

Meeting:	General overview and scrutiny committee
Meeting date:	11 July 2017
Title of report:	Sustainable modes of travel to school strategy
Report by:	Transportation strategy manager

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To seek the Committee's views on the council's draft Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy to inform cabinet's consideration of the strategy.

Recommendation(s)

THAT: The committee determines any recommendations it wishes to make to the executive to consider which would strengthen the draft Sustainable Modes of Travel To School Strategy (SMOTS) attached at appendix 1

Alternative options

- 1 Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the production and update of a SMOTS strategy is a statutory duty placed on councils. The committee may choose to recommend alternative priorities or proposals but in doing so any alternatives should be informed by the evidence base available and the prevailing financial and policy context.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 The adoption and maintenance of a SMOTS strategy is a statutory duty under the Education and Inspection Act 2006.
- 3 It is a function of the scrutiny committee to make recommendations to the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive.

Key considerations

- 4 Understanding the needs of children and young people is a key priority for all departments of the Council which work together with that aim
- 5 The production and update of the SMOTS strategy is a statutory duty within the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The act sets out the activities that should be undertaken in producing and adopting a SMOTS strategy, these include:
 - a. Assess the school travel needs of their area; (completed)
 - b. Assess the facilities and services for sustainable modes of travel to, from and within their area; (completed)
 - c. Prepare for each academic year a document containing their strategy to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of their area (“a sustainable modes of travel strategy”); (completed for 2017)
 - d. Publish the strategy in such manner and by such time as may be prescribed; and, (in progress)
 - e. Promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of their area. (in progress)
- 6 The draft SMOTS strategy at appendix 1:
 - a. sets out the council’s priorities to engage and encourage pupils to walk, cycle or take the bus to their place of education, and reduce reliance on the private car where it is practical to do so.
 - b. applies to travel by pupils of compulsory school age to and from any school within the county. The SMOTS strategy will also guide actions to provide improvements for students ages 16-19.
 - c. outlines the policies and strategies we have drawn on to establish the SMOTS strategy objectives. The proposed objectives are:
 - i. To improve the safety of parents and pupils;
 - ii. To improve the health and well-being of pupils; and,
 - iii. To reduce congestion.

- 7 To inform the SMOTS strategy we undertook a range of data collection activities. These activities provided valuable information on current travel trends and barriers to pupils within the county. The methods we used included:
- a. Parental questionnaire;
 - b. Desktop walking and cycling infrastructure audits;
 - c. School travel plans;
 - d. Travel to school provision;
 - e. Accident analysis; and,
 - f. Pupil health data.
- 8 Some of the highlights from our data collection included:
- a. 47% of pupils travel to school by car whilst 26% walk and 2% cycle. A further 17% use the bus, comprising both public bus services and those provided by the Council;
 - b. The main reasons why pupils predominantly travel by car are that journey distances are too long for walking or cycling, and that there are safety concerns;
 - c. 16 schools have 20mph limits in the immediate vicinity;
 - d. 75 schools have cycle racks and 17 schools have parent waiting shelters;
 - e. The Council provides bus transport for 3,318 pupils with 284 paying for vacant seats; and
 - f. 23% of pupils in reception year and 34% of pupils in year 6 are overweight.
- 9 The SMOTS strategy describes the extensive work that we already undertake and engage with schools to encourage walking and cycling. These include:
- a. Bikeability - specialist cycle training from the basics of balance and control to independent journey planning;
 - b. Road safety education and school crossing patrols - undertaken by our road safety unit, delivering education talks and practical sessions to schools;
 - c. Access fund projects - funded by the Department for Transport to encourage behaviour change; and
 - d. Hereford transport packages - major infrastructure projects taking place in Hereford, likely to include walking and cycling measures.
- 10 The SMOTS strategy addresses how we propose to fund our activities. We propose to obtain funding from S106 contributions and the Balfour Beatty Living Places

(BBLP) Annual Plan. We will continue to bid for both revenue and capital funds from the Department for Transport.

