

GREEN TRAVEL PLAN

Agenda Item 8b

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Background Papers:- Staff Travel Survey Report April 2007
Energy Savings Trust Green Fleet Review August 2007
Green Travel Plan December 2001
Financial Implications:- Self Funding – see report section 10.0
Equalities Implications:- See report section 12.0
Legal Implications:- None
Options: See body of report
Risks: See report section 13.0

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report introduces a Green Travel Plan for Braintree District Council. The plan is applicable to all Council workplaces and covers travel to and from work, travel at work, fleet management and visitors to Council buildings. It is expected to have major benefits in meeting carbon reduction targets and demonstrates community leadership in sustainable development. The plan also delivers health and well being improvements for staff and longer-term financial benefits to the organisation. Risks associated with housing transfer and organisational change have been identified but these are largely outweighed by potential benefits. Overall impact is reduced by a requirement for cost neutrality but the plan focuses on initiatives that can be delivered now, providing short-term benefits whilst providing a foundation for more challenging solutions in the future.

DECISION

To note progress made on the travel plan and to delegate decisions on those areas of the plan requiring further development to Peter Crofts, Corporate Director, in consultation with the Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability.

GREEN TRAVEL PLAN

1.0 Background

A “green travel plan” is a package of measures tailored to the needs of individual workplaces and aimed at promoting greener, cleaner and healthier travel choices. The emphasis is on changing travel modes and reducing reliance on the car. The plan involves the development of mechanisms, initiatives, and targets that enable the organisation to reduce its environmental impact, whilst also bringing employer and staff benefits.

Braintree District Council first produced a draft travel plan in 2001. The Executive supported this in principle but the proposals were not funded and the plan was never implemented.

Renewed interest in the sustainability and climate change agenda led to the plan being re-visited in 2006, with a corporate plan target to develop a new green travel plan. The project was delayed to take advantage of two free external consultancy opportunities and a new travel plan is now proposed based on the results of this work.

This report outlines the travel plan and seeks Member endorsement of the proposals and delegated authority to pursue areas of the plan requiring further development.

2.0 Scope of Plan

The plan covers four main areas of travel:

- Travel to and from work
- Travel at work
- Management of the hgv and van fleets
- Travel by elected members and visitors to Council buildings.

Funding options and performance management are also addressed. The plan will apply to all Council staff but the main impact is expected to be on travel to and from the main centres of employment at Causeway House and Millennium Tower. Housing transfer will impact on the scope of the plan and staff transferring to Greenfields Community Housing have been included in preparatory work; the new organisation will be encouraged to adopt the measures where appropriate. The plan also addresses technical fleet management issues as well as individual travel patterns and habits.

3.0 Benefits to the Authority

3.1 Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change

The plan is a very visible expression of the Council’s commitment to sustainable development and the climate change obligations of the Nottingham Declaration. Use of vehicles is responsible for over 40% of the Council’s carbon dioxide emissions and the Green Travel Plan will form a major element of a Carbon Management Plan.

3.2 Community Leadership

The plan sets an example to strategic partners and local businesses and the plan is expected to form the basis for a much greater awareness of travel planning throughout the District. In addition, the Council is increasingly using its planning powers to require travel plans for new development. Setting an example with our own travel plan makes this process more equitable and more likely to succeed.

3.3 Staff Well-Being

Walking or cycling will result in a fitter, healthier and more alert workforce. Even those employees who continue to rely on the car will benefit from less traffic congestion and less stressful journeys during rush hour periods.

4.0 Limitations of the Plan

The plan is required to be self-funding. Limited options for raising substantial levels of income within the plan will restrict the delivery of initiatives. In particular the project is developed on the assumption that there is no funding for a dedicated co-ordinator post, normally considered an essential element for successful travel planning.

The rural nature of the District and relatively poor levels of public transport provision compared with more urban authorities will require continued dependence on the use of vehicles for service delivery. There is no significant traffic congestion in the area and no major air quality management issues to help drive the plan forwards.

The project to relocate the main offices will restrict site-specific capital projects involving Causeway House and Millennium Tower, with only those initiatives offering very quick paybacks likely to succeed.

5.0 Evidence Base

The development of the plan has been based on three key pieces of evidence:

5.1 A Review of the 2001 Travel Plan and Best Practice

A desktop review of earlier work has identified areas where progress has been made since 2001, areas that are no longer relevant and issues that should be rolled forward into the new plan. A related review of current best practice has identified additional measures for consideration.

5.2 The Energy Savings Trust Green Fleet Review

This review was conducted by an independent consultant and has resulted in a better understanding of the use of vehicles at work and some clear recommendations for improvement.

