

Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services

Report to:	Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell OBE, Executive Councillor: Adult Care, Health and Children's Services
Date:	31 July 2020
Subject:	Sustainable Modes of Travel to School (SMOTS) Strategy
Decision Reference:	I018626
Key decision?	Yes

Summary:

Local authorities have a duty to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel on journeys to and from schools in their area, in accordance with Section 508A of the Education Act 1996. To help meet the duty, the Council must prepare a document which sets out their strategy to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of their area.

The draft Strategy 2020-2023 (attached at Appendix A) provides an assessment of the education travel needs of children and young people resident in Lincolnshire and undertakes an audit of the sustainable travel infrastructure.

It outlines the successes of the previous Strategy which ran from 2016-19 and acts as a statement of the local authority's vision, objectives and work programme for improving the sustainable travel infrastructure and for promoting sustainable school travel. It aims to provide health benefits for children and their families through active journeys, and environmental improvements through reduced congestion and improvements in air quality.

The draft Strategy outlines the Council's objectives and the necessary actions to achieve these over the duration of the lifetime of the Strategy and help promote sustainable modes of travel to school in Lincolnshire.

Recommendation(s):

That the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services:

1. Approves the draft Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy 2020-2023, attached at Appendix A, as the Council's Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy 2020-2023.
2. Delegates to the Executive Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health and Children's Services, authority to take all decisions necessary to ensure the delivery of the Strategy.

Alternatives Considered:

1. Do nothing i.e. do not refresh the Strategy.

Reasons for Recommendation:

The draft Strategy 2020-23 attached at Appendix A will allow the Council to discharge its duty to publish a document outlining the approach to meet the duty to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel on journeys to and from schools in their area, in accordance with Section 508A of the Education Act 1996.

Successful delivery of the Strategy will also meet a number of wider key priorities of the Council including combatting obesity, particularly for children and young people, and promoting physical activity leading to healthier lifestyles for the community.

1. Background**Legislation**

Local authorities have a duty to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel on journeys to and from schools in their area, in accordance with Section 508A of the Education Act 1996.

The Act defines 'sustainable modes of travel' as those which an authority considers may improve either or both of the following:

- the physical well-being of those who use them; and
- the environmental well-being of the whole or part of their area.

The Act requires the Secretary of State for Education to issue guidance to local authorities on how to fulfil the obligation relating to sustainable modes of travel to school. The local authority must give regard to the guidance in preparing a document which sets out their strategy to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of their area. The draft SMOTS Strategy attached at Appendix A gives due regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Before preparing its strategy, a local authority must carry out:

- an assessment of the school travel needs of children and persons of sixth form age resident in their areas; and
- an audit of the sustainable travel infrastructure within their area.

A Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy should:

- be a statement of the local authority's vision, objectives and work programme for improving the sustainable travel infrastructure and for promoting sustainable school travel; and
- aim to provide health benefits for children and their families through active journeys, and environmental improvements through reduced congestion and improvements in air quality.

Lincolnshire County Council's approach to date

The Council's own inaugural SMOTS programme ran from 2003-2010 as part of the Department for Transport's Travelling to School Initiative, which included grant funding of £1.8m for Lincolnshire to enable schools to develop travel plans and improve sustainable facilities. In 2010, £243k of CATCH (Choose Active Travel, Choose Health) funding was also granted to further improve school facilities.

The most recent SMOTS Strategy in Lincolnshire ran from 2016-2019. Highlights of the achievements of the programmes delivered in the Strategy include:

- 12,000 pupils engaging in Bikeability cycle training;
- 5,381 children and young people attending Bike It activities;
- 4,000 pupils participating in Max Respect education workshops;
- 362 Road Safety education initiatives delivered;
- 295 children and young people accessing 'Wheels to Work';
- 47 active school travel plan accounts;
- 43 pupils receiving Independent Travel Training;
- 14 school safety zones created, with 12 more a 'work in progress';
- 6 schools gaining National Travel Plan Accreditations, supported by the Department for Transport.

