

Scrutiny task group review update

Title of scrutiny review:	Sustainable Transport Strategy
Chair of scrutiny review:	Councillor Amanda Grimston
Final report published:	31 January 2022
Forwarded to Cabinet:	28 February 2022
Date of review:	1 February 2023

Recommendation:	The priority for the implementation of the strategy should be to reduce the number of short trips (under 2 miles) that are driven in Watford. This should be a determining factor in how actions contained in the strategy are prioritised.
Update:	Active travel, such as walking and cycling, is a good alternative for short trips and this area has been prioritised. Following extensive public consultation the Council have adopted their Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which identifies priority cycling and walking routes to be delivered. Having an adopted LCWIP provides WBC and HCC with the basis to prepare proposals that can be submitted to government for Active Travel Funding. Work to date has focused on the Green Loop cycle route, also identified in the Council's Delivery Plan, and initial feasibility and validation work has been undertaken on a number of proposed improvement projects which will be used to bid for delivery funding. The school run is also a significant generator of short trip and, as discussed below, we have been working closely with schools and HCC to encourage the uptake of School Travel Plans in order to reduce short journeys by car.

Recommendation:	In recognition of the close geographical relationships with neighbouring districts, ongoing partnership work should continue to be developed with areas that border Watford.
Update:	The Council's LCWIP was produced in collaboration with Three rivers District Council to ensure continuity of key active travel routes across administrative boundaries. The Council have been progressing a feasibility study on alternatives for the disused railway line between Croxley and Watford and this work is being progressed in partnership with TRDC and HCC. The findings of the study are due in Summer 2023. The Council are also progressing the South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan with the five neighbouring authorities and HCC. This work provides a platform for cross-boundary collaboration and planning on the long

	term strategic sustainable transport infrastructure needs of South-west Hertfordshire, include progression of the HCC Hertfordshire-Essex Rapid Transit (HERT) proposals.
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Recommendation:	To build on the popularity of the bike share scheme, the council should explore with neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders how the scheme could be expanded beyond the borough's boundaries.
Update:	Beryl continue to explore opportunities with our neighbouring authorities and initial conversations have been held with DBC and TRDC to explore the potential to bring cycle hire schemes to those areas and integrate with the scheme that already operates within Watford. Further discussions are needed and implementation of a cycle hire scheme within neighbouring authority areas would need further consideration from a public sector procurement perspective.

Recommendation:	In considering whether there are any areas in Watford that would benefit from becoming a low-traffic neighbourhood, the highest priority should be working with and listening to residents and local stakeholders. Low traffic neighbourhoods could be considered if they have extensive community support designed to address a defined local issue.
Update:	The recommendation rightly identifies that local support is essential to the successful implementation of low-traffic neighbourhoods and there is no intention to proceed with proposals unless support is established. Initial feasibility work is being undertaken in collaboration with HCC to rule out areas that would not be suitable for a low-traffic neighbourhood and to identify if there are any areas where local engagement could be considered.

Recommendation:	The strategy, or associated documentation, should include a target to have a travel plan in place for every school in the borough and proactively work with schools and Hertfordshire County Council to achieve this.
Update:	In September 2022 WBC officers emailed both primary and secondary schools within Watford as well as local councillors to encourage the uptake of Schools travel plans. (STPs). Two virtual sessions promoting School Travel Plans were held for head teachers and staff on 29th and 30th September chaired by the Mayor, and facilitated by HCC and WBC officers. Over the two sessions the schools that attended included Cherry Tree Primary School, Cassiobury Infant and Nursery School, St Michael's Catholic High School, Beechfield School, Parmiter's School, and West Herts College (the Grove Academy were interested, but were unable to attend meeting). Since the two online sessions HCC Travel Plan officers have

	<p>been following up with the schools who have shown interest and continue to work with schools within Watford.</p> <p>Since the sessions there has been progress on developing and improving school travel plans. This includes Cassiobury Infants who have submitted a Green level School Travel Plan. St Catherine of Siena, Bromet and Orchard hold a Bronze level travel plan. Beechfield School and Parkgate Infants are engaged and working on school travel plans. Alban Wood Primary have a meeting planned due to take place in the New Year with school travel plan officer. Further engagement with schools is be planned for later in the year</p>
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Recommendation:	Further work should be undertaken with local businesses and other stakeholders to improve transport links to employment areas that are not easily reached without a car to consider how access could be improved.
Update:	<p>Further work is needed on this recommendation and this will be progressed in partnership with the Economic Development team. The team have prepared a delivery plan for the Council’s Economy Growth Strategy which includes a workstream on business engagement, support and communications. It is proposed that as part of this engagement the team will explore with the businesses what improvements should be made to reduce the reliance of businesses on the private car. Work is currently progressing on the procurement of a borough-wide car-club and the opportunity for businesses to benefit from this will be explored. We will also continue to promote corporate memberships to the Beryl Bike scheme and highlight the benefits these can bring to businesses.</p> <p>In terms of less well connected areas outside of central Watford, we are currently looking at how we can progress improvements to local shopping parades which will include the provision of better infrastructure to encourage more short local journeys by walking and cycling.</p>

Recommendation:	Recognising that accepting the need for wider change is different to making personal behavioural change, further work is needed to consider how to grow confidence in the alternatives to travelling by car.
Update:	<p>The strategy recognises the importance of behavioural change and sets out proposals within Theme 5 ‘Supporting Change’. Initial work has been undertaken to consider the feasibility of a sustainable transport rewards scheme within Watford but in order for this to be successful this needs to be supported by the provision of new infrastructure and attractive alternatives for residents otherwise the incentive of rewards will not be sufficient to change the behaviour of those who do not already use sustainable transport modes. Officers will continue to promote the strategy and the projects within in as part of events such as national Bike Week. We will also continue to build on the work already undertaken with schools outlined above.</p>

	<p>Encouraging behavioural change in response to climate change is also a major theme within the Council's new emerging Sustainability Strategy. The need for 'People Power' is highlighted as an essential component of Watford's response to climate change and the strategy sets clear targets for residents and businesses to commit to making personal and collective change to support our overall response. The strategy has been reviewed by an Overview and Scrutiny task group and the report and recommendations, which include reference to behavioural change, are included on the agenda for this meeting.</p>
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