



Report to Leader (Transport portfolio)

Decision Date:	21 September 2021
Reference number:	TR17.21
Title:	E-Scooter Trial Extension of End Date
Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Steve Broadbent
Contact officer:	Joan Hancox joan.hancox@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	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;
Recommendations:	To extend the end date for the e-scooter trials in Buckinghamshire taking place in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Princes Risborough until March 2022
Reason for decision:	To allow the e-scooter trial to continue as it provides more choice to residents, to assess take up and impact post-lockdown and contribute to the national DfT evidence collection.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This paper is seeking approval for Buckinghamshire Council to extend the current trial for e-scooters, from September 2021 until March 2022.
- 1.2 The trial is being facilitated by the Department for Transport and the extension will enable additional data to be captured through the Covid recovery period, helping to understand what the uptake will be post-lockdown providing a comparison with the

same period in 2020. This will be invaluable in providing evidence to feed into the evaluation process being conducted by the Department for Transport (DfT) who are using the trials to consider the future legalisation of e-scooters.

- 1.3 Participating in the e-scooter trial has enabled Buckinghamshire Council to offer a sustainable mode of travel for its communities, especially whilst access to public transport is reduced due to Covid-19. The trial has enabled e-scooters to be introduced in a controlled and safe manner, from which we can provide evidence as to their suitability as a new transport mode in Buckinghamshire.
- 1.4 The trial supports the Council's ambitions to be a 'living lab' for innovation and fits with the Council's Climate Change agenda by proactively providing opportunities to promote sustainable transport. There have been over 45,000 rides in Buckinghamshire since the trial began and only one reported Health and Safety incident that was associated with the scooter rider only.

2. Content of report

Background to trials

- 2.1 To support a 'green' restart of local travel and help mitigate reduced public transport capacity as a result of Covid, the Department for Transport (DfT) fast tracked trials of rental e-scooters. E-scooters offer the potential for fast, clean and inexpensive travel that can also help ease the burden on transport networks and allow for social distancing.
- 2.2 The Electric Scooter Trials and Traffic Signs (Coronavirus) Regulations and General Directions 2020 came into force on 4th July 2020, to facilitate e-scooter trials.
- 2.3 Informal discussions were held with several operators to gain an understanding of the operating models available and to ascertain whether Buckinghamshire would be a viable option. An expression of interest was posted in July 2020 and Zipp Mobility were selected as the preferred operator.
- 2.4 Extensive consultation and engagement were undertaken with key stakeholders including disability groups to ensure that the Buckinghamshire Trials would be as safe as we could possibly make them. A full list of stakeholders is in paragraph 6.1.

Aim of the trials

- 2.5 The main aim of the trials is to build robust evidence about the safety, benefits, public perceptions and wider impacts of e-scooters in order to inform the possible legalisation of e-scooters in England.
- 2.6 Key areas which the Council and DfT are gathering information on include:

- safety outcomes for e-scooter users and what influences this;
- interaction with, and effect on, other road users;
- public perceptions of these scooters including people with disabilities and related groups;
- nature of modal shift and new journeys that have been enabled;
- characteristics of users and how uptake and outcomes differ for different groups;
- local authority perception of effects on their transport system.

Key elements of the trials

- 2.7 Only e-scooters participating in the trials are officially classed as legal. Privately owned e-scooters are still considered illegal.
- 2.8 During the trials, e-scooters are being classed as motor vehicles, requiring all users to have a provisional driving licence as a minimum. E-scooters in the trials must be covered by a motor vehicle insurance policy. DfT expect all operators to have a policy in place that covers users of the vehicles.
- 2.9 Users are not required to complete a mandatory training course but in Buckinghamshire we offer this and key safety features are included on the Zipp App.
- 2.10 Wearing a helmet is recommended but not a mandatory requirement.
- 2.11 E-scooters are permitted to use the same road space as cycles and electrically assisted pedal cycles (EAPCs.) This means e-scooters would be allowed on the road (except motorways) and in cycle lanes and cycle tracks.
- 2.12 E-scooters can be used on shared cycle/pedestrian pavements through required amendments to TROs. E-scooters are not permitted on pavements which are not shared with cycles.
- 2.13 We initially began trials in Aylesbury and High Wycombe in November 2020 with Zipp Mobility as the operator. The trial was expanded into Princes Risborough in May 2021.
- 2.14 The numbers of scooters, potential routes and parking locations were agreed with stakeholders and the operator. These are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure issues, such as safety concerns, can be resolved quickly and to meet new demand where required. Geo-fenced zones are also agreed with stakeholders and the operator to enable a strict e-scooter use zone.
- 2.15 The operating model of painted parking bays was agreed with stakeholders and the operator to ensure it is appropriate for the locality. A parking bay is typically

indicated by painted white box marking. These are visible to the community. Journeys begin and end in pre-defined parking bay locations.

Results of the trial so far

- 2.16 The trials have so far been successful in Aylesbury and High Wycombe, and early results from the more recent trial in Princes Risborough are encouraging.
- 2.17 In Aylesbury, there have been a total of 24,949 rides to date covering a total of 53,410 miles. The average ride time is around 17 minutes and average ride distance is 2.3 miles. The most popular times for rides are between 14:00 and 22:00 and the most popular routes are in the centre of the town.
- 2.18 Building on the success which these numbers demonstrate, the Council has been working with local Parish Councils and Members to expand the scheme further in Aylesbury including to Bierton and Buckingham Park which are anticipated to start soon.
- 2.19 In High Wycombe, there have been a total of 19,782 rides to date covering a total of 37,051 miles. The average ride time is around 15 minutes and the average ride distance is 2 miles. The most popular times for rides are between 14:00 and 20:00 and the most popular routes are along the main routes into and out of the town centre, whilst there are also rides occurring from further afield such as in Loudwater, Micklefield and on the edge of Hazlemere.
- 2.20 Like in Aylesbury, building on the success of the trial to date, the Council has been working with local Parish Councils and Members to consider expanding the scheme further in High Wycombe. Parking bays have been set up in Loudwater. However, some of the steeper hills in High Wycombe have been excluded from the trial through what is termed ‘geofencing’, which prevents scooters being ridden along less suitable roads where it is not considered safe to use the e-scooters. Zipp are working on a solution which involves enhancing the braking system and potentially applying more restricted speeds which they hope will allow some of the hills to be open to users. This demonstrates that there are opportunities to identify and implement innovative solutions whilst the trial continues, and it will be useful to see the outcome of this and other planned changes over an extended trial period.
- 2.21 In Princes Risborough, which has only recently been introduced, the results are within realistic expectations for a town of its size and population. There has so far been a total of 648 rides, with an average ride time of around 13 minutes and average ride distance of approximately 1.47 miles. Most rides occur between 18:00 and 20:00.

Safety

- 2.22 There is a very mixed representation in the media from interest groups and communities about the benefits and risks associated with micro-mobility vehicles such as e-scooters. Safety is one of the key issues.
- 2.23 To try and mitigate some of these risks for riders, other road users and pedestrians on pavements, DfT have issued strict design guidelines for scooters. They have also set a maximum speed limit of 15mph. In Buckinghamshire we