The delivery of the Strategy was a partnership between Children's Services and the Smarter Choices/Transport Services Group, with support from other directorates as appropriate.

Draft SMOTS Strategy 2020 – 2023

A draft SMOTS Strategy, to run from 2020 – 2023, is attached at Appendix A for consideration. To make a significant difference to sustainable and active travel to schools, a cross sector approach will see Children's Services, Transport, Economic Development, Highways and Public Health working closely together to deliver the 2020 - 2023 Strategy.

The challenge of promoting sustainable travel is a difficult one, because it can involve offering alternatives which are often not as convenient e.g. walking a route to school rather than taking a car journey. However, the gains from a modal shift towards sustainable modes of travel are considerable, and encompass health benefits for the individual and the community, for example, carbon emission reduction, addressing obesity, cardiac health improvements, the possibility of better public transport (replacing dependence on private vehicle usage) and economic benefits.

The added challenges of promoting SMOTS in a large and predominantly rural county such as Lincolnshire are many. To encourage walking and cycling relies, in the main, on that percentage of pupils who have the potential to walk, scoot or cycle to school. In many instances, there may only be a small number of pupils that live locally to a school and, for that school to survive, it may rely on attracting pupils from further afield. Wherever possible, the Strategy will seek to promote sustainable modes of transport for those families travelling longer distances to school.

The rurality of the county - the nature of habitation, rural roads and applicable speed limits - may also mean walking and cycling are not the preferred mode of travel. Routes that are deemed unsuitable for walking and cycling can result in significant expenditure on the provision of home to school transport to meet the needs of children. The Strategy will seek to identify routes currently deemed unsuitable that could, with some work, be made suitable again to encourage walking and cycling to school, in line with recent Government announcements and the Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge plan. To this end, the Council has already awarded £450k of capital monies to contribute to improvements of specified unsuitable routes as part of an Invest-to-Save project.

The statutory requirement is to provide transport to children of school age to and from their nearest or designated school if they live over the statutory walking distance (two miles at the primary age or three miles at the secondary age) from the school. The cost of providing home to school/college transport for entitled pupils meeting the criteria for support in Lincolnshire runs to more than £27million per annum.

The Council has given thought to the requirement in Section 508A of the Act that it consults with such persons as it thinks appropriate.

The delivery of the Strategy relies on the collaboration of other areas of the Council outside of Children's Services. Therefore a workshop meeting was held, prior to the finalisation of the draft Strategy, to identify overlapping areas of responsibility likely to have a bearing on the delivery and intended outcomes of the Strategy. The workshop included colleagues from Highways, Public Health, Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership (LRSP) and Transport Services Group. The aim of the workshop was to set out a more collaborative approach to the delivery of the Strategy and to recognise that it relies on a whole-system approach. For example, successfully identifying and rectifying unsuitable walking routes to school will in turn have a beneficial impact on key Council priorities including combatting childhood obesity.

Consultation with external stakeholders has been and is undertaken regularly through, for instance, dialogue with transport operators regarding opportunities to maximise route optimisation.

However, whilst the overarching strategy outlines the Council's wider approach, it is through the development of school travel plans where the Council has the opportunity to consult with individual schools, parents/carers, and children and

young people to identify the best solutions to meet local needs. This has been demonstrated over the previous three-year strategy with nearly 50 schools having an active school travel plan to promote SMOTS and feedback has helped to identify the objectives, and necessary actions, within the draft strategy at Appendix A.

In addition, Independent Travel Trainers work directly with children and young people, and their parents and carers, in an intense training programme lasting months to see how they can best be supported to enhance their own independence whilst maintaining their safety.

The Strategy includes an assessment of the education transport and travel needs of young people in Lincolnshire against two key elements:

- The statutory requirement to pay for and provide transport to children of school age to and from their nearest suitable school over the statutory walking distance (two miles at the primary age or three miles at the secondary age).
- The Council's own Education Transport Policy, which is adapted to fit local conditions regarding the pattern of school locations and types of provision on offer.

Over the next three years the SMOTS Strategy will continue, in the main, with the successful initiatives delivered between 2016-2019. This will include fundamentals such as Independent Travel Trainers, Max Respect, Road Safety education (provided by the LRSP), and the promotion of active and sustainable travel through the Modeshift Stars National Accreditation programme for schools.

The Strategy will seek to continue the collaborative approach initiated in the cross-directorate workshop, referenced above, through the creation of a sustainable travel group drawn from Officers across directorates. The group will include representation from the Executive Support Councillor for Children's Services and will petition the involvement of councillors, at a local level, to develop improvements that support sustainable modes of travel across the county.

The group will oversee key actions denoted within the strategy including identifying and developing routes for improvement, monitoring the work of key programmes such as Independent Travel Training, and the audit of schools tasked with improving travel plans further to planning applications.

The Strategy also includes an assessment of the sustainable travel infrastructure in Lincolnshire looking at cycle network routes and facilities such as 'park and stride' sites, scooter storage etc. Planned initiatives include identifying 'Links to School' routes that can be developed with the awarded capital funding to deliver improvements to unsuitable walking and cycling routes to school.

The aim of the Strategy is to create safe accessible walking and cycling options for pupils to actively travel to school, where possible, and to promote more sustainable modes of travel such as education or commercial transport, creating modal shift which will contribute to the improved health of young people, whilst reducing

congestion around schools and lessening the impact on the environment, and with associated cost benefits to education transport.

The Strategy has three key overarching objectives:

- Objective 1 - Children's Services, the Transport Services Group, Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership and Highways to work collaboratively to improve the transport infrastructure.
- Objective 2 - Children's Services, Transport Services Group and Public Health to work together to promote healthy lifestyles for children and young people.
- Objective 3 – To meet the requirements of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 in the provision of home to school transport.

There are six key deliverables in the Action Plan to help achieve these objectives. They are as follows:

- To create a sustainable travel group drawn from Officers across departments in the Council to promote and set standards for travel to school, achieving mutual objectives;
- To develop a programme of 'Links to School' routes to identify routes, currently deemed unsuitable, that can act as Links to School routes as a result of development following award of capital funding;
- To continue to engage with schools on an individual basis to develop School Travel Plans that promote and deliver SMOTS;
- To continue to deliver the Max Respect programme on schools transport and the Independent Travel Trainer scheme to support children and young people to both understand the expected behaviours on schools transport and travel more independently;
- To reappraise unsuitable routes and seek to utilise capital funding to make improvements that promote SMOTS;
- To continue to work in partnership with the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership to ensure safe travel to school for children and young people, and support School Travel Plans.

2. Legal Issues:

Equality Act 2010

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- * Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- * Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- * Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- * Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- * Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- * Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice, and promote understanding.

Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.

The duty cannot be delegated and must be discharged by the decision-maker. To discharge the statutory duty the decision-maker must analyse all the relevant material with the specific statutory obligations in mind. If a risk of adverse impact is identified consideration must be given to measures to avoid that impact as part of the decision making process.

The Equality Act duty was taken into account in preparing the report.

One potential adverse impact has been identified, namely for those young people with physical disabilities that may wish to participate in active travel activities, where there is a reward system in place. In mitigation, schools are generally resourceful wherever this is identified as a problem and seek to put measures in place to overcome such adverse impact.

Positive impacts for young people include the Independent Travel Trainer (ITT) programme which ranges from road safety training to intensive one-to-one coaching with children and young people, many of whom will have a disability. ITT tends to focus on developing holistic journey skills as well as other associated life skills. ITT can be applied to a wide range of potential users of all ages and abilities, and takes into account any specific difficulties for the candidate.

Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

The Council must have regard to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) in coming to a decision.

