

# **Report to Communities, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Committee**

**9 June 2023**

## **Draft Active Travel Strategy and Ongoing Work With Active Travel England**

**Report by: Assistant Director Highways, Transport and Planning**

---

### **Summary**

This report provides an update on progress towards the adoption of a new Active Travel Strategy together with current ongoing work with Active Travel England in relation to our approach to progression towards Level 1 status. The purpose of this paper is to seek scrutiny of the draft Active Travel Strategy, and of the plans to undertake stakeholder and public engagement on the draft, which is planned to supersede the existing Walking and Cycling Strategy in due course.

### **Focus for Scrutiny**

The Committee is invited to review and comment on the current draft Active Travel Strategy and consider plans for stakeholder and public engagement prior to the proposed formal adoption of the Strategy. The Committee is asked to consider the following areas:

- 1) Alignment of the draft Strategy and approach with the plans, policies, and strategic priorities of the County Council.
  - 2) The likely significant impacts of the draft Strategy on the County Council's duties, responsibilities, services and emerging capital delivery programmes.
  - 3) The likely significant impacts of the draft Strategy, both locally and more widely, on the economy, environment, and communities of West Sussex.
  - 4) Plans for stakeholder and public consultation
- 

### **Proposal**

#### **1 Background and context**

- 1.1 In 2017 the Government published its Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) which encouraged local authorities to adopt Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) - long term visions for creating active travel networks. The Department for Transport (DfT) awarded WSCC consultancy time to develop LCWIPs.
- 1.2 There are adopted LCWIPs in Adur, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Mid Sussex and Worthing. Arundel Town Council is currently developing an LCWIP. Arun District Council completed an Active Travel Study, which focuses on strategic development sites. The draft West Sussex LCWIP considers six long distance

routes that connect communities and is designed to complement the district and borough LCWIPs that focus on creating active travel networks in the main urban areas.

- 1.3 In 2020 the Government created the Active Travel Fund (ATF) to support the delivery of LCWIP schemes. In 2022, stewardship of the ATF transferred from the DfT to Active Travel England (ATE) who are charged with achieving the Government's target that 50% of all journeys in English towns and cities should be walked or cycled by 2030. In March 2023 the Government reduced ATE's budget by £200 million.
- 1.4 The ATE capability ratings for local authorities assessed the County Council one of only four authorities nationally to score zero. ATE have not provided details of how they arrived at this outcome, and we had expected to be graded at level 1. Despite our requests, ATE have not provided details of how they graded the County Council. However, ATE described level zero authorities as follows: "Local leadership for active travel is not obvious, no significant plans are in place, the authority has delivered only lower complexity schemes."
- 1.5 As a level zero authority at this time, the County Council are not able to bid for ATE's capital funding (Active Travel Fund) to deliver active travel schemes. Delivering such schemes is central to achieving the aims and objectives our recently adopted West Sussex Transport Plan notably objectives 5, 6 and 17; enable healthy lifestyles, enable access to services and extend and improve active travel facilities. Such schemes also contribute to achieving carbon reduction and public health benefits.
- 1.6 The County Council remains in a dialogue with ATE and is preparing a portfolio of evidence to be submitted summer 2023 when we expect to be re-assessed at a level one. We have recently been awarded £237k of revenue funding from ATE to implement a development plan which includes a re-evaluation of our progress for award of level one during the summer 2023. Once the County Council are level one, it will be possible to bid into the next round of capital funding for active travel priorities when invited by ATE.
- 1.7 ATE has advised the County Council to consider improvement schemes that remove barriers to walking (narrow pavements, lack of crossing points) especially as they relate to the school journey. ATE have indicated this is a priority. The key aim is to improve our overall culture of promoting and delivering active travel schemes.
- 1.8 An officer Active Travel Ambition Group (ATAG) has been established that intends to address both technical and cultural issues. This group will initially focus on securing at least level one status from ATE and the development and implementation of an Active Travel Action Plan to influence future delivery programmes and approaches. This draft approach is set out in Appendix A.
- 1.9 The Committee is asked to support the proposed plan to achieve level one and to champion the role active travel plays in achieving transport, carbon reduction and public health improvements.
- 1.10 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport constituted an Executive Task and Finish Group to assist in revising the current Walking and Cycling Strategy which will become known as the Active Travel Strategy. This draft Strategy is set out in Appendix B.

- 1.11 It is intended to undertake a stakeholder and public engagement on the draft Active Travel Strategy to replace the existing Walking and Cycling Strategy.

## **2 Proposal details**

- 2.1 The draft Active Travel Strategy has been developed following engagement with a member-led Task and Finish Group. The draft vision looks to support national and local ambitions to deliver infrastructure that nurtures and enables a reduction in car trips in favour of active travel (i.e. walking, wheeling and cycling) generally but with a focus on school communities. It is envisaged that following stakeholder and public engagement, the formal adoption of this Strategy is approved and implemented.
- 2.2 The Active Travel Strategy aligns with the current plans, policies, and strategic priorities of the County Council. It will influence how the County Council carries out its duties and responsibilities and services. It will also derive the development of the emerging Active Travel capital delivery programmes to ensure that investment on this infrastructure is focused on appropriate schemes such as walking and wheeling in school communities.
- 2.3 To achieve this vision, a number of objectives will guide this Strategy over time, that are aligned with the County Council's wider policy framework and reflects the application of national policy at the local level. These are:
- 2.4 **Supporting the decarbonisation of our transport network:** Our Active Travel schemes will contribute to the decarbonisation of our transport networks and support the pathway to net zero. When we develop active travel schemes assessing carbon impacts will increasingly form an integral part of our scheme development process. This will ensure approaches to scheme design and delivery maximise the potential to reduce embodied carbon and secure reductions in emissions from journeys that would otherwise be undertaken by motorised vehicles.
- 2.5 **Reducing the need to travel by motorised vehicles:** We will strive to make walking, wheeling and cycling the natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey. This will mean the development and delivery of active travel routes that provide safe and direct connections between people and places, and journey times that make these options the logical choice. For longer distance journeys we will ensure active travel planning is advanced with consideration of access to public transport services, including local bus and rail connections, to ensure door-to-door journeys by more sustainable, low carbon forms of travel become the most viable and attractive option across the county.
- 2.6 **Boosting physical and mental health and wellbeing across the county:** There will be a clear focus in our approach on active travel to increase levels of physical activity in West Sussex, supporting both physical health and mental wellbeing. This will include working closely with local stakeholders to determine how best to identify, engage and promote active travel across communities to support it becoming more commonplace as a form of activity in everyday life and provide better access to both green and blue spaces.
- 2.7 **Supporting future economic prosperity and vibrant local communities:** Through our approach to active travel investment, we will create better streets and places for people and empower local communities to shape scheme proposals. We recognise that this means consulting on scheme proposals from

an early stage in their development, so they appropriately recognise impacts and the benefits for local communities, and for those who work in and visit our County.

- 2.8 The Strategy seeks to place importance and priority on active travel improvements that will support the success of future funding bids to ATE and elsewhere. Hence, the increased focus on walking and wheeling especially as they relate to the school journey which are a priority for ATE.
- 2.9 In so doing we also seek to enable behavioural change in relation to increase active travel and will reinforce work with Local Planning Authorities when negotiating Section 106 Agreements and other development-led contributions. It is also recognised that our Public Rights of Way provides a substantial network of walking, cycling and equestrian routes.
- 2.10 Various meetings between members, officers and ATE have resulted in a plan for reassessment to level one to enable capital bids which is at Appendix B. The County Council has recently been awarded £237k from ATE to implement this plan which includes a re-evaluation of our progress for award of level one during the summer 2023.

### **3 Other options considered**

- 3.1 None.

### **4 Consultation, engagement, and advice**

- 4.1 Internal Officer consultation has taken place as necessary in Highways, Transport and Planning and with specialist consultants.
- 4.2 The Executive Walking and Cycling Task and Finish Group has been consulted during preparation of the draft Active Travel Strategy.
- 4.3 Subject to the agreement of this committee, it is intended to commence a public and stakeholder consultation in early September, with a view to reporting back to this committee early 2024.
- 4.4 It is proposed to run an 8-week online consultation for the draft Active Travel Strategy using EngagementHQ. Results will be considered and evaluated in a consultation report.
- 4.5 The planned consultation will be promoted via media releases, social media and other communication channels such as e-newsletters.

### **5 Finance**

- 5.1 In March 2023 we were awarded £237,667 as part of our level one support package. Details of the spending plan can be seen in Appendix A.

### **6 Risk implications and mitigations**

- 6.1 Failure to demonstrate the County Council's commitment to active travel improvements may hinder the likely success of future funding bids to ATE and consequently frustrate plans for investment in associated infrastructure improvements.

## **7 Policy alignment and compliance**

- 7.1 **Our Council Plan** – the adoption of the Active Travel Strategy will support delivery of improved infrastructure and help to deliver a sustainable and prosperous economy.
- 7.2 **Legal implications** – there are no legal implications for the County Council in making this response.
- 7.3 **Equality duty and human rights assessment** – there are no equality and human rights implications in making this response. The EquIA can be seen in Appendix C.
- 7.4 **Climate change** – the adoption of the Active Travel Strategy is expected to support current work as part of the County Council’s approach to climate change issues.
- 7.5 **Crime and disorder** – there are no identifiable Crime and Disorder Act implications in making this response.
- 7.6 **Public health** – the adoption of the Active Travel Strategy will support increased walking, wheeling and cycling and is likely to have a positive impact on the County Council’s approach to public health.
- 7.7 **Social value** – responding to the consultation is not expected to impact on social value.

Matt Davey

**Assistant Director Highways, Transport and Planning**

### **Contact Officers:**

Andy Ekinsmyth, Head of Transport and Network Operations,  
Tel: 0330 222 6687, [andy.ekinsmyth@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:andy.ekinsmyth@westsussex.gov.uk)

Ian Patrick, Local Transport Improvements Manager,  
Tel: 0330 222 6715, [ian.patrick@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:ian.patrick@westsussex.gov.uk)

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Active Travel England Level One Bid: West Sussex County Council

Appendix B - Draft Active Travel Strategy

Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment

### **Background papers:**

None