

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Special Meeting of **Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 1A - County Hall, Durham on **Monday 3 September 2018 at 11.00 am**

Present:

Councillor E Adam (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors B Avery, D Bell, L Brown, J Carr, S Dunn, A Gardner, D Hicks, P Howell, P Jopling, R Manchester, O Milburn, A Patterson, A Simpson, P Sexton and L Taylor

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Bolton and Mrs P Holding

Also Present:

Councillors J Clare, G Darkes, E Huntington, L Maddison, S Quinn and M Wilkes
Co-opted Members Mrs R Hassoon and Mr D Taylor Gooby

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Clark, R Crute, C Martin and M Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Declarations of Interest

Mr Bolton declared an interest as a Member of the Local Access Forum.

Mrs Holden declared an interest as the Chair of the Local Access Forum.

Councillor Gardner declared an interest as a member of Durham University Bike Group.

Councillor Patterson declared an interest as an Equestrian.

4 Any items from Co-opted Members or interested parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

5 Draft Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan - Consultation

Members considered the Joint report of the Director of Transformation and Partnerships and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services that provided Members with background information in advance of the presentation by the Sustainable Travel Officer (for copy, see file of minutes).

The Sustainable Travel Officer was in attendance to provide a presentation on the overview of the draft Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2018-2028 (SCWDP), the consultation process, the key themes/comments resulting from the consultation and next steps in relation to the Delivery Plan (for copy of presentation, see file of minutes).

The Sustainable Travel Officer stressed the key ambitions of the Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2018 - 2028 were that Durham is recognised as a cycling and walking friendly county and that the networks are safe, accessible and well maintained. That more people especially women and children are cycling or walking for everyday journeys and that the quality of people's lives, health and fitness were improved.

Members were advised that there were three building blocks to create a cycling and walking county. The first two blocks related to infrastructure and operation while the third was about encouraging participation. The Sustainable Travel Officer gave a summary of the key cycling strategy achievements that would be used as the foundation of the SCWDP.

The key differences between the Cycling Strategy 2012 -2015 and the SCWDP were highlighted such as the inclusion of walking which is in line with the government investment strategy, the production of network plans for main towns and a 10 year delivery plan with two 5 year action plans.

Members were advised of the national context, the Department for Transport (DfT) Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy sets out targets in relation to cycling and walking the SCWDP fits with the government ambitions. The government's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) include network plans to identify preferred routes and core zones for further development and a prioritised programme for infrastructure improvements for future investment and a report that sets out underlying analysis and provides a narrative that supports the identified network. Unfortunately, Durham County Council were unsuccessful in attracting government funding but by developing a SCWDP it is possible that future funding from government may be attracted. Members were informed that the demand to the response to the LCWIPs was so great that for those Local Authorities that were unsuccessful in attracting the funding online support was available and workshops providing information were also provided.

The County Durham SCWDP was developed initially with the establishment of internal and external working groups, reviewing the cycling strategy and developing the new delivery plan that evolved into the SCWDP that has gone out to consultation. So far the service has received 33 responses via the online system and 4/5 coming in directly. Members were advised that most of the responses to the consultation were in support of this and only one objection.

The consultation ended 7 September following that all responses were collated and those individuals and groups who had taken the time to respond the consultation would receive a response themselves. The SCWDP would be revised where appropriate and redrafted then in October would go before Senior Management teams and in November the SCWDP would be considered by Cabinet.

Following the presentation, the Chairman thanked the Sustainable Travel Officer for her very informative presentation.

He then asked in relation to the £2.7 million spent since 2012-2015/16 what difference has this investment brought to the County, he then referred to the 2012 – 2015 Audit and commented that all cycle routes had already been looked at, so was there any need for a further audit.

The Officer responded that the cycle network planning process had been developed in house to address existing networks and to ensure that they were mapped and recorded. They looked at the usability of the network, plan what might be required in the future, joining up existing networks, look at where people want to move between two points and how the network can provide a network that meets that demand, this process also helps prioritise routes.

The Strategic Traffic Manager continued that when the project was a large project, there were more benefits gained in relation to improved journey times than invested in various schemes and it was difficult to quantify in relation to health improvements.

The monies invested brought value in that more usage of the cycle routes and people cycling to work.

The Chairman indicated that they currently did not have performance indicators for cycling.

The Sustainable Transport Officer responded that they were hoping to expand the number of counters currently installed so that they could obtain more and better information. The Strategic Traffic Manager agreed to share data on individual projects.

Councillor Jopling commented that the delivery plan was geared toward getting people to work but raised concerns in relation to health and safety of people walking. She continued that there were six little villages within close proximity within her division, however none of which have pavements and the only option is for people to walk was to use the roads, which was dangerous. She continued that elderly people who wanted to keep fit wanted to walk 2-3 miles not huge distances and a safe walk to the next village would give them the opportunity to improve their health however it was unsafe to walk on the road or the verges as they were no longer mowed.

The Strategic Traffic Manager responded that County Durham was a rural county and we had to prioritise and have therefore targeted travelling to work.

Councillor Huntington commented that whilst it was good to hear about the proposals in the delivery plan, but there is an issue of maintaining the routes once established. In her division there was an issue with litter on cycling routes from walkers and cyclists and there was a need for cyclists and walkers to be educated to take their litter home with them. She

continued that local litter picks undertaken by volunteers had taken place on the various routes to keep them clean and tidy.

