



## ECONOMY REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 4 March 2021

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| <b>REPORT TITLE:</b> | <b>PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN ACTIVE TRAVEL MEMBER WORKING GROUP</b> |
| <b>REPORT OF:</b>    | <b>DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE</b>                          |

### REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to the establishment of a members working group focussed on active travel. It is considered that a working group focussed on active travel is required to support the Council to secure a positive outcome in delivering increased levels of sustainable travel as set out in the emerging Local Plan. This proposal is within the wider context of the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and the target in the Cool2 Strategy to 'a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030'.

The Wirral Plan 2025 sets out the Council's vision to secure the best possible future for our residents, defined by the community prosperity we create and supported by our excellent people and services. This proposal directly supports the following key themes within that plan.

- A cleaner, greener borough which celebrates, protects and improves our environment and urgently tackles the environmental emergency
- A prosperous inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations
- Safe, vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

The matter is not a Key Decision.

### RECOMMENDATION/S

The Economy Regeneration and Development Committee is recommended to approve that:

1. The Active Travel Working Group be established with the Terms of Reference as attached to this report at Appendix 1.
2. The Monitoring Officer be authorised as proper officer to carry out the wishes of the Group Leaders in allocating Members to membership of the Active Travel Working

Group and to appoint those Members with effect from the date at which the proper officer is advised of the names of such Members.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The creation of an Active Travel Working Group is proposed as a positive step. The work of the group will enable this Committee to make appropriate decisions and recommendations which will support the delivery of increased levels of sustainable travel as set out in the emerging Local Plan and to support actions required to address the Climate Emergency and the target in the Cool2 Strategy to 'a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030'.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 The Council could choose not to establish an active travel cross party working group. However, it is considered that having such a group would assist the Council in actively working to deliver ambitious inclusive walking and cycling projects as required to secure a positive outcome in delivering increased levels of sustainable travel as set out in the emerging Local Plan and to support actions required to address the Climate Emergency and the target in the Cool2 Strategy to 'a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030'.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 In 2017 the Department of Transport published its Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy which set out the ambition for England to make cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey. The strategy sets out how the Government wishes to change the perception of cycling from being seen as a niche activity to a normal activity for all. The benefits are considered to be wide ranging, for people cheaper travel and better health, for businesses increased productivity and increased footfall in shops and for society as a whole it means lower congestion, better air quality, and vibrant, attractive places and communities.
- 3.2 Investing in active travel can bring environmental, health and economic benefits:
- Promoting active travel can result in reduced emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), Particulate matter (PM) and CO<sub>2</sub> helping to tackle climate change and improve air quality.
  - Active travel can contribute towards the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity for adults each week, which are hugely important for maintaining health.
  - Walking and cycling can contribute towards economic performance by reducing congestion, supporting local businesses and more. The benefit to cost ratio of investments in walking and cycling are estimated at 5.62:1 (or 'very high' value for money).
- 3.3 In July 2020, the Department of Transport published Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking for 2020-25. This plan was described by the Prime Minister as the "most ambitious plan yet to boost cycling and walking". Some of the key policies to deliver on this ambition are:

- £2bn of ringfenced funding for walking and cycling overseen and administered by Active Travel England a new inspectorate, which will ensure projects meet new design standards, and be delivered on time.
- The creation of a 'national e-Bike programme' – this will enable the elderly, or those who travel far to take to bikes as part of journeys.
- A new approach on health will be piloted in selected places with poor health rates to encourage GPs to prescribe cycling, with patients able to access bikes through their local surgery.
- Improvements to the National Cycle Network
- Making streets safer by consulting to strengthen the Highway Code to better protect pedestrians and cyclists; improving legal protections for vulnerable road users; raising safety standards on lorries; and working with the police and retailers to tackle bike theft.

