discussion and feedback. At the time of writing this report, HATOC comments are awaited pending their next meeting.

In conclusion, taken in isolation, it does not appear that the paper document of the IKEA Green Travel Plan is as aspirational as one would have hoped for. However, having heard directly from IKEA representatives it is clear that practically this is not the case and the document is not a true reflection of the work in progress or IKEA's appetite to review and improve the Green Travel Plan or their willingness to engage with Exeter City Council to achieve this going into the future. Practical progress and ideas clearly demonstrate a meeting of minds and that IKEA and Exeter City Council are very much on the same page in terms of green travel aspirations and vision for the future, sitting in line with priorities at a local level.

This conclusion clearly illustrates a need to ensure, in future, that Green Travel Plan documents reflect the true reality of intention and work in progress rather than simply being a document to satisfy the basic requirements of policy. In order to achieve this, early engagement with developers is crucial so that they are fully aware of the

Council's Green Travel Plan expectations and aspirations before coming to Planning Committee with a Green Travel Plan document.

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 Keith Owen: 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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