



Report to Cabinet

Date:	22nd February 2024
Title:	The future of E-scooter and E-bike hire schemes in Buckinghamshire
Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Steve Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport
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Ward(s) affected:	Abbey; Aston Clinton & Bierton; Aylesbury East; Aylesbury North; Aylesbury North West; Aylesbury South East; Aylesbury South West; Aylesbury West; Booker, Cressex & Castlefield; Downley; Hazlemere; Ryemead & Micklefield; Stone & Waddesdon; Terriers & Amersham Hill; The Risboroughs; Totteridge & Bowerdean; Tylers Green & Loudwater; West Wycombe; Wing.
Recommendation:	Continuation of E-scooter and E-bike hire schemes until May 2026
Reason for decision:	The national e-scooter trial period has been extended for a further two years to 31 st May 2026. It is recommended that Buckinghamshire Council continues to offer an e-scooter and/or e-bike hire offer after the current contract with Zipp Mobility ends on 31 st May 2024.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council hosts three of the national e-scooter trials (Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Princes Risborough). The Council introduced e-bikes to complement the trial schemes in Aylesbury and High Wycombe in July 2023.

- 1.2 In the King's speech on 7th November 2023, it was announced that the government's e-scooter trial period would be extended by a further two years to 31st May 2026. No firm decision has been made by the Government regarding legalisation of e-scooters beyond this point, or beyond the geographic extent of the existing trial areas.
- 1.3 The Council's contract with Zipp Mobility, which operates the service at zero cost to the Council (aside from officer time), is currently set to conclude on 31st May 2024, in line with the former end of the Government's trial period.
- 1.4 Options considered to continue, reduce the scope of, or cease the e-scooter and/or e-bike hire offer are discussed in this paper.
- 1.5 It is recommended that the Council continues all three e-scooter hire schemes until the 31st May 2026 and that these include an offer of e-bike hire in all three areas.

2. Content of report

Background

- 2.1 To support a 'green' restart of local travel during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to help mitigate reduced public transport capacity, in July 2020 the Department for Transport (DfT) made regulations allowing limited trials of rental e-scooters. The three trials in Buckinghamshire (Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Princes Risborough) started from October 2020.
- 2.2 These trial areas were originally scheduled to end on 31 March 2022, but have so far been extended twice, first to November 2022, and then for a further 18 months to 31 May 2024, reflecting extensions of the trial period by central Government. The purpose of the extension was to gather more information to inform a decision on the future legalisation of e-scooters¹. Although the Government's trial period has now been extended to 31 May 2026, there is still uncertainty regarding the legal status of e-scooters after this point. As of November 2023, there are thirty-eight trial areas active across the country.
- 2.3 The DfT strategic objectives for the trials are:
 - To evaluate safety for riders, other road users and the community;
 - To measure the transport mode shift;
 - To contribute towards improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions;
 - To evaluate the effectiveness of e-scooters as a new transport mode; and,
 - To evaluate how local characteristics impact on the trial.

¹ [E-scooter trials: guidance for local authorities and rental operators - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/e-scooter-trials)

- 2.4 In December 2022, the DfT published a comprehensive National Evaluation of e-scooter trials - Findings Report² which analysed data collected from all trial areas between July 2020 and December 2021.
- 2.5 The findings showed that rental scheme e-scooter users were most likely to have walked their journey if an e-scooter had not been available (42% of trips), followed by using private motor vehicle (21%), or taking public transport (18%).
- 2.6 These results are consistent with the authority's own findings (surveys undertaken via the Zipp Mobility app in July 2022, March 2023 and August 2023). In the most recent Zipp survey 18% of customers stated they would have travelled by car, and 18% would have used a bus. Assuming that e-scooters have zero tailpipe emissions, this equates to approximately 91k miles of car journeys, an equivalent mileage of bus journeys, and 31.2 tonnes of carbon saved³ over the lifetime of the scheme (see Appendix 3).