5.3 Staff Travel Survey

A web based staff travel survey was carried out in April 2007 in partnership with Essex County Council. This has revealed a wealth of information about staff travel patterns and habits, and gives a number of indications of where change might be appropriate and achievable.

6.0 Journeys to and from Work

Journeys to and from work have a considerable impact on the environmental impact of the business. The first priority of the travel plan is to eliminate commuting journeys as far as possible through increased home working and flexible working arrangements. This fits well with current information technology priorities to develop flexible working options and with existing homeworking and work life balance policies. Currently there are relatively few staff taking up these options and more work is required to identify opportunities and develop business cases that will deliver a reduction in commuter journeys.

The second priority area addressed by the plan is to change the travel mode of staff with realistic alternatives to the car. A considerable number of staff live within walking or cycling distance of the main offices and more live in areas well served by public transport. The plan includes a number of low cost initiatives to encourage modal change. It will also address ways of reducing the current over generous provision of car parking spaces.

For those staff that still need to bring a car to work, car share can have a major impact on overall vehicle movements. The plan includes proposals for a car share database scheme provided through Essex County Council and other incentives to share.

7.0 Journeys at Work

The key to reducing journeys at work is more effective journey planning and active management of mileage allowances and the casual user fleet. The plan includes proposals to restructure budgets to encourage greater use of public transport and challenge journey need. It also recognises a need to revisit lease car subsidies and rules to encourage a further shift towards a low carbon fleet. Much of the casual use of cars at work could be replaced by the availability of pool cars or cycles. More work is required to establish the financial viability of pooled transport and this is included in the plan. A shift to public transport will require readily available information on the options for travel and an information system is proposed based on that used by Essex County Council. Other measures include driver training to reduce fuel usage and better meeting planning to reduce the need for journeys and facilitate car sharing or the use of public transport.

8.0 The Commercial Fleet

A transport environmental policy will be produced for the hgv and van fleet, covering procurement, maintenance, risk management, fuel management and performance, with the latter being included into the corporate performance framework. Technical fixes such as fuel additives will be evaluated in conjunction with neighbouring authorities. Driver training and evaluation will be extended to include fuel saving, with fuel champions being trained to ensure improvements are maintained. Future route planning will consider fuel consumption as well as operational factors and in the longer-term, more strategic location of depots and sharing with other authorities will be considered.

9.0 Members and Visitors

The plan includes proposals for better information to visitors to Council buildings to help them identify alternative travel modes. Visitor cycle parking will be provided at the front of Causeway House and consideration be given to cloak room facilities for visitors. Elected Members will be encouraged to use the staff car share database and to use public transport wherever practical.

10.0 Funding the Plan

Members have already indicated that the plan must be cost neutral. Some of the smaller initiatives can be delivered at little or no cost, or by re-prioritising existing spending. Other potential sources of funding are from expected reductions in car mileage payments, fuel and car park costs. More work is required to identify the potential availability of funds and this will ultimately dictate the timing and eventual performance of the travel plan.

11.0 Consultation

Staff have been involved in the development of the plan through the survey process. UNISON has been represented on the travel plan development group and will consider the plan at its October branch executive. Most of the early, quick win initiatives are not controversial and are expected to go forward with no additional staff consultation. Some of the medium and longer-term projects will have a potential impact on conditions of service and the process will include appropriate consultation where necessary.

12.0 Equalities

Although the plan is most likely to deliver benefits in its application to Causeway House, measures will need to be applied equitably to all Council staff and workplaces. This could have future implications as the organisation develops more workplace sharing opportunities with partners.

13.0 Risks

A number of risks have been identified as follows:

- The travel plan is largely location based and will be affected by any future plans to move from Causeway House.
- Lack of specific funding or resourcing a co-ordinator post will limit the extent and speed of implementation.
- Housing transfer will leave a smaller organisation with less potential for implementing the plan, partnership with Greenfields Community Housing and/or Essex County Council may be required to achieve a critical mass for car share and other initiatives.
- Insufficient drivers such as local congestion to incentivise staff acceptance of measures.

14.0 Conclusion

This report introduces a Green Travel Plan for Braintree District Council. The plan is expected to have major benefits in meeting carbon reduction aims and will demonstrate community leadership in this area of sustainable development. It will also deliver health and well being impacts on staff and longer-term financial benefits to the organisation. There are some risks associated with housing transfer and organisational change but these are largely outweighed by potential benefits. Overall impact is reduced by a requirement for cost neutrality but the plan focuses on initiatives that can be delivered, providing short-term benefits whilst providing a foundation for more challenging solutions in the future.

15.0 Recommendation

Members are recommended to note progress made on the travel plan and to delegate decisions on those areas of the plan requiring further development to Peter Crofts, Corporate Director, in consultation with the Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability.