

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	Thursday 18 January 2018
Title of report:	Sustainable Modes to School Strategy
Report by:	Cabinet member transport and roads and cabinet member for young people and children's wellbeing

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To approve the Sustainable Mode of Travel to School (SMOTS) strategy for adoption by the council and approve the contents of the general scrutiny committee recommendations.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) The Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy at appendix 1 be adopted; and**
- (b) The response to the recommendations of general scrutiny committee at appendix 3**

be approved.

Alternative options

1. The SMOTS strategy is not adopted and we do not carry on with its development. This is not recommended as the adoption of a SMOTS strategy is a statutory duty placed on councils by the Education Act 1996 (as amended).

Key considerations

2. The production and update of the SMOTS strategy is a statutory duty set out in the Education Act 1996 (as amended). The act details the activities that should be undertaken in producing and adopting a SMOTS strategy, these include:
 - a. Assess the school travel needs of the area;
 - b. Assess the facilities and services for sustainable modes of travel to, from and within the area;
 - c. Prepare for each academic year a document containing the strategy to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of the area (“a sustainable modes of travel to school strategy”);
 - d. Publish the strategy in such manner and by such time as may be prescribed; and,
 - e. Promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of the area.
3. The recommended SMOTS strategy is contained in appendix 1. This sets out the 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. It is intended to apply to travel by pupils of compulsory school age and sixth form age to and from any school within the county. The document sets out the data collection and analysis undertaken in developing the strategy.
4. In addition to highlighting the connections to other policies, including in relation to the potential to secure S106 funding from developers to improve transport facilities, the strategy sets out, in Chapter 6, an action plan to encourage use of sustainable modes of transport to school. Some of the key actions include:
 - a. facilities at schools to support walking and cycling;
 - b. Increasing the numbers of schools with up-to-date travel plans;
 - c. Continuing to deliver cycle training through the Department for Transport funded Bikeability scheme;
 - d. Consideration of sustainable transport infrastructure in proximity to schools in the public realm annual plan;
 - e. Developing and implementing a SMOTS strategy plan for a pilot school; and

- f. Responding through the neighbourhood planning consultation process to ensure school transport needs are supported.
- 5. The current SMOTS was published by the council in 2009. Whilst the broad thrust of the policy remains the same the development of the new strategy has provided an opportunity to take account of the now adopted Local Plan Core Strategy, Local Transport Plan and the current Health and Wellbeing strategy. It has been prepared using all relevant available data and has been subject to consultation with schools and the public. Key elements of the new strategy include:
 - a. Updated strategy aims, objectives and targets
 - b. Accident, bus transport numbers and child health data
 - c. An infrastructure audit of all schools
 - d. An action plan setting out specific activities to deliver our objectives
 - e. How we plan to monitor school travel behaviour; and
 - f. A description of our consultation activities.
- 6. The SMOTS strategy provides a framework for promoting sustainable travel to schools, assists them in developing their own travel plans and complements the council's wider aims and objectives

Community impact

- 7. 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 the Corporate Plan, the Core Strategy, the Local Transport Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This will be achieved by seeking to improve health outcomes and addressing traffic congestion.
- 8. The council is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for all individuals impacted by the council's funded activities. The council endeavours to ensure that the work they and their partners undertake, does not adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of members of the public. Further details regarding health and safety are set out in related policy and strategy documents including the highways maintenance plan, the home to school transport policy and operational policies and procedures for school crossing patrols, cycle and pedestrian training and school transport services.

Equality duty

- 9. Section 149 of the Equality Act imposes a duty on 'public authorities' and other bodies when exercising public functions to have due regard to the need to:
 - a. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act

- b. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
 - c. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
10. The SMOTS strategy will not have a detrimental impact on equality as it will encourage greater access to schools and education for all pupils.

Resource implications

11. 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.
12. The SMOTS strategy action plan can be delivered within existing budgets and resources.

Legal implications

13. The council has a statutory duty each academic year to prepare and publish a document which contains its strategy to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of Herefordshire. This statutory duty is set out in Section 508A of the Education Act 1996 (as amended), regulation 8 and paragraph 9, schedule 3 of the School Information (England) Regulations 2008 and the Department for Education statutory guidance document Home to School Travel and Transport published in July 2014.
14. The statutory defined purpose of such sustainable modes of transport must improve on both:
- a. The physical wellbeing of those who use them; and
 - b. The environmental wellbeing of the whole or part of Herefordshire.
15. The Act further defines school travel needs as those relating to the needs of children and young persons of sixth form age to travel to and from school, institutions within the further education sector, 16-19 academies or places where they receive education or training.

Risk management

16. If we fail to refresh the SMOTS strategy we will be open to challenge for not fulfilling our duties set out in the Education Act 1996 and the policies contained in our local transport plan.
17. A number of key risks have been identified and are highlighted on the risk management plan within the SMOTS strategy (Appendix 1, page 20). Some of the risks include:
- a. Availability of robust data to monitor the strategy – the strategy sets out a range of sources which can be utilised to coordinate school travel data and also an approach to government to re-instate the annual school travel census;

- b. Funding availability – the strategy identifies a number of potential funding sources for capital schemes and also identifies the public realm annual planning process which will consider schemes identified by local communities;
- c. Coordination across different council service areas – the strategy identifies the development of a cross directorate working group which will help improve the coordination of activities targeting the supporting children:
- d. Limited enthusiasm/capacity in schools to engage in school travel planning – the cross directorate working set out in c. will be used to explore how best to support schools to engage more actively in travel planning.

Consultees

18. The SMOTS strategy was presented to GSC on the 11th July 2017 which put forward a number of recommendations. The details of the GSC's recommendations and proposed response are set out at appendix 3 including specific changes which have been incorporated into the strategy document.
19. A public consultation was undertaken providing the opportunity to comment on a draft SMOTS between 13th July 2017 and 29th September 2017. The consultation was publicised and targeted information provided to schools, local members and the general public. We received 132 responses in total and these have helped inform the final strategy. Whilst school travel issues are often brought to the council's attention by schools across the county it is disappointing that no consultation responses were received from schools.
20. Most common responses comprised:
 - a. Concern over lack of a target set for Hereford modal shares;
 - b. Difficulty in getting schools to co-operate with developing travel plans with incentives;
 - c. Closer working with Public Health; and
 - d. The need to add additional text under the highways management section to make reference to the Local Transport Plan 2016-2031 asset management policies.
21. In light of the consultation responses we have made the following changes to the draft version:
 - a. Clarification of the link between actions, targets and objectives which will enable monitoring of the impacts of the strategy;
 - b. Inclusion the most recent robust dataset clarifying school travel modes;
 - c. A clearer linkage between this strategy and Public Health activities targeted at children;
 - d. Clearer linkage between the strategy and the council's highway asset management policies.

22. The views of Members and Group Leaders have been sought on this report and no comments have been received.

Appendices

Appendix 1- SMOTS strategy document.

Appendix 2- Equality assessment.

Appendix 3- GSC recommendations and responses.

Background papers

None