There are a number of topics within the JSNA which are relevant to the Strategy:

Access to Transport

Public sector organisations in Lincolnshire spend around £41.5 million a year on transport services. This includes £26m on home-to-school transport, £1.4m on Call Connect services, and £7m on bus route support services all of which play a significant role in the delivery of the SMOTS Strategy.

Educational Attainment

Provision of the above, and suitable walking and cycling routes, helps to ensure children and young people are able to get to school and achieve to their full potential.

Financial inclusion

One of the key elements of the Strategy is to assess the travel needs of children and young people and, where appropriate, entitle and fund home-to-school transport for pupils who meet the eligibility criteria. This includes post-16 education, access to which can have a significant impact on young people's future employment opportunities.

Obesity (all ages), Physical Activity, Cardiovascular Disease

The Strategy supports healthy lifestyles through the promotion of walking and cycling to school. This goes wider than simply children and young people, with families encouraged to be active too through initiatives such as Park and Stride sites or a Walking Bus.

Major Diseases e.g. COPD

There is a wider perspective around the health and environmental costs of not promoting walking and cycling to school and/or not having an effective public or education transport system. These include air pollution and its subsequent effect on illness and premature deaths as well as environmental factors such as carbon emissions and climate change.

There are a number of priorities within the JHWS which are relevant to the Strategy:

Obesity

Childhood obesity presents immediate and long-term negative effects on a child's physical and social wellbeing, educational attainment and mental health. Obese children and adolescents are more likely to be obese in adulthood, consequently at greater risk of adult health problems such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes, stroke and cancers.

The Strategy helps to combat obesity through the promotion of walking and cycling leading to healthier lifestyles.

Physical Activity

Physical inactivity is the fourth greatest risk factor for premature death. It has a bigger impact than obesity. It is responsible for one in six UK deaths. The Strategy helps to encourage physical activity through the promotion of walking and cycling leading to healthier lifestyles.

Crime and Disorder

Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council must exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area.

The Strategy helps to ensure that children and young people are able to access education effectively, ensuring they are engaged in meaningful activity that may prevent them from becoming involved in, or be drawn into, anti-social behaviour and/or criminal activity.

2. Conclusion

The draft SMOTS Strategy attached at Appendix A allows the Council to discharge its statutory duty and serves to promote sustainable modes of travel to school. The Strategy seeks to build on the achievements of the 2016-2019 SMOTS Strategy such as engaging individual schools in the development of School Travel Plans.

It also acknowledges the interdependencies of achieving the objectives set and seeks to develop cross-directorate working to facilitate this, most notably in areas relating to identifying and rectifying unsuitable walking and cycling routes. It seeks to continue to promote independent travel for children and young people, offering

potential health benefits related to active lifestyles and combatting childhood obesity, as well as associated wider environmental benefits.

3. Legal Comments:

Under s508A of the Education Act 1996 the Council must prepare and publish a sustainable modes of travel strategy. The Council must have regard to Guidance in preparing the Strategy and must consult such persons as they consider appropriate. Approval of the document at Appendix A will fulfil these statutory responsibilities.

The decision is consistent with the Policy Framework and within the remit of the Executive Councillor.

4. Resource Comments:

The recommendation to approve the strategy has no financial implications and the support activities mentioned in the report which aim to support the strategy are met from existing budgets. Agreeing a sustainable transport policy will not only improve the wellbeing of Lincolnshire residents and the environment, but could also reduce costs through measures that are introduced. Where the strategy enables sustainable travel infrastructure opportunities, the financial implications will be considered in each individual case for value for money purposes, and how it is to be financed.

5. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

N/A

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

The decision will be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 17 July 2020 and the comments of the Committee will be reported to the Executive Councillor.

d) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Yes

e) Risks and Impact Analysis

See the main body of the report.

6. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Draft Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy 2020-2023

7. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Education Act 1996 - Section 508A	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/508A
Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-the-transport-decarbonisation-plan

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