- 3.4 Alongside Gear Change, a new Local Transport Note (LTN1/20) was published by the Department of Transport setting out new standards for infrastructure design. LTN1/20 sets out five core design principles which represent the essential requirements to achieve more people travelling by cycle or on foot, based on best practice both internationally and across the UK. LTN1/20 set outs that networks and routes should be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive.
- 3.5 To support this vision the Government have set out that £2 billion of new investment, in addition to existing funding, will be provided over the next five years. However, Gear Change makes clear that the Government will not fund or part-fund any scheme that does not meet the new standards and principles. A new commissioning body and inspectorate, Active Travel England, led by a new national cycling and walking commissioner will be established in the near future which will have the power to hold the active travel budget, approve and inspect schemes, lead on training, good practice, knowledge sharing, inspect highway authorities and review major planning applications. Active Travel England will also begin to inspect, and publish annual reports on highway authorities, whether or not they have received funding, grading them on their performance on active travel and identifying particularly dangerous failings in their highways for cyclists and pedestrians. It is the intention that the commissioner and inspectorate will in this regard perform a similar role to Ofsted in raising standards and challenging failure.
- 3.6 The Government consider that Covid-enforced lockdown has resulted in increased rates of walking and cycling across England. This pattern is said to have been repeated worldwide with many authorities acting rapidly to expand space for cycling and walking. In May 2020, the Department of Transport announced a £250 million emergency active travel fund, which is the “first stage of a £2 billion investment, and part of the £5 billion in new funding announced for cycling and buses in February.” The Department of Transport also published fast-tracked statutory guidance for local authorities to “make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians”.
- 3.7. It is considered that the establishment of the Active Travel Working Group would be a positive step having regard to the recently published Department of Transport Gear Change guidance and also given Wirral’s ambitious regeneration programme. The work of the Group would be designed to secure a positive outcome in delivering increased levels of sustainable travel as set out in the emerging Local Plan. This

development of the Local Plan is also within the wider context of the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and the target in the Cool2 Strategy to 'a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030'.

- 3.8 As such it is proposed that the working group will play an advisory role in the development of active travel schemes. The group would advise on the direction of active travel policy and delivery across Wirral. This would be with a view to aiding greater understanding across the Council of issues associated with the implementation of active travel initiatives. The group would need to take account of the wider context of the potential for sustainable transport projects to contribute to:
- health and well-being;
  - tackling the climate emergency and improving air quality;
  - improving accessibility;
  - reducing congestion by encouraging active travel modes especially for shorter journeys;
  - achieving value for money;
  - helping economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic;
  - tackling transport poverty and inequality of access; and
  - inclusive economic growth.

- 3.9 It is proposed that the remit of the group includes policies, processes and resources, infrastructure, including reviewing best practice and Department of Transport guidance, advising on consultation and community engagement and behaviour change and vision. Specifically, the role of the group will include:

- advising on the development and implementation of an Active Travel Strategy and Infrastructure Plan as part of building an evidence base and developing business cases for future funding applications as appropriate;
- advising on wider activity to support the implementation of 'Gear Change' and the uptake of active travel across Wirral;
- providing input into a review of current and pipeline active travel projects and supporting the implementation of any actions arising;
- providing a collective voice to respond to consultations on policies and proposals that will impact upon pedestrians and cyclists in Wirral, and wider Liverpool City Region as appropriate;
- facilitating the exchange of ideas and best practice in order to encourage and promote increased levels of active travel; and
- guiding, responding and working with, as appropriate, the Wirral Active Travel Forum.

## **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications relating to the establishment of an active travel working group. However, the Government have set out that £2 billion of new investment for active travel over the next five years and to existing funding will be provided over the next five years. The recently published guidance makes clear that the Government will not fund or part-fund any scheme that does not meet the new standards and principles. Therefore, the establishment of the working group would

aid greater understanding across the Council of issues associated with the implementation of active travel initiative and advise on the direction of active travel policy and delivery across Wirral therefore ensuring Wirral was best placed to secure funding going forward.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The establishment of the Active Travel Working Group is in compliance with the Council's Constitution. This group would not take any decisions but inform the deliberations of this Committee.

5.2 Paragraph 26 of Part 1 of the Council's Constitution states as follows:

*“Panels, Forums, Working Groups, Liaison and Task & Finish Groups may be established by Committees. The purpose of these working groups is to examine in detail specific issues or aspects of policy, procedure or service, according to their remit. These groups do not take any decisions but inform the deliberations of the committees. Their membership may include councillors from each party, non-councillors by invitation and, occasionally, employees”*

5.3 Paragraph 2 of Part 3 Section B of the Council's constitution states as follows

### ***“Working Groups Involving Members***

*Working groups, may be established by a Committee from time to time to develop recommendations or investigate issues of interest or concern alongside formal Sub-Committees. They shall be for specific purposes and shall be time limited. They will only be established when the matter cannot be undertaken by a relevant Committee and each committee is limited to establishing [two] such committees at any one time.*

