

**APPENDIX C**  
**Agenda Item No 6**

**SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT ( STAGE 3)**     Director of Environment & Planning

**(1.) Purpose**

- 1.1 To progress Stage 3 of the scrutiny and overview of Travel Plans within an overall sustainable transport strategy.

**(2.) Recommendation**

Members consider the evidence given to them at the earlier meetings (as summarised in Appendix 1). If the Committee consider favourably the idea of developing a Travel Plan the following would be appropriate: -

the principle of the Council developing a Travel Plan for staff and Members is agreed (as per paragraph 3.5 below); and

Cabinet be requested that when considering the forward budget planning for next year they make adequate provision for the development of a Council Travel Plan.

**(3) Supporting Information**

- 3.1 This Committee considered a report (Stage 1) on Sustainable Transport in November 2003. The report focused on looking at the Council itself as a large employer (not looking at other organisations in the role of local planning authority) and the work undertaken previously to develop a Travel Plan for staff and Members. At meetings in March and June 2004 (Stage 2) Members heard evidence from five witnesses: the first meeting considered witnesses from this Council, Bucks County Council and a leaflet submission from Wycombe District Council; and the second from representatives of the two key local public transport operators Arriva (buses) and Chiltern Railways. Because of the time between meetings a Briefing Note covering the issues raised at the three previous Committees is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.2 This report covers the Third Stage of the Scrutiny process and draws together the evidence to Committee and associated deliberations by Members, to enable members to draw conclusions and make recommendations to Cabinet. Stage 2 of the Scrutiny process can be distilled into three main subject areas (underlined headings below) which highlight the evidence given and Members' comments. Members are asked to review these, as reported below, and consider those elements that can or should be taken forward for further examination and recommendation to Cabinet.

Principle of a Travel Plan for AVDC

- 3.3 Throughout the evidence sessions Members were made aware of the significant national and local support for local authorities to develop a Travel Plan (Appendix 1 paras 3& 4). A number of nearby authorities, including Wycombe District Council and Bucks County Council, have an operative Travel Plan for the authority. All witnesses identified the benefits of an up to date Travel Plan in promoting sustainable

transport and potential health benefits for the Council by encouraging alternatives to the car for commuting and general work journeys.

- 3.4 Members will also recall that the adopted Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan includes policy to make provision for travel plans to be submitted as a requirement of some planning applications. Developers are likely to look on this requirement rather poorly if the Council, as a major employer itself, has failed to develop a Travel Plan.
- 3.5 On this basis, Members may consider that there is significant support and potential benefits for the development of a Travel Plan for the Council. If Members consider favourably the idea of developing a Travel Plan it would be appropriate to make this a recommendation to Cabinet (see recommendations in Section 2).

#### Future Development of a Travel Plan

- 3.6 Members were advised that a Travel Plan for the Council was considered by the Environment and Health Committee in January 2001. While the Committee supported this initiative no additional resources to support the development of the Travel Plan were approved at that time. As identified in Appendix 1 (paras 5 & 6) limited initiatives were introduced, paid for from existing budgets, but the impact on staff/Member travel patterns was very limited. No other initiatives have been introduced and the situation has worsened as the pool bikes, with no maintenance budget, are now in such a condition that they seem to be rarely used.
- 3.7 The above paragraph reinforces the need for a realistic approach to the development of a Travel Plan. It requires dedicated staff time and resources. This was made clear in the presentations by BCC, the major local public transport operators and in the written presentation from Wycombe District Council. The failure to address the issue of staff and budget when originally considering the introduction of a Travel Plan has resulted in the ad hoc situation we are in today. Without this input it is most unlikely that the operation of any future Travel Plan will be any different.
- 3.8 Both Chiltern Railways and Arriva the Shires (the two main public transport operators) have expressed their willingness to participate in the operation of a Travel Plan. Some examples of what were previously proposed for inclusion in a Council Travel Plan are included in Appendix 1 – paragraphs 6, 7 and 11.

