WALKING & CYCLING UPDATE

Report of the Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 Cycling and walking continue to be important modes of transport within Stockport with 86% of residents walking and 14.7% cycling at least once a month in 2014-15.

1.2 This report provides an update on both the strategic framework underpinning the Council’s approach to cycling and walking, and the various programmes of work which are currently being delivered to further support cycling and walking across Stockport.

1.3 The report presents a proposed approach to develop a new cycling and walking strategy for Stockport, and presents an opportunity for a new bike share scheme.

2. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Cycling and Walking Strategy

2.1 The existing Cycling and Walking Strategies were adopted in 2000 and 2010 respectively and, therefore, require revision to take account of the improvements which have been made to infrastructure in the Borough over that time. Such improvements include:

- New Alan Newton Way route
- Improvements to the Trans Pennine Trail (most recently in 2015)
- Improvements to the Middlewood Way
- Delivery of Cycle City Ambition Grant 1 (CCAG1)– Manchester Road
- New route from Marsden Street to Howard Street Bridge

2.2 A refresh of the Council’s strategic approach is also needed to take account of the significant ongoing investment in the wider highways network in Stockport, including through Town Centre Access Plan (TCAP), Highways Investment Programme (HIP) and delivery of an off-road cycling and walking route as part of A6MARR.

2.3 As well as changes to the physical context, there have also been notable changes to the wider strategic and political context at both the Greater Manchester and national government levels, which need to be reflected in any Stockport strategy. Of particular note:

- In April the Government published a new national Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy which outlined the government’s ambition to invest £1.2bn in cycling and walking in order to make cycling and walking a

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1 Department for Transport, Walking and Cycling Statistics Table CW0103
natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of longer journeys by 2040. The Strategy includes a commitment that by 2020 there will be an increase in cycling and walking activity, a reduction in the rate of cyclists killed or seriously injured on England’s roads, and an increase in the percentage of children aged 5 to 10 that usually walk to school.

- The Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy also included the publication of guidance for local authorities on the preparation of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), encouraging local authorities to produce plans for their local areas.
- In July 2017 the government published a new Air Quality Plan for the UK which set out the plan for reducing roadside nitrogen dioxide contributions and highlighted the role of increasing cycling and walking rates as a way of addressing local air quality issues. The Plan highlighted the need for local action and set a requirement for local authorities to produce a local air quality plan by December 2018.
- In February 2017 the GMCA adopted the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 which reiterated the commitment to achieve the target of cycling accounting for 10% of all journeys in GM by 2025.
- The recently elected Mayor of Greater Manchester has committed to increasing and improving cycling and walking in GM, and has recently appointed a GM Cycling and Walking Commissioner to spearhead Greater Manchester’s activities in this regard.
- Under the recently launched Greater Manchester Moving plan, the GMCA has committed to achieving the goal of having 75% of people living in GM active or fairly active by 2025 in order to address increasing health challenges resulting from inactivity. Encouraging active travel and increased movement by all groups continues to be a priority.

2.4 As a result of these factors, it is timely to update the Council’s strategic approach to cycling and walking to ensure it accurately reflects both the Council’s ambitions, and the wider strategic and policy framework at both the Greater Manchester and national levels.

2.5 In addition, given the ongoing investment in highways infrastructure across Stockport, it is important that there is an up to date strategy in place to ensure that cycling and walking provision is considered in a consistent manner.

2.6 Given the national and GM focus on combining cycling and walking, it is proposed that a combined Cycling and Walking Strategy be produced to set an ambitious but evidence-based vision for cycling and walking in Stockport, which demonstrates links and interfaces with wider agendas.

2.7 In order to deliver this, the following steps and timescales are proposed:

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<th>Step</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Review existing evidence base to take account of what has been achieved to date but also the barriers and challenges for delivery. This will include a review of best practice examples from both within GM and beyond, and will coordinate with the government’s guidance for Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)</td>
<td>August – September</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Produce a draft strategy and accompanying consultation plan</td>
<td>Early October</td>
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3. Undertake public consultation. This will be slightly extended to take account of the Christmas break and will include consultation with existing stakeholder groups such as the Cycle User Group and Local Access Forum, but will also include a proactive approach to wider consultation to ensure that a full spectrum of feedback is obtained. Consultation activities will be coordinated with the proposed consultation on the Rights of Way Improvement Plan wherever possible. November until mid-January

4. Review and amend the draft strategy based on feedback gained through the consultation period Mid January - February

5. Present final version to Cabinet for adoption March 2018

Rights of Way Improvement Plan

2.8 A new Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) is currently in development following initial consultation earlier this year. The plan will address the Council’s approach to all adopted Rights of Way in the borough. Subject to Executive Councillor approval, the ROWIP will be put out to public consultation on the 16th October. As a statutory document, the Council is required to publicly consult on the draft ROWIP for 12 weeks and as a result the consultation will run until the 8th January 2018. A final version will be presented to Cabinet for adoption in February 2018.

2.9 As set out in paragraph 2.6, consultation activities will be coordinated with the Cycling and Walking Strategy wherever possible.

3.0 PRACTICAL DELIVERY

Improvements to cycle and walking routes

3.1 In addition to those improvements listed in 2.1, a number of further improvements to cycling and walking routes have been delivered in the last 12 months. These include:
- Recent surfacing upgrades to Dark Lane
- Delivery of an off-road cycle path at Lancashire Hill in partnership with Highways England
- Improved cycle facilities on the bridge across St Mary’s Way from Spring Gardens to New Zealand Road.

3.2 Over the next 12 months, there will also be further improvements including:
- Delivery of route improvements in Cheadle Hulme following the recent successful Cycle City Ambition Grant (CCAG2) bid
- Further upgrades to the Middlewood Way for all users (A6MARR mitigation)
- Opening of improved cycle routes along St Mary’s Way (TCAP)
- Opening of off-road cycle and walking routes as part of A6MARR.

Internal Cycling Promotion
3.3 As well as delivering improvements to cycling and walking routes across the borough, the Council also continues to encourage cycling and walking by staff as part of the Staff Travel Plan. Most significantly, the Council has an established pool bike system, including 2 electric bikes. In the last 12 months 224 business trips have been made by staff by bike, and a Staff Travel Survey later this year will update information held on the number of staff who cycle or walk to work. The Council's cycle scheme for employees helps staff to purchase cycles. 34 employees joined the scheme on 2016-17 and 17 have joined so far in 2017-18.

3.4 The Council has also run a series of events and promotional activities over the last month as part of Cycle September.

**Opportunity for Bike Share in Stockport**

3.5 Bike sharing is a service in which bikes are made available for shared use by members of the public on a very short term basis. Schemes allow people to borrow a bike from one place and return it to another. The first schemes began in Europe in the 1960s and as of 2014, schemes were operating in 712 cities worldwide. London has the most well-known scheme in the UK. ‘Smart’ bike sharing is when digital apps are used for administrating the system, rather than physical docking infrastructure being used (as is the case in London, Liverpool and Dublin). The advantages of this are that the scheme costs are significantly lower (and do not, therefore, require subsidy or grant from the public sector), and they can be expanded more easily to match demand.

3.6 In June 2017, MoBike launched a bike hire scheme in Manchester and Salford as part of a pilot underpinned by an MoU with TfGM and the two pilot local authorities. This is the first scheme of its kind to be operational in Greater Manchester.

3.7 MoBike is the world’s first smart, dock-free bikeshare platform which aims to encourage people to undertake short journeys by bike. MoBike is already operational in over 130 cities across China and Singapore, with more than 5m bikes in operation worldwide. Under the pilot, the China-based company has since introduced 1000 hire bikes to the city centre. Users locate and hire bikes using the MoBike app, with usage charged at 50p per 30 minutes. Unlike under conventional city bike hire schemes (e.g. the London scheme) users do not have to return their bike to docking stations but will be awarded ‘credits’ for parking bikes in favourable locations, and ‘debts’ for using unfavourable ones. This significantly reduces the capital costs of schemes.

3.8 The MoU with TfGM and the pilot LAs sets out high level operational standards and insurance requirements. Given that the scheme is being delivered by MoBike without any financial commitment from TfGM or the LAs, the MoU is unable to tie either party into any firm performance indicators or targets. A weekly operational meeting is held with MoBike, TfGM and the pilot LAs to get updates. TfGM’s long term vision is to see bike sharing schemes available across GM.

3.9 Since the scheme was launched, there have been 30,000 app downloads in Greater Manchester and bikes are being used on average 5 times a day (with 9/10 trips per day per bike being the highest usage). This compares to an average of 2/3 trips per day per bike in London under their scheme. Although the impact of the scheme is
difficult to evaluate at this early stage, MoBike are sharing trip data with TfGM and the pilot LAs, enabling analysis to be undertaken of how and where the bikes are being used and how they are interacting with other transport modes (e.g. Metrolink).

3.10 Although the scheme has generally been well-received, there have been a number of challenges/ issues:

1. There have been some challenges around bikes being parked in undesirable locations (e.g. residential back gardens) or being taken out of the Manchester/ Salford pilot area. In order to try and address this, MoBike are in the process of using non-slip vinyls to delineate ‘preferred parking locations’. Whilst these are not formal docking stations, they will visually set out where the bikes should be parked and will be used to encourage parking outside key locations (e.g. Metrolink stops). At the outset, 30 such locations for the vinyls have been agreed in consultation with the local authorities and TfGM and have been formally signed off by the LA Highways Management Teams.

2. Cluttering of footpaths and public spaces has not yet been experienced as demand for bikes currently exceeds the number of bikes available. This means that bikes are not being left for long periods of time before being moved by another user, although this will continue to be monitored.

3. The bikes have non-puncture, airless tyres and built-in, GPS-embedded locks, and are designed to be “maintenance free” with a four-year, fix-free lifespan. Although a number of bikes were damaged in the first weeks following the scheme’s launch, the majority are now back in circulation and the number being damaged has reduced over time. MoBike have since worked closely with GMP on an agreed approach to dealing with vandalism and ASB. MoBike is also working with Manchester Bike Hire to ensure that bike maintenance and repairs are undertaken locally.

3.11 Mobikes are already appearing in Stockport, particularly in north of the borough, and formal expansion of the scheme could contribute to encouraging mode shift for short, local journeys (e.g. from Stockport station to, and in and around the town centre), supporting the Council’s ambitions to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality by encouraging cycling and walking, particularly in the town centre. Mobikes may also assist in delivering on the 10% modal split by 2025 referenced in the adopted GM Cycling Strategy.

3.12 Given the scheme requires no financial contribution or significant input from the Council (other than identifying ‘preferred parking locations’ and promotional support), such a scheme provides an opportunity to encourage increased levels of cycling in the borough, without any financial or resource implications.

3.13 In order for a scheme to operate effectively, there would likely be a need for a local operation to be established for bike redistribution and maintenance. This could provide an opportunity for local bike shops and potential job creation depending on the size of any scheme.
4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Walking and cycling continue to be an important element of the transport network in Stockport, and are intrinsically linked to wider agendas around reducing congestion, improving local air and environmental quality, reducing carbon emissions associated with transport, and increasing activity levels amongst all population groups.

4.2 In order to deliver against these agendas, the Council needs to have a clear strategic framework in place to underpin the ongoing practical improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure which continue to be delivered across the borough.

4.3 In addition, the Council has the opportunity to capitalise on the recent bike share pilot elsewhere in Greater Manchester and encourage the scheme’s expansion into Stockport.

4.4 In this regard, Cabinet are recommended to:

4.4.1 Endorse the proposed approach to producing a new Cycling and Walking Strategy for Stockport

4.4.2 Delegate responsibility to the Corporate Director for Place Management & Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Member for Communities, to approve the draft Cycling and Walking Strategy for use in public consultation.

4.4.3 Endorse the proposed approach to coordinating the public consultation with the statutory consultation on the draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) wherever possible.

4.4.4 Grant officers approval to further investigate, in partnership with MoBike, the feasibility of extending the Manchester/Salford Pilot scheme into Stockport, and delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Place Management and Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Members for Communities and Housing, and Economy and Environment, to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with MoBike should the expansion be found to be feasible.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Sue Stevenson on Tel: 0161-474-4351 or by email on sue.stevenson@stockport.gov.uk