E-scooter Legislation

- 2.7 Details on the legality of e-scooters (rental and privately owned) are available on the DfT website⁴. The Queen's Speech in May 2022 stated the following:
- "New powers would allow the Government to decide the vehicles that fall into this new category in future and how they should be regulated to make sure that they are safe to use. We hope that e-scooters will be the first of these vehicles."*
- 2.8 Although the King's Speech in November 2023 did not mention e-scooters or their future legal status, the trial period for specified hire schemes has been extended by two years, to 31st May 2026.
- 2.9 No official updates have been provided on the long-term legalisation of e-scooters. Several possibilities remain beyond May 2026: full legalisation of all e-scooters; partial legalisation of rental scheme e-scooters only; further extension(s) to the trial period; or ending the trials without legalisation.

E-scooter trial schemes in Buckinghamshire

- 2.10 The Council's own trials started in Aylesbury and High Wycombe in October 2020. A further trial was launched in Princes Risborough in May 2021. Fifty-one thousand people have downloaded the app and there are currently 85 e-scooters in Wycombe, 173 in Aylesbury and 10 in Princes Risborough.
- 2.11 Buckinghamshire Council's e-scooter scheme is managed at zero cost to the Council by the supplier. The original supplier Zipp Mobility were acquired by Zeus Scooters in

² [National Evaluation of e-scooter trials - Findings Report](#)

³ Calculated based on DEFRA greenhouse gas reporting conversion factors 2023:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2023>

⁴ E-scooter trials: guidance for users: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-users>

April 2023, who operate in eight countries worldwide. They have invested £400k in the Buckinghamshire networks, with a fleet of new e-scooters (see Appendix 1) and e-bikes.

- 2.12 Regular data has been provided by the operator in terms of e-scooter usage and Situation Reports are sent to the DfT monthly, reporting any incidents/accidents that occurred in that month.
- 2.13 E-scooters have typically been most popular among the 20 to 40 age range. As of 26 January 2024, over 327k trips had been made on e-scooters, covering a total distance of just over 507k miles. Appendix 2 provides a detailed snapshot of trip statistics from January 2024.

Safety concerns

- 2.14 At the moment privately-owned e-scooters are illegal on both roads and in pedestrian areas, including within the designated trial areas; being classed as motor vehicles but not having received clearance by statute for use on roads.
- 2.15 Casualty rates⁵ on rental e-scooters nationally in 2021 were estimated at 13 per million miles. This compares with 3.9 per million miles for pedal cycles. The DfT's evaluation report notes this is likely due to e-scooters' status as a new mode.
- 2.16 Safety features have been added to the rental scheme e-scooters during the trials at the Councils request, including enhanced braking and additional light fittings, which are likely to be absent from privately-owned scooters. In particular, the rental scheme e-scooters are 'geofenced' to operate within specified areas only, and their speed limited to 15.5mph, which private e-scooters are not. The trial zones cannot be extended to new areas or towns at present.
- 2.17 Members have previously raised concerns about the use of e-scooters, particularly in the High Wycombe area. Further information on feedback from local ward members is provided in section 6.
- 2.18 To date, there have been six health and safety incidents reported to the DfT from the Buckinghamshire trial schemes:
 - a) (Apr 2021) one injury to rider in High Wycombe (bruising)
 - b) (May 2021) one injury to pedestrian in High Wycombe (broken kneecap)
 - c) (Sep 2021) one injury to a pedestrian in Aylesbury
 - d) (May 2022) one death of a dog in High Wycombe

⁵ Casualties are defined as any person killed or injured involving a collision (with an e-scooter).

- e) (May 2022) one instance of anti-social behaviour in High Wycombe (rider wearing baby carrier)
 - f) (Feb 2023) one injury to a rider in High Wycombe (suspected dislocated shoulder)
- 2.19 Since the start of the trial there have been twenty-one recorded insurance claims involving a Zipp e-scooter. Fourteen of these were classed as a fault claim (e.g., e-scooter hit a car or pedestrian), six non-fault claims (e.g., car hit one of the e-scooters), and one joint responsibility. These represent 0.006% of all rides undertaken and is below the national average of 0.02%.
- 2.20 Whilst there have been issues and reports of misuse, the authority has also had positive feedback from local members and residents asking for e-scooters to be introduced to their areas, such as four recently installed bays extending the scheme to include Bierton (which is within the DfT approved trial zone).

E-bike trials

- 2.21 E-bikes were introduced to the Aylesbury and High Wycombe rental schemes in July 2023. E-bikes are legal to use on the highway, having the same road classification as pedal bicycles.
- 2.22 It is hoped the introduction of the e-bikes would appeal to a broader range of residents in Buckinghamshire who may have concerns about the safety of e-scooters, with the same opportunity to provide a low-cost sustainable travel option.
- 2.23 Fifty e-bikes were split between Aylesbury and High Wycombe. However, Zipp Mobility have experienced multiple issues with vandalism and theft and so the security of these is currently being reviewed. Zipp is relaunching the e-bikes in early 2024, with enhanced security features.

Recommendation to continue hire schemes until May 2026

- 2.24 The Council's concession contract with Zipp Mobility ends in May 2024 and the Council must decide whether to continue to provide this service in the longer term, until at least the end of the renewed Government e-scooter trial period: 31st May 2026.
- 2.25 Through the Council's own surveys and the DfT's 2022 report it is clear that e-scooters do provide a sustainable travel solution for local journeys. Zipp Mobility have performed well in terms of customer service (customer satisfaction is 83%) and safety record when compared to the national picture. Continuing the scheme means we will continue to offer a sustainable travel option to the local community, helping to reduce congestion and carbon emissions.
- 2.26 Despite e-scooters being illegal to use on the public highway outside of the specified trials, the numbers of private e-scooters in circulation have proliferated exponentially.

E-scooters have become established as a popular transport 'mode' regardless of the presence (or not) of dedicated trial areas.

- 2.27 The authority are able to control the Zipp e-scooter users by limiting the areas e-scooters can be used in and limiting the speed. Continuing the e-scooter rental trial will help to minimise the increase in private e-scooters and offer a safer option to customers.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Three other options were considered:

- a) The Council decides to discontinue the offer of e-scooters and refocuses efforts on providing e-bike hire schemes. Feedback from the operator has implied that e-bikes alone would not be a commercially viable option.
- b) The Council continues to offer e-scooter and e-bike hire in Aylesbury but removes them from High Wycombe, where there is less support from local members (Section 6). Feedback from the operator has implied that Aylesbury alone would not be a commercially viable option.
- c) The Council decides to discontinue both hire e-scooter and e-bike schemes. This would result in the removal of a low-cost sustainable travel opportunity for the people of Buckinghamshire. Removal of the scheme is counter to the Council's policies. It would also remove an established travel option frequently used by many residents (including adults commuting to work).

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 Based on information provided by Zipp, the estimated value of the existing contract over the whole 6.5-year period since the start of the trial would be under the £5.3M⁶ threshold for public concession contracts. Therefore should the Council extend the hire scheme we have the option to either procure a new supplier through a competitive tender process, or to extend the existing contract.
- 4.2 The current Traffic Regulation Order is still in force but may require amendment should a change in legislation occur, which will incur staff time and legal costs at that time.
- 4.3 There is currently minimal financial burden for the Council as the existing e-scooter and e-bike rental schemes are delivered at zero cost. The scheme is also not supported by any funding from DfT. However, officer time is required to monitor the schemes

⁶ £5,372,609, source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ppn-1123-new-thresholds/procurement-policy-note-1123-new-thresholds-html>

and to manage any requests for minor changes to operational area (e.g. blocking off individual streets) or new pick-up points. This equates to an annual cost of £40k/year, which was not budgeted for at the outset of the trials as it was unclear how long they would remain in place.

- 4.4 Financial burdens could change if a new contractual arrangement is put in place, depending on the operator and route to procurement selected. We will seek a profit share arrangement with the operator to help cover the Council's administrative costs.

4a Director of Legal & Democratic Services comment

- 4.5 The Director has read and commented on the report.

4b Section 151 Officer comment

- 4.6 There is no budgetary provision for the trial of e-scooters or bikes and any extension of the scheme would have to be undertaken on the basis that it would be cost neutral to avoid placing any pressure on the Medium-Term Financial Plan. A profit share arrangement with the new operator would ensure this.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 Participation in the e-scooter and e-bike schemes is consistent with Councils corporate policies as follows:

- Buckinghamshire Corporate Plan (priority of "Improving our Environment", through reduction of transport carbon- and air pollutant emissions). The schemes are providing a sustainable alternative to people that would have otherwise used the car.
- Local Transport Plan 4⁷ - Policy 15 (supporting the Council's ambitions to be a 'living lab' for innovation).
- Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy⁸ (Council ambition for net zero carbon by 2050). The schemes promote sustainable low-carbon transport alternatives for shorter trips.

- 5.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was completed prior to the start of the trial (see Appendix 4). The EqIA highlighted concerns regarding the impact on residents who may be blind, visually impaired or hard of hearing. The main concern, as with

⁷ [Buckinghamshire's local transport plan 4 \(buckinghamshire.gov.uk.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/s3.amazonaws.com)

⁸ <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/environment/sustainability-and-climate-change/energy-and-climate-change/the-climate-change-and-air-quality-strategy/climate-change-and-air-quality-strategy/>

cyclists, is the potential for collisions. On continuation of the trial the EQIA will be updated.

6. Local councillors, community boards consultation and views

6.1 Members for the trial areas were contacted on 1st February 2024 requesting comments for this paper. No comments had been received at the time of publication.

6.2 Prior to the extension in March 2022, ward members from each trial area were emailed on 23rd December 2021 to update them on how the trials were progressing and ask their level of support for extending the trial. Their feedback is summarised below.

Aylesbury

6.3 Eighteen members for Aylesbury were contacted and there were three responses. All were supportive of the trial extension.

High Wycombe

6.4 Twenty-two members from High Wycombe were contacted and five responses were received. Two of these were supportive.

6.5 Additionally, one councillor was supportive of e-scooters in principle but had concerns about underage users, that they seem quite untidy and can lead to anti-social behaviour.

6.6 Two councillors were unsupportive of the trial extension. They raised the concern that e-scooters are not safe for those who are elderly or those with restricted sight, as well as being concerned about anti-social behaviours and non-observance of the rules. One councillor also believed they only replace walking trips and are being used for leisure, rather than replacing car trips.

6.7 It is possible that the lower level of support for e-scooters in High Wycombe may stem from the need for e-scooter riders to use shared-use pavements more often, whereas Aylesbury has more dedicated, segregated cycling infrastructure which e-scooters can use.

Princes Risborough

6.8 Three members for The Risboroughs were contacted and one supportive response was received.

6.9 Community Boards were not contacted directly as these do not align directly to the respective trial zones. However, all the Chairs for the Community Boards were included in their capacity as local ward members.

7. Communication, engagement and further consultation

- 7.1 The team frequently attend the High Wycombe Town Committee to update local stakeholders on the progress of the trials, most recently on the 26th September 2023. At this meeting local members again voiced their concerns about antisocial behaviour, underage riding and lack of insurance.
- 7.2 To combat the use of illegal e-scooters Thames Valley Police (TVP) have agreed to run joint campaigns to raise awareness of the appropriate use of e-scooters and are currently running a campaign to minimise the use of illegal private e-scooters⁹. Most recently, TVP, Buckinghamshire Council and Zipp Mobility ran an information stand in Friars Square Shopping Centre on 15th and 16th January 2024 to raise awareness of e-scooters and their safe use.
- 7.3 The team are also working with Zipp to ensure the provision of safety advice to e-scooter users via their app.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 The team are liaising with Procurement and Legal teams to ensure the legal requirements are in place by 31st May 2024, in order to avoid a gap in service provision for users.
- 8.2 The team will then update key stakeholders including Thames Valley Police and provide wider messaging about the continuation of the hire schemes, as well as reminders regarding the illegal status of private e-scooters.

9. Background papers

National Evaluation of e-scooter trial report: [National evaluation of e-scooter trials report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/national-evaluation-of-e-scooter-trials-report-2022.pdf)

Reported e-scooter casualties:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-e-scooter-factsheet-year-ending-june-2022/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-e-scooter-factsheet-year-ending-june-2022#:~:text=there%20were%201%2C437%20casualties%20in,the%20year%20ending%20June%202021\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-e-scooter-factsheet-year-ending-june-2022/reported-road-casualties-great-britain-e-scooter-factsheet-year-ending-june-2022#:~:text=there%20were%201%2C437%20casualties%20in,the%20year%20ending%20June%202021)

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please get in touch with the author. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member

⁹ <https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/news/23936219.thames-valley-police-launch-crackdown-e-scooters/>

to consider, please inform the democratic services team by 5pm on 20 February 2024.
This can be done by email to democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