The Strategic Traffic Manager responded that maintenance was an issue and that volunteers do help in relation to issues such as litter and continued that there were different standards across the county, we need to try to get an even standard in relation to the maintenance of these routes.

Councillor Darkes sought clarification on the 12 major towns, details of which the Sustainable Travel Officer provided.

Councillor Wilkes referred to the consultation process and asked if all Members were consulted.

The Chair advised that the consultation had been emailed to all members of Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 August via Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillor Wilkes explained the salary sacrifice scheme in place for employees of the council who want to purchase a bicycle and would have the cost of the bike taken from their wages before tax and national insurance. He advised that the scheme was with Halfords who charged 15% commission then handed 12% back to Durham County Council and asked if it was possible for local cycling retailers to be included in this scheme.

The Strategic Traffic Manager advised that Halfords had given a lot back in relation to repairs and maintenance and competitions and money is allocated back, but this was another department responsible for this.

Councillor Wilkes indicated that he had previously asked that Members got involved in the procurement process so that local shops were not priced out of the scheme and asked if there was a consultation with Members.

The Strategic Traffic Manager advised that he pass this query to the service and ask them to respond to Councillor Wilkes.

Mr Taylor-Gooby indicated that all that had been said also applied to running concerning safety of runners on roads and wondered whether some of the principles in relation to walking and cycling could be extended to running.

The Sustainable Travel Officer responded that running was addressed through Sport and Physical Activity.

The Strategic Traffic Manager added that when cycle routes are improved they are used by runners too.

Mrs R Hasoon asked if they worked with employers and schools to establish locations for where cycles could be parked.

The Sustainable Travel Officer responded that bicycle racks had been installed in council buildings and enterprise parks and that 400 bike stands had been installed across the

county which also included the likes of community centres and pubs through 'Park That Bike' scheme, overall the scheme had been successful.

Councillor Dunn referred to the cycle route from Coxhoe to Durham which was extremely staggered and poor and that improvements to the route are not included in the delivery plan.

He then referred to Objective 5.3 contained in the action plan 2018-2023 which limited funding for constructing cycling super routes (up to £0.5m) to within 5 miles of Durham City. He suggested that the end of this objective be amended to read 'key settlements within 5 miles of Durham City being a priority'.

He then referred to improvements scheduled to J61 of the A1M which would make it more difficult to cycle and suggested to open up part of the railway line which would link with the existing plan. The policy should not restrict improvements to towns, at the expense of improvements to villages across County Durham.

The Strategic Traffic Manager responded that they had limited resources, so needed to prioritise the focus was on employment areas and that every settlement could not be included.

Councillor Dunn indicated that the MP for Durham had recently commented that the bus services for people in villages was inadequate.

The Chairman advised Councillor Dunn that they would take note of his comments.

Councillor Gardner indicated that it was a good document but he had some issues and concerns with the Newton Aycliffe to Durham route of the A167 corridor which missed out Spennymoor. He then referred to the Bishop Auckland to Shildon route and commented that he was concerned if major towns were best priority and maybe work routes should be prioritised more, and would be sensible to focus on safe routes from housing estates to schools which would also aid local people.

The Chairman referred to schools and encouraging people to walk to get cars off the road but there was not much detail regarding this in the plan.

The Sustainable Travel Officer responded that schools had been included in the consultation via bikeability. The Government is encouraging walking and cycling for 5 to 10 year olds and this is addressed via the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), the service had been working with Living Streets who were going into schools to deliver the walking schemes.

Councillor Gardner commented that Snipely to Lanchester is an area where significant development was planned for the future. There had been issues raised in relation to safe walking and cycling.

The Strategic Traffic Manager responded that the Cycling and Walking Strategy sits behind the Development Strategy and is one of the many building blocks which will be used to inform the development strategy.

Councillor Patterson advised she was an equestrian and asked why bridal paths were not included in the consultation and was advised that services for horse riding were different to those for walking and cycling. Councillor Patterson went on to suggest that the SCWDP should influence policies contained within the County Durham Plan such as highways infrastructure and need to be looking at how to join up with the County Durham Plan. The Strategic Traffic Manager advised that the policy was being redrafted to reflect this work and explained that they had worked closely with Planning in relation to the SCWDP. The Sustainable Travel Officer advised that the British Horse Society and its local reps were a consultee. The emphasis of the work was to concentrate on the 12 towns but work had been carried out on bridal ways in Durham City area and all users had benefitted from the work.

Councillor Patterson asked what percentage of routes were also bridleways. The Officer indicated that this information would be obtained and passed to Councillor Patterson outside of the meeting.

Mrs Holding commented that whilst she appreciated that the delivery plan and strategy concentrated on getting people to work there was also a need to ensure that we don't lose sight of the need to develop tourist routes and encourage people to come to County Durham for cycling and walking holidays which would be of economic benefit too.

Resolved: (i) That the presentation be noted.

(ii) That the comments made be formulated into a response and fed into the ongoing consultation as the Overview and Scrutiny response.

(iii) That the work programme for 2019/20 include a progress update on the Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2018-2028.