#### Resource Issues

- 3.9 Both the County Council and Wycombe District Council have staff dedicated to the operation of their respective Travel Plans. In the County there is a Travel choice team and with Wycombe there is one officer who spends 10 – 20% of their time on the Travel Plan (in starting the Plan over 50% of the officer's time was spent on setting up the operation of the Plan).
- 3.10 In addition to these staff costs Members were informed that BCC had spent £30,000 during the first year of implementation rising to over £75,000 in its third year. Wycombe District Council has an annual operational budget of some £4,000 for the Travel Plan (this does not include any staff costs).
- 3.11 As Members are aware there are no identified staff or financial resources for the development of a Travel Plan for this Council. If Members do decide this is

something to be pursued there needs to be a second recommendation that Cabinet needs to make an allowance for this work to be initiated and supported in the future with staff and an operational budget.

- 3.12 Until work is initiated on developing a Travel Plan it is difficult to identify what the costs are likely to be. Previously costings were done on the basis of a part-time post on grade SG4 (currently £13,500 + 35%) with an appropriate operational budget. While it is not possible to quantify the yearly operational costs for a Travel Plan they are more likely to be in the order of the £4, 000 budget of Wycombe than that spent by BCC. Together this gives a yearly cost of over £22,000.
- 3.13 It is recommended that Cabinet, in considering the forward budget planning for next year, that they make adequate provision for the development of a Council Travel Plan.

**(4.) Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 The recommendations reflect both the evidence presented to the Committee and Members' subsequent deliberations.
- 4.2 The option not to develop a Travel Plan puts the Council in a rather delicate position in regards to Government advice (Appendix 1 para 4. 2) and the adopted Local Plan. Developers are likely to look on the Plan's policy requirement rather poorly if the Council, as a major employer itself, has failed to develop a Travel Plan.

**(5.) Resource Implications**

- 5.1 None directly arising from this report albeit the work to develop a Travel Plan will require both staff (there is no spare capacity in Planning Services) and additional on-going financial implications – as outlined in paragraph 3.12 above.

**(6.) Key Aims and Outcomes**

- 6.1 This report is in accordance with the Local Communities Key Aim (providing for healthy communities and accessible services) and Local Environment Key Aim (promoting sustainable development).

Contact Officers: Andy Kirkham 01296 585462  
Background Documents: Stage 1 report Nov 2003; Stage 2 reports March & June 2004.

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environment 16.11.04

## APPENDIX 1

### Briefing Note for Environment Scrutiny Committee 16 November 2004

1. Sustainable Transport is an integral part of promoting sustainable development in reducing the need to travel and promote alternative means of transport than the private car – public transport, cycling and walking. One way of responding to this is by the development of a Travel Plan.
2. A Travel Plan is where an organisation develops an integrated plan to change the amount of travel demand associated with its operations. Most commonly, the management of demand will focus on reducing car usage amongst its workforce and visitors, and also encourage employees to increase their health by walking and cycling.
3. AVDLP the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (2004) (GP.21) includes a policy to make such provision for travel plans to be submitted as part requirement of some planning applications. Developers are likely to look on this requirement rather poorly if the Council, as a major employer, has failed to develop a viable travel plan itself.
  4. The support for Travel Plans comes from a variety of initiatives:
    - The Transport White Paper, ‘A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone’ (1998), sought to encourage local authorities to devise and implement a TP.
    - Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (March 2001), paragraph 87, states, “*Local Authorities are expected to consider setting targets for the adoption of travel plans by local businesses and other organisations and to set an example by adopting their own plans*”. The guidance also develops an argument that encourages planning authorities to request a travel plan as part of a planning application.
    - The Local Transport Plan (2000) prepared by Buckinghamshire County Council encourages organisations to produce and implement their own Travel Plans and identifies AVDC as an organisation that needed to produce such a plan.
5. A Travel Plan for the Council was drafted by the Green Travel Group in November 2000 and a comprehensive report was considered by the Environment and Health Committee in January 2001. The Committee supported a number of issues to encourage greater cycle and public transport usage within the Council, and these are referred to below. However no additional resources to support the development of the Travel Plan were approved at that time.
6. In April 2001, staff and Members were issued with a Travel Choice card, which provides access to:
  - A 34% discount on leisure and business travel with Chiltern Railways.In addition
  - Interest free season ticket loans for bus and rail travel.