*They usually fall into one of the following categories:*

#### ***(a) Advisory groups relating to policy development or service functions***

*Usually established to advise about an issue or subject area. The relevant Committee shall specify terms of reference and membership, which may include invited persons holding relevant expertise or knowledge and Members who are not members of the parent Committee.*

#### ***(b) Task & Finish Groups***

*Small groups of Members appointed by a Committee or Sub-Committee for the purpose of advising the parent committee about either:*

*(i) an in-depth policy review*

*(ii) performance monitoring*

*(iii) responding to a major policy consultation.*

*The terms of reference and purpose are specified by the relevant Committee.”*

5.4 The Working Group will comprise of seven members, one of whom will be the Chair of the Economy Regeneration and Development Committee. In addition, Members of other Committees may be invited to attend as and when appropriate at the discretion of the Chair of the Economy Regeneration and Development Committee. The

appointment of Members to the Working Group will be made having regard to the political balance of the Council as a whole. The Active Travel Working Group would come within the category of an Advisory Group.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 The Lead Commissioner Transport and Technology will provide the strategic transport support role for this working group, alongside wider support from colleagues from Democratic Services.
- 6.2 There may be minor implications in terms of staffing time in terms of setting up and attending Working Group meetings, which can be managed within current resources.
- 6.3 There are no other staffing, ICT and assets implications arising from this report.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 The establishment of the working group has been identified as a mitigation against the Council failing to meet the standards set by the new Active Travel England body.
- 7.2. The new Active Travel England body will assess Wirral's performance with respect to sustainable travel outcomes, particularly cycling and walking, which will be taken into account when considering funding allocations for local transport schemes. In addition the Government have set out that future funding will be conditional on work starting and finishing by specified dates. If work has not started or been completed by the specified times, they will ask for funds to be returned. The new Active Travel funding body and inspectorate will enforce the standards and time limits with the aim of raising performance.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 In 2019 the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in conjunction with Sustrans published their first Bike Life report. The information in the report comes from local cycling data, modelling and an independent survey of 1,491 residents aged 16 or above in LCR. The survey was conducted by social research organisation NatCen and is representative of LCR residents, not just those who cycle. The working group can consider engagement reports such as this as well as other national and regional research in providing advice to Committee.
- 8.2 The Council currently has a formally constituted Active Travel Forum, membership of this group is open to anyone individual or organisation with an interest in active travel. It is proposed that this established Active Travel Forum and the proposed cross party working group relationship is formalised in order that the established Active Travel Forum has a formal route to Committee via the proposed Active Travel Working Group. It is proposed that the working group will guide, respond and work with, as appropriate, the Active Travel Forum. Advice will be sought from Legal Services and Committee Services as to how this can best be facilitated.

- 8.3 Public consultation for individual cycling and walking schemes will be undertaken in line with processes that are required for the undertaking of work on the adopted highway for 'traffic management measures' as per the Council Constitution.
- 8.4 The Chair of the Committee and Party Spokespersons have been consulted on the proposals in this report.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 The establishment of the working group will support the Council to give due regard to the impact of policies, practices and actions. Gear Change recognises that increasing levels of cycling and walking can help tackle inequalities. Inclusive design and accessibility runs through all five of these core design principles in LTN1/20 which specifies that designers should always aim to provide infrastructure that meets these principles and therefore caters for the broadest range of people.
- 9.3 Infrastructure must be accessible to all and the needs of vulnerable pedestrians and local people must be considered early in the process to ensure schemes are supported locally in the long term. This working group will support the Council to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Increasing cycling and walking will help to combat climate change. By encouraging and enabling people to travel more on foot and by cycle instead of the private car harmful emissions will be reduced. Promoting active travel can result in reduced emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), Particulate matter (PM) and CO<sub>2</sub> helping to tackle climate change and improve air quality.
- 10.2 Gear Change identifies that mode shift to active transport is one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing transport emission and that meeting the targets to double cycling and increase walking would lead to savings of £567 million annually from air quality alone and prevent 8,300 premature deaths each year and provide opportunities to improve green spaces and biodiversity.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Active Travel Working Group Draft Terms of Reference

### BACKGROUND PAPERS

**Department for Transport Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2017**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/918442/cycling-walking-investment-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/918442/cycling-walking-investment-strategy.pdf)

**Department for Transport Gear Change July 2020**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf)

**LTN1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/951074/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951074/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf)

**Sustrans Bike Life Report Liverpool City Region**

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/bike-life/bike-life-liverpool-city-region/>

### SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|-----------------|------|
| None            |      |