

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**DATE: 24 APRIL 2008**

**REPORT OF REGENERATION  
AND TRANSPORT SELECT  
COMMITTEE**

### **CABINET DECISION**

**Regeneration and Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Cook;  
Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Cunningham.**

#### **SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL TRAVEL STRATEGY**

1. Summary

The attached report sets out the findings and recommendations from the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee's review of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy. The report examines home to school travel and transport in the borough; the take-up and effectiveness of school travel plans amongst Stockton's schools; the travel and transport and facilitating measures necessary to assist in the effective provision of safe and sustainable school travel in Stockton; governance issues surrounding sustainable school travel; and links to the Building Schools for the Future programme.

2. Recommendations

- (1) The Regeneration and Transport Select Committee be provided with updates on the impact of the new statutory walking distances on choice of schools and the statutory provision of transport managed by the Community Transport Service.
- (2) The Regeneration and Transport Select Committee write to the governing bodies of those schools without a school travel plan encouraging them to complete a school travel plan.
- (3) That the Road Safety Team consider ways of celebrating those schools with an authorised travel plan in conjunction with, for example, the 'Crucial Crew' Initiative and the Electoral, Civic and Community Engagement Team.
- (4) That the Road Safety Team design a school travel plan logo or insignia which could be used by schools to signify they have an authorised school travel plan.
- (5) That consideration be given to the levels of support to the school travel plan implementation and audit processes to ensure adequate staff resources are in place.
- (6) That the Road Safety Team implements a monitoring and accreditation scheme for all schools with a school travel plan.
- (7) The Sustainable School Travel Strategy Action Plan be amended to more accurately reflect the current number of visits to schools made by the enforcement service, enabling current performance to be further developed.

- (8) That the early implementation of bridges linking Ingleby Barwick to Yarm and Eaglescliffe through the Connect 2 project be pursued to provide the option for safe and sustainable pedestrian and cycling routes to school for students living in Ingleby Barwick.
- (9) That the Select Committee be provided with updates relating to progress on new methods of cashless payments and real-time public transport information.
- (10) That the Road Safety Team adopt new ways of promoting school travel planning in Stockton Borough, utilising other services and initiatives, for example the Healthy Schools and Eco Schools Initiatives.
- (11) That the Road Safety Team be represented on an obesity strategy development group in order to ensure that the role of school travel planning is captured in an obesity strategy.
- (12) That the Road Safety Team and the Extended Schools Team work in partnership to ensure sustainable school travel issues are considered as part of the Extended Schools programme.
- (13) That the Road Safety Team, the Building Schools for the Future Team, and Planning Services work in partnership to ensure sustainable school travel issues are considered as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme.

### 3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

1. This review was undertaken in response to a Cabinet referral of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy to Executive Scrutiny for consideration and possible inclusion in a Select Committee's work programme. Reference was made by Cabinet to School Travel Plans, which were mentioned in the Strategy and Cabinet suggested that as part of any future review the relevant Select Committee may wish to consider to what degree plans were implemented and how effective they were. The topic was confirmed by Executive Scrutiny Committee in September 2007 and the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee began their review of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy in December 2007 with the issues outlined by Cabinet taken into account.
2. The Committee has learnt that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is currently below the national average for the percentage of schools with authorised school travel plans. However, the Committee also identified that many schools in the borough have undertaken school travel plans and implemented many practical measures designed to increase sustainable travel to their school. It is hoped that these recommendations may assist in increasing the number of schools completing travel plans and facilitate the identification and sharing of good practice.
3. The Committee also considered how sustainable school travel 'joins-up' with a series of other initiatives and has made recommendations in relation to this, and requests further information on certain issues as it becomes available.

### 4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (paragraph 8) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (paragraph 12 of the Code).

**Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.**

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**SUMMARY**

The attached report sets out the findings and recommendations from the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee's review of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy. The report examines home to school travel and transport in the borough; the take-up and effectiveness of school travel plans amongst Stockton's schools; the travel and transport and facilitating measures necessary to assist in the effective provision of safe and sustainable school travel in Stockton; governance issues surrounding sustainable school travel; and links to the Building Schools for the Future programme.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) The Regeneration and Transport Select Committee be provided with updates on the impact of the new statutory walking distances on choice of schools and the statutory provision of transport managed by the Community Transport Service.
- (2) The Regeneration and Transport Select Committee write to the governing bodies of those schools without a school travel plan encouraging them to complete a school travel plan.
- (3) That the Road Safety Team consider ways of celebrating those schools with an authorised travel plan in conjunction with, for example, the 'Crucial Crew' Initiative and the Electoral, Civic and Community Engagement Team.
- (4) That the Road Safety Team design a school travel plan logo or insignia which could be used by schools to signify they have an authorised school travel plan.
- (5) That consideration be given to the levels of support to the school travel plan implementation and audit processes to ensure adequate staff resources are in place.
- (6) That the Road Safety Team implement a monitoring and accreditation scheme for all schools with a school travel plan.
- (7) The Sustainable School Travel Strategy Action Plan be amended to more accurately reflect the current number of visits to schools made by the enforcement service, enabling current performance to be further developed.
- (8) That the early implementation of bridges linking Ingleby Barwick to Yarm and Eaglescliffe through the Connect 2 project be pursued to provide the option for safe and sustainable pedestrian and cycling routes to school for students living in Ingleby Barwick.

- (9) That the Select Committee be provided with updates relating to progress on new methods of cashless payments and real-time public transport information.
- (10) That the Road Safety Team adopt new ways of promoting school travel planning in Stockton Borough, utilising other services and initiatives, for example the Healthy Schools and Eco Schools Initiatives.
- (11) That the Road Safety Team be represented on an obesity strategy development group in order to ensure that the role of school travel planning is captured in an obesity strategy.
- (12) That the Road Safety Team and the Extended Schools Team work in partnership to ensure sustainable school travel issues are considered as part of the Extended Schools programme.
- (13) That the Road Safety Team, the Building Schools for the Future Team, and Planning Services work in partnership to ensure sustainable school travel issues are considered as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme.

## **DETAIL**

1. The report presents Cabinet with the findings of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy review undertaken by the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee between December 2007 and March 2008. This review was undertaken in response to a Cabinet referral of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy to Executive Scrutiny for consideration and possible inclusion in a Select Committee's work programme. Reference was made by Cabinet to School Travel Plans, which were mentioned in the Strategy and Cabinet suggested that as part of any future review the relevant Select Committee may wish to consider to what degree plans were implemented and how effective they were. The topic was confirmed by Executive Scrutiny Committee in September 2007 and the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee began their review of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy in December 2007 with the issues outlined by Cabinet taken into account.
2. This review was primarily based on the changes made in relation to school travel under the Education and Inspections Act (2006). The Act placed a general duty on local authorities, in relation to all children and young people of sixth form age, to assess the school travel needs of their area and promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to school. These are defined as those modes of travel the local authority considers "may improve the physical well-being of those who use them and / or the environmental well-being of whole or part of the area", and may include walking, cycling, use of public transport and car-sharing (DfES, 2007: 5).
3. The new sustainable travel duty requires local authorities to assess the travel and transport needs of children and young people in the local authority's area. Local authorities should also undertake an audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure for travel to, from, and between schools and other education institutions. Following the assessment and audit, local authorities should prepare and publish a sustainable school travel strategy which should include details of measures to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure of the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for, as well as other objectives which include environmental improvements, improvements to health and increased road and personal safety and security. Finally, local authorities should promote sustainable school travel and transport.
4. 'School travel plans' are identified as key in enabling local authorities to meet the new sustainable school travel duty. It is hoped that every school will have a travel plan in place by 2010. The government define a school travel plan as:  
  
...a package of measures to improve safety and reduce car use, backed by a partnership involving the school, education and transport officers from the local authority, the police and the

health authority. It is based on consultation with teachers, parents / carers, pupils and governors and the wider community

(DfES, 2007: 6).