- 11 The SMOTS strategy action plan sets out our priorities to improve sustainable travel to schools. Some of the actions include:
 - a. Install bike racks and parent waiting shelters;
 - b. Improve the numbers of schools with up-to-date travel plans;
 - c. Continue to deliver bikeability;
 - d. Include SMOTS strategy projects in the BBLP annual plan; and,
 - e. Through the neighbourhood planning process to ensure school transport needs are supported.

- 12 So that we can measure our performance we have identified performance indicators and developed a monitoring program to engage with the schools:
 - a. The performance indicators comprise:
 - i. Modal share of pupils walking, cycling and bus to schools;
 - ii. Percentage of pupils considered overweight or obese;
 - iii. Number of personal injuries from traffic accidents near schools during peak times;
 - iv. Number of pupils engaged in road safety education; and,
 - v. Traffic flows near schools during peak time.
 - b. We will monitor the performance indicators with the following activities:
 - i. Hands-up surveys in schools to establish modal share;
 - ii. Establish the numbers of travel plans being updated or newly written;
 - iii. Retrieve pupil's health data from Public Health England;
 - iv. Collect data from the accident investigation unit on traffic collision numbers;
 - v. Collect data from road safety unit on numbers of pupils engaged; and,
 - vi. The flow of cars on our automatic traffic counters located near schools during peak periods.

- 13 The performance indicators in the 2009 version of the SMOTS strategy are set out below:
 - o All state schools in Herefordshire to have a travel plan in place by March 2010 - 92.3% schools had completed a travel plan by 2010.

- All independent schools in Herefordshire to have a travel plan in place or be working towards a travel plan by March 2010 - 50% of schools had a travel plan by 2010.
- An audit and mapping exercise to be carried out in 20 schools by March 2010 – not known.
- 50% of schools with travel plans to have current travel plan reviews in place by March 2010 - 61 schools have reviewed their travel plans post 2011. Of the 92.3% of schools with travel plans 64% have reviewed and updated since 2011.

- 14 The production of a SMOTS strategy was discussed at GSC on the 17th January 2017 during the provision of home to school transport (item 65). It was resolved that a SMOTS strategy should be presented to GSC in July. It is anticipated that the strategy will be adopted before the end of the year

Community impact

- 15 The SMOTS strategy will affect all communities across the county and will provide support for and complement a number of other council strategies and plans including:
- a. Corporate Plan
 - i. By promoting active means of transport we will work towards the priority of “keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life” by helping improve children’s health; and
 - ii. By reducing school term congestion we will support economic growth and connectivity.
 - b. Core Strategy
 - i. The sustainable modes of travel to school strategy will provide additional support to Policy MT1 which aims to increase levels of walking and cycling.
 - c. Local transport plan 2016-2031
 - i. The SMOTS strategy will support the objectives of supporting economic growth by reducing term-time congestion and promoting healthy lifestyles.
 - d. Health and well-being board’s strategy
 - i. The health and well-being strategy places the needs of children’s and young peoples’ health and well-being at the core of providing access to education and training. It also makes a significant emphasis on improving the health and well-being through active travel options.

Equality duty

- 16 Consultation on the SMOTS strategy will be undertaken so that we are compliant with

the Public Sector Equality Duty. The SMOTS strategy has been subject to an equality impact assessment which is attached in Appendix 2.

Financial implications

- 17 The SMOTS strategy in itself does not commit the council to expenditure, but sets the parameters within which future proposals will be considered. Proposals / schemes will be developed on a case by case basis, progressing through the appropriate governance channels.

Legal implications

- 18 Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 the council must prepare and publish a Sustainable Modes of Transport to School Strategy.

Risk management

- 19 If we fail to refresh the SMOTS strategy we will be open to challenge for not fulfilling our duties set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the policy contained in our local transport plan

Consultees

- 20 During the data collection process parents and schools were approached for their views on what constituted barriers to sustainable travel. Numerous barriers were identified and noted in the SMOTS strategy.
- 21 A public consultation process is currently underway. This is being run concurrently with the review of the SMOTS strategy by GSC. All views will be reflected in the final document. Stakeholders include:
- a. Schools;
 - b. Governors;
 - c. Parents;
 - d. Transport operators; and the
 - e. General public.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Draft SMOTS strategy document

Appendix 2 - Equalities Impact Assessment

Background papers

- None