- A 15% discount on cycles and cycle accessories from Buckingham Bikes.
  - A 'borrow a bike' scheme has been set up to allow staff to use a bike for business travel. Four bikes with safety equipment have been supplied with sponsorship from Buckingham Bikes and Unison.
7. Through a lack of resources the impact of these initiatives on staff and Members has so far been limited. In addition to those items mentioned above other initiatives put forward in the 1999 report included:
- Introduction of Pool Cars;
  - A similar discount scheme to that with Chiltern Railways was agreed with the local bus company, Arriva, but was never actioned through a lack of finance; and
  - More support for car sharing and a possible free taxi home if you had to work late.
8. In March 2004, the Committee heard evidence from two witnesses (AVDC and BCC) and a leaflet circulation about what Wycombe District Council is doing. The representative of Bucks County Council provided information on the County Travel Plan ("Travel Choice") and its potential benefits and links to a District Travel Plan. Members heard that BCC had spent £30,000 during the first year of implementation rising to over £75,000 in its third year. Included in this figure was match funding with Arriva to provide discounted bus travel for County Council employees.
9. The AVDC witness was of the opinion that more use would be made of the local bus services if there were discounted fares or bus passes available to AVDC staff. A survey of staff would measure the possible take-up of any such schemes. It was confirmed to Members that there were no resources at present to fund or operate a travel plan for this Council
10. In June 2004, the Committee heard evidence from two further witnesses – Chiltern Railways and Arriva (main local bus company). Both operators had considerable experience working with local authorities on sustainable travel/travel plan issues.
11. Chiltern Railways provided Members with information on:-
- (a) AVDC staff concessions - Staff and Members using a Travel Choice card could obtain a discount of 34% on leisure and business travel on Chiltern Railway Services. Discounts were also available on season tickets;
  - (b) Journeys made on the Chiltern Route - At peak periods, trains into London were very busy, but there was capacity on 'contra-flow' services and scope for encouraging AVDC staff and Members to use these services. There were no peak fares on the contra-flow services; and
  - (c) Travel Plan roles - There had been little up-take on the purchase of season tickets with the Travel Choice card. The Council might have to consider the promotion of this further. This could include a comparison of the cost of obtaining a discounted rail ticket with the cost of travelling by car.

12. Arriva noted that 36% of people who used buses were using them for the purpose of travelling to/from work. The company had been working with a number of bodies with regard to Travel Plans, including:

BCC - a 50% discount was offered to staff on single, return, day, weekly and monthly tickets (35% of the discount was paid for by BCC and 15% was paid for by Arriva).

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) - discounted tickets could be purchased and this was complimented by the Council offering interest free loans to staff.

In developing a Travel Plan Arriva noted that, it was important that staff and Members were encouraged to use other modes of transport rather than cars. It was therefore important that initiatives did not simply discount existing users of public transport. The shift from car use to public transport needed to be measured.

Arriva's experience of Travel Plans had shown that the criteria for success hinged on several different tests:-

- A good base service or network of routes;
- The scheme must be simple to operate and administer;
- Good marketing, preferably by a dedicated officer;
- Realistic aspirations;
- Partners had to contribute and be flexible e.g. why promote free parking for staff; whilst trying to promote travel on public transport;
- Costs needed to be understood;
- The scheme must benefit, not only existing users, but also be of sufficient advantage to entice new users.