5. The Committee considered a number of issues as part of this review and received evidence and input from Council officers; the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF); headteachers through responses to questionnaires sent to schools in the borough both with and without a school travel plan; and from staff and pupils of three of the borough's schools in a Committee meeting at the Town Hall.
6. The Committee considered the potential impact of the new statutory walking distances for children from families on low incomes on facilitating choice of schools and on the provision of statutory school transport. The Committee plan to reassess this issue, through updates from the Community Transport Service, once its impact has been established.
7. As of March 2007 around 48% of Stockton-on-Tees schools had completed school travel plans against a current national average of 56%. This figure does not take into account, however, that five of Stockton's schools who have previously completed school travel plans are now classified as no longer having them as they have received new DCSF numbers, primarily due to amalgamation. The Committee recognised that increasing the numbers of schools in the borough with authorised travel plans is currently a priority.
8. The Committee considered that more could be done to promote school travel planning and the good work many schools are currently undertaking as part of their travel plans. A letter from the Committee to the governing bodies of all schools without a travel plan was considered appropriate in respect to this, to encourage these schools to complete a travel plan. Secondly, the Committee considered that a celebration event and a school travel plan insignia or logo could further assist in recognising the good work currently being done and encourage more schools to enter into the process. Greater numbers of schools undertaking school travel plans may require greater staff resources however, and the Committee request that consideration be given to this issue.
9. The Committee received evidence from three of the borough's schools, Tilery Primary School, Junction Farm Primary School and Conyers Schools as examples of good practice in school travel planning in the borough. The Committee was pleased to note that many more schools could have attended a Committee meeting for this purpose, evident through the questionnaire responses received from headteachers of schools with established travel plans. Despite this, data collection on modeshare of travel to school is at an early stage and an assessment, using statistical data, of how school travel plans may be impacting on a reduction in car use should currently be treated with a degree of caution. In order to achieve a better understanding of what kinds of measures are being implemented in schools, and what effect they are having, the Committee recommend that a school travel plan monitoring and accreditation scheme be implemented.
10. The Committee also considered as part of the review the enforcement of parking regulations around schools, the implementation of more sustainable routes in the borough, and innovative new ways of making public transport a more attractive travel option, which were all identified as having the potential to impact on increasing sustainable school travel in the borough.
11. Finally, the Committee considered governance issues surrounding sustainable school travel, as it appears to 'join-up' with a number of other current initiatives. The Committee wish to see an increased role for sustainable school travel within the authority's new childhood obesity strategy, and for school travel issues to be included as a consideration in relation to the Extended Schools and the Building Schools for the Future programmes. The Committee also considered that the Road Safety Team could utilise existing links with the Healthy Schools and Eco Schools Initiatives to encourage more schools to complete a travel plan.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Advice from the relevant financial officer indicates that any funds required for the recommendations will be met from existing service resources.

Regarding recommendation 5, the Committee was informed that the Road Safety Service will be reviewed as part of Technical Services' draft Service Improvement Plan as a priority action for 2008. At present this is at an early stage and no figures have yet been presented. It is though usual in these circumstances that any review would be undertaken within the current resources that the service is allocated.

Regarding recommendation 8, the implementation of the footpaths / cycleways through the Connect 2 project will be subject to securing further resources in addition to that already received through the 'Sustrans Connect 2' project.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

No identified legal implications. The report is based in part on a consideration of the local authority's duties in respect to sections 508A, 508B, 509AS and Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996 which were inserted by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

This scrutiny report of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

## **COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS**

### **Environment**

Reduction in car journeys on the school run which will have a positive impact on air quality

### **Community Safety and Well-Being**

Reduction in congestion within the vicinity of the school buildings

### **Health**

To encourage walking and cycling and enable children to become confident travellers.

### **Economic Regeneration**

No significant impact

### **Education and Lifelong Learning**

The Sustainable School Travel Strategy provides information for parents to assist them in their decision-making regarding their preferred school. It is also essential to the organisation and planning for entry to reception and the smooth transition from primary to secondary school.

### **Arts and Culture**

No significant impact

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The existing Equalities Impact Assessment needs to be reviewed in the light of recommendations suggested.

## **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

A questionnaire was sent to Head Teachers at all Stockton Borough schools. Parents were consulted using a Viewpoint focus group. Members of the public were invited to submit views following a press release publicising the review.

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### Background Papers:

None

### Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Not ward specific

### Property:

The investment of £150 million through the BSF programme will have a significant impact on the secondary school estate at a later stage.