

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 16 MAY 2017

REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT TASK AND FINISH GROUP  
RECOMMENDATIONS

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WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- To present the recommendations of the Sustainable Transport Task and Finish Group, which were presented to Environment Scrutiny Committee on 7 March 2017.

<b><u>RECOMMENDATION FOR EXECUTIVE:</u> That</b>	
<b>(A)</b>	<b>Consider, in partnership with Hertfordshire Highways, the cost and benefits of a charging mechanism for use of the road infrastructure, targeting certain types of vehicles (Eg. HGVs) or journeys taking place at certain times of the day (eg. during rush hour);</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>Consider a charge for use of the car park at the East Herts Council offices, alongside an incentive scheme for those who car share or use lower emissions vehicles;</b>
<b>(C)</b>	<b>Commit revenue funding to actively promote sustainable transport platforms and campaigns within the district;</b>
<b>(D)</b>	<b>As part of an overall work programme supported by revenue funding, roll out the park and stride model to schools in Hertford, Ware, Buntingford and Bishop's Stortford;</b>
<b>(E)</b>	<b>Agree to undertake further consultation with members of the public (building on responses already received) about what specific improvements to the current cycling and walking networks would encourage more journeys (eg. electric charging points, cycling lanes, track improvements</b>

	etc);
(F)	Support investment in minor changes to the networks to encourage use;
(G)	Promote cycling and walking networks in conjunction with the County Council and pro-actively market the bike and go scheme in Bishop's Stortford;
(H)	Ensure volunteering opportunities to maintain and improve cycling and walking routes are considered with East Herts Council's volunteering policy;
(I)	Continue to encourage uptake of CVS community transport options;
(J)	Consider working in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire's Smart Mobility Research Unit to look at a mobility as a service business model for East Herts, viable on demand business models and driverless technology;
(K)	Support the marketing and promotion of the Intalink mobile app to rural communities in East Herts;
(L)	Work in partnership with strategic bodies such as the County Council, LEP and LSCC to lobby the Department for Transport) for an East/ West light rail route;
(M)	Work in partnership with strategic bodies such as the County Council, LEP and LSCC for commuters to "think train" as well as lobby train service providers to "think customer";
(N)	The council continues to ensure that, through the District Plan, travel planning and sustainable transport is an early consideration for any new development; and
(O)	The council continues to make further provision for electric car parking and charging points within its car parks.

## 1.0 Background

1.1 The Task and Finish Group was constituted on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016 by the Environment Scrutiny Committee. The terms of reference for the group were as follows:

- To review current multi-agency plans, strategies, technical documents and studies which will inform transport provision in East Herts
- To define what “sustainable transport” means for East Herts
- To develop and recommend to Environment Scrutiny a long term sustainable transport vision for East Herts which will support delivery of key objectives within District Plan and Corporate Strategic Plan
- To identify and recommend to Environment Scrutiny tangible actions and interventions that East Herts Council can undertake, either as a lead agency or in partnership, to realise that vision
- To identify and recommend to Environment Scrutiny likely resource and investment required by East Herts and partners over short (2016-21), medium (2021-2031) and long term (2031-2050) to deliver the actions

1.2 Members of the group were agreed as follows:

- Councillor John Wyllie (Chair)
- Councillor Michael Freeman
- Councillor Ryan Henson
- Councillor Jeff Jones
- Councillor Mark Pope
- Councillor David Andrews

1.3 The Lead Officer was agreed as Benjamin Wood, Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy, supported by Emily Coulter (National Management Trainee) and Tess Michaels (Democratic Services Apprentice). Kay Mead, Principal Planning Officer and Dave Thorogood, Environmental Strategy and Development Manager also supported the group.

1.4 Method and lines of enquiry were agreed as:

- Review of secondary evidence
- Invitation to people from key partner and stakeholder organisations to give evidence

- Series of meetings to hear evidence and analyse issues
- Invitation to members of the public to give evidence

## 2. **Overview of meetings**

- 2.1 A total of 4 evidence gathering sessions were held between November 2016 – February 2017 alongside an initial planning meeting and a final meeting to consider conclusions. A summary of each of those meetings can be found below. In addition views from the public were sought and these were fed into discussions. Full details of public responses can be found at Appendix A.
- 2.2 8<sup>th</sup> November 2016: This preliminary meeting set out the initial intentions for the group. Members decided on the definition of Sustainable Transport as well as the topics/themes for the rest of the meetings. It was agreed that these themes would be: local context (which would have two meetings); behaviour change and green travel; and public transport (a closer look at rail and local sustainability success). The Group also decided an email address should be created so that members of the public could send ideas directly in, encouraging public engagement.
- 2.3 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016: This meeting was the first of two to focus on local context. The Group heard from both Jacob Wing, the Network and Travel Planning Deputy Team Leader at HCC, and Councillor Derrick Ashley, also from HCC. Jacob Wing gave a presentation about HCCs work on sustainable transport, going on to explain how similar actions could be reflected by East Herts, and how said policies could help residents within the district. Then, both Jacob Wing and Derrick Ashley answered Members questions on subjects such as real time bus information, mini park and ride systems, and road user charges.
- 2.4 20<sup>th</sup> December 2016: This was the second meeting focusing on local context. Dr Scott Copsey from the University of Hertfordshire (lecturer in sustainable transport and lead for the Uno Bus company) gave a presentation. He emphasised the importance of partnership and innovation in order to achieve the best outcomes for sustainable transport. He also told members about the work the University was doing. He then had a Q&A session with the members.
- 2.5 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017: This meeting focused on behaviour change and green travel and took place at the Town Council offices in Bishop's Stortford. The Group had a presentation from Simon

Manville, team leader from the Cycling Projects Team at Cambridgeshire County Council, informing members of the decisions taken by the council to introduce cycling infrastructure in the county.

- 2.6 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017: This meeting focused on rail travel and was held at the Town Council offices in Sawbridgeworth. Richard Bowran (Sawbridgeworth Town Council) and Annelise Furnace (Mandeville School Governor) gave presentations on community transport and the park and stride school challenge in the town (designed to encourage children to walk or cycle to school). Larry Heyman (Govia Thameslink Rail Limited) also presented on rail travel in parts of the district.
- 2.7 22 February 2017: final meeting to consider findings and recommendations ahead of submission to the Environment Scrutiny.
- 2.8 On 7<sup>th</sup> March Environment Scrutiny considered the report and supported all the recommendations being made to Executive.

### **3. Definition of sustainable transport**

- 3.1 The overarching definition of sustainable transport was agreed as follows:
- Mission statement: to reduce reliance on private car usage in East Hertfordshire and *“to ensure an enduringly efficient sustainable transport vision for the short, medium and long term for East Hertfordshire that maximises behaviour change and overtly reduces congestion”*
  - To support local economic competitiveness and growth, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks
  - To reduce local transport emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of reducing climate change
  - To maximise behavioral change towards sustainable transport, with the overt aim of reducing congestion
  - To contribute to better safety security and health and longer life-expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health
  - To improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment. To work in line with East Herts strategic

- priority to improve the health and wellbeing of our local community
- To ensure equality of opportunity for citizens living in all areas of East Herts, and to ensure that sustainable transport is available to all towns, villages and parishes; rural and urban.
- To ensure that sustainable transport is enduring as it evolves and to ensure it will thrive in the local area.
- To ensure sustainable transport is supported by the District Plan, and new developments promote sustainable transport over car usage
- To work within the local context and to promote partnership working with stakeholders.

#### **4. Themes and recommendations**

4.1 It should be noted that these discussions took place in the context of other initiatives, projects and work programmes where there are numerous interdependencies. This includes:

- The HCC 2050 Transport Vision consultation (which will form the basis of the Local Transport Plan 4) and the response from East Herts Council
- The Pre-Submission East Herts District Plan, which includes a policy on sustainable transport within the Transport chapter
- East Herts Council's air quality action plan

4.2 The findings and recommendations herein are only the starting point for debating sustainable transport in East Hertfordshire. They are not offered as a comprehensive vision and way forward for the council but instead suggest some specific ideas and interventions which could be pursued in partnership with other organisations such as the County Council. In that regard the Task and Finish Group has met 4 of the 5 elements agreed within the terms of reference (see 1.1). Detailed investment options for the short, medium and long term can be considered in due course subject to recommendations being agreed by Scrutiny and subsequently referred to Executive or Full Council.

#### **4.3 Behaviour change**

4.4 The group acknowledged that the car is the primary form of transport in the district due to the geographic and socio-economic make-up of the area. This is unlikely to change in the near future

and thus behaviour change should be targeted towards people using alternative methods of travel.

- 4.5 A range of behaviour change interventions could be adopted including radical options such as charging for use of roads, increasing car park charges and/ or reducing car park capacity. For example in Cambridge the County Council and City Council have deliberately reduced the amount of car parking space available to create more cycling infrastructure and networks. This has resulted in a loss of revenue income however has been an important part of increasing the number of journeys taken by bike. There has therefore been a conscious decision to focus on environmental and health benefits instead of financial gain.
- 4.6 There is little evidence to suggest a direct correlation between increasing car park charges and less car journeys. Moreover East Herts have recently agreed to increasing car park charges in the district and whilst further charges may not be feasible at this time, there was a sense that the Council (as a large employer) should be taking steps to reduce car journeys to the main office in Wallfields and other sites. One way to do this would be to introduce a charge for use of the office car park. Such a policy would be exclusively aimed at encouraging sustainable travel and not at generating income. Incentives could be offered to staff who car share and use lower emissions vehicles.
- 4.7 Although it was acknowledged charging for use of roads would be unpopular it is likely to be the most powerful motivation for encouraging journeys to be taken by other means. There was also a sense that many journeys in the district are the result of individuals 'passing through' the area (ie. commuting from home to a place of work, neither of which are in the district). Charging for use of the road network in the district could be targeted at such journeys, or indeed focus on certain types of vehicles (eg. HGVs) that increase congestion on rural roads. There was a strong theme in views submitted by the public regarding the need for greater parking enforcement activity (eg. around schools) to discourage car journeys and reduce congestion. One member of the public suggested that communities are given informal powers to regulate parking arrangements in recognition that the council has limited resources to deal with this.
- 4.8 There are also a range of softer behaviour change interventions that could be adopted such as sustained communications campaigns to encourage less car travel and incentives to car

share, walk or cycle. There are already good web based platforms to encourage car sharing (eg. [www.liftshare.com](http://www.liftshare.com)) which the council has signed up to alongside a number of other predominantly public sector employers. Generating and sustaining interest and usage of these is resource intensive however and requires on-going dedicated support (eg. the University of Hertfordshire relies on a full time sustainable transport officer to ensure projects are delivered).

4.9 A good example of how to encourage behaviour change, specifically with a focus on school traffic is the Park and Stride Project in Sawbridgeworth, concentrating on engaging and incentivising children to reduce school traffic. Good results were achieved from this with the town council working in partnership with the 4 schools and County Council. The 'Beat the Street' initiative is also a good example of an initiative which reduces traffic and encourages greener travel with health benefits. The group recognised however that these activities are resource intensive, requiring a lot of marketing and planning as well as investment and schools/ businesses willing to take part.

4.10 Recommendations:

- Consider, in partnership with Hertfordshire Highways, the cost and benefits of a charging mechanism for use of the road infrastructure, targeting certain types of vehicles (Eg. HGVs) or journeys taking place at certain times of the day (eg. during rush hour)
- Consider a charge for use of the car park at the East Herts Council offices, alongside an incentive scheme for those who car share or use lower emissions vehicles
- Commit revenue funding to actively promote sustainable transport platforms and campaigns within the district, supported by a Member champion
- As part of an overall work programme supported by revenue funding, roll out the park and stride model to schools in Hertford, Ware, Buntingford and Bishop's Stortford

**4.11 Investing in viable alternatives to car travel for short journeys (walking and cycling)**

4.12 Discussion in the group recognised that the lack of robust alternatives to car travel is a major challenge in terms of expecting people to switch modes of transport.



- 4.13 There is a need to improve connectivity between settlements in the district as a basis for encouraging more journeys by foot, bike or bus. Specifically with regards to cycling there is already a strong but perhaps under-utilised network. The Cole Green Way (connecting Hertford to Welwyn Garden City), as well as the tow paths on the River Lea and River Stort (connecting Hertford, Ware and Bishop's Stortford to Harlow and North and East London) are good examples of walking and cycling networks. However the group noted that these are individual routes and not well integrated in places. In the case of cycling it often requires moving across main roads or going through pedestrianised areas to get from one route to another. This was also a very strong theme from members of the public in the views that were submitted. Cyclists who regularly use routes in East Hertfordshire felt that more needed to be done to join up routes between urban and rural areas, access into major employment sites (eg. Stansted Airport) as well as improve and maintain supporting infrastructure (such as drying facilities).
- 4.14 The group identified learning from cycling networks in Cambridgeshire where small investments in highly localised infrastructure can make a big impact on the utility of cycling and walking networks. It can also make a big impact in terms of safety for cyclists and pedestrians (a sense of not feeling safe on main roads was also raised by members of the public). For example painting cycling lanes on roads, dropping kerbs to enable easy access from roads to cycle paths etc does facilitate a greater number of journeys taken by bike. Equally infrastructure at the 'end point' of a journey is important such as adequate bike racks, covered space and even showering /drying facilities at train stations. Both Cambridgeshire County Council and the University of Hertfordshire concluded that these facilities do get used when they have been built (ie. The investment creates the demand). The group also identified a lack of bike storage facilities on buses as an issue.
- 4.15 There have been well established bike hiring schemes in place for some time nationally (eg. so called "Boris bikes"). These are becoming increasingly attractive due to new technologies such as electric/ solar powered assisted and fold away bikes to make them more portable on trains and buses. A "bike and go" scheme is already in place at Bishop's Stortford train station however the group noted perceived take up of this has been slow. The council could play a role in activity promoting this and building momentum

to introduce similar schemes in other East Herts rail stations. This may involve additional investment in to install electric bike charging points in areas used frequently by cyclists.

4.16 Although there is already a good walking and cycling network in the district (see 4.13) the group are aware of anecdotal feedback from residents and their own experience that some footpaths and trails are not well maintained. Often volunteers are engaged to address some of these issues and the Council has recently adopted a volunteering policy for its own staff. This allows staff to take one non leave day to undertake volunteering in the community. Staff should be encouraged to consider volunteering activities which contribute to sustainable transport infrastructure.

4.17 Recommendations:

- Agree to undertake further consultation with members of the public (building on responses already received) about what specific improvements to the current cycling and walking networks would encourage more journeys (eg. electric charging points, cycling lanes, track improvements etc)
- Support investment in minor changes to the networks to encourage use
- Promote cycling and walking networks in conjunction with the County Council and pro-actively market the bike and go scheme in Bishop's Stortford
- Ensure volunteering opportunities to maintain and improve cycling and walking routes are considered with East Herts Council's volunteering policy

#### **4.18 Transport for rural areas and on-demand services**

4.19 Buses were a large focus for the group in terms of meeting sustainable transport needs for individuals and communities in rural areas. The group would like to note that Councillor Freeman travelled to the majority of meetings via the bus. There are very few routes operated by commercial operators in rural parts of the district simply because they are not deemed viable. In addition members of the public felt that the current bus offering in the district is poor – with few routes operating on highly limited hours, old and inefficient buses (ie. heavy polluters and no wi fi) and a lack of reliability. There are good examples of community transport initiatives in place (eg. Sawbo bus, Hadham Hopper, Buntingford Cat and Bishop's Stortford Shuttle) however having

this provision across the whole district and for each of the smaller settlements would not be financially viable. Other alternatives exist such as the CVS led car share scheme which is not running at full capacity.

- 4.20 Increasingly there is a move towards 'on demand' services (eg. Uber) and mobility as a service which the group discussed. This largely reflects a demographic trend away from owning and towards hiring, particularly as car ownership for young people is becoming increasingly unaffordable. Successful on demand services rely on real time data being available through mobile devices and apps using pay as you go technology. This is potentially attractive as the business models for these services typically undercut traditional taxi services (with further development into autonomous vehicles these costs are set to reduce even further).
- 4.21 A challenge for implementing these types of services is trying to establish what demand exists in a rural area. Research from the University of Hertfordshire indicates that inconsistent ticketing systems across the country (ie. De-regulated areas outside of London) make it difficult to identify meaningful data about patterns and trends of use. The Network St. Albans project is a good example of a collaborative approach between the university, council, rail and bus companies to implement a multi-use ticketing system which can be transferred across all modes of transport. This has provided benefits for the customer as well as providing good data about overall demand for different services. Currently the county council are developing and rolling out an app version of Intalink which provides real time data on bus use.
- 4.22 Recommendations:
- Continue to encourage uptake of CVS community transport options
  - Consider working in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire's Smart Mobility Research Unit to look at a mobility as a service business model for East Herts, viable on demand business models and driverless technology
  - Support the marketing and promotion of the Intalink mobile app to rural communities in East Herts

## 4.23 Rail travel

- 4.24 The group felt strongly that East/ West connectivity in the district (and region as a whole) could be vastly improved with additional investment in rail infrastructure. There was a sense that trains tend to be preferable to bus travel in this regard due to their higher speeds and extended operational times (eg. evenings and weekends as well as during the working day).
- 4.25 With anticipated growth in the district, especially around Buntingford, the possibility of a light rail route connecting the town to Stansted in the East and Hertford North to the South was raised (also picked up by members of the public). This could be part of a wider East/ West light rail route connecting Hemel Hempstead through to Braintree and Colchester, joining up with the Stansted Express route. This would deliver specific improvements in East Hertfordshire by improving times into Stansted and London as well as discouraging car journeys on the A414 and A120 to Harlow, Broxbourne and Bishop's Stortford from commuters/ holiday makers driving long distances to board quicker trains. The East/ West rail challenge was also a feature within public responses.
- 4.26 Govia Thameslink recognised the need to ensure standards on trains generally need to be improved. A clean, reliable and warm environment should be a basic expectation for customers and this is something train operators are acutely aware of. The group acknowledged that East Herts Council cannot directly influence operational issues on the rail network or directly influence the building of new routes. However the council can lobby and have a voice through wider partnership working with the County Council, Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and London Stansted Cambridge Consortium (LSCC) as well as through documents such as the district plan.
- 4.27 Recommendations:
- Work in partnership with strategic bodies such as the County Council, LEP and LSCC to lobby the Department for Transport) for an East/ West light rail route
  - Work in partnership with strategic bodies such as the County Council, LEP and LSCC for commuters to “think train” as well as lobby train service providers to “think customer”

#### **4.28 Maximising opportunities in the future:**

- 4.29 The group discussed the future of East Herts both in relation to the district plan and expected housing growth alongside changes in technology. There are positive developments in this regard such as planned improvements to junction 7a on the M11, upgrades to the A10 Buntingford roundabout and Hadham bypass. There is an expectation that where significant development takes place on key sites, developer contributions through section 106 agreements will also have a strong emphasis on new bus, cycle and pedestrian transport routes as well as road infrastructure. There was a general concern amongst members of the public who responded as to whether adequate infrastructure would accompany housing growth outlined in the district plan.
- 4.30 The district plan is a very useful tool in driving the sustainable transport agenda around strategic sites. The group also discussed the importance of the neighbourhood planning process in refining details around local transport issues and connectivity between sites.
- 4.31 The move towards electric cars is gathering momentum and evidence from the County Council suggests Hertfordshire as a whole is ranked highly in terms of electric vehicles registered to the county. Indeed a number of public respondents owned electric cars, were positive about the experience but keen for more charging sites to be available. The group discussed what incentives could be offered to residents and businesses to use more electric vehicles as well as incentivising council staff and contractors to do the same. The University of Hertfordshire uses an electric car pool club which staff and students can access when required and is successful.
- 4.32 East Herts have recently been awarded £163,000 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for electric vehicle charging and infrastructure improvements and an electric vehicle car club in East Herts. This is a very welcome development and the group hopes this will be the start of a step change in approach to supporting electric cars.
- 4.33 The benefits to air quality were also discussed by the group. Several members of the public expressed concern about pollution overall and electric cars may be the best way to mitigate air quality challenges, especially around hotspot congestion areas.

4.34 The group discussed the Council's role in terms of regulating the taxi industry. It is possible to actively encourage the use of electric or low emissions vehicles through the taxi licensing policy. It was noted that high speed charging points are pre-requisite for a step change in the use of electric vehicles and such investment from the council may be needed to ensure taxi companies are able to operate effectively in the district. In addition the Pre-Submission District Plan does accommodate this for new developments in the "Design of Development" chapter (that "*dwelling design and layout should make provision for electric vehicle charging points in safe and accessible locations*").

4.35 Recommendations:

- The council continues to ensure that, through the District Plan, travel planning and sustainable transport is an early consideration for any new development
- The council continues to make further provision for electric car parking and charging points within its car parks

## 5. Acknowledgements

5.1 The group would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions:

- Councillor Derrick Ashley, Executive Member for Planning and Transport, HCC
- Jacob Wing, Network and Transport Deputy Team Leader, HCC
- Dr. Scott Copsey, Transport Planner and Senior Lecturer in Sustainable Transport, University of Hertfordshire
- Simon Manville, Team Leader Cycling Projects, Cambridgeshire County Council
- Larry Heyman, Local Development Manager, Network Rail
- Richard Bowran, Town Clerk, Sawbridgeworth Town Council
- Annelise Furnace, School Governor, Mandeville School

## 6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

## Background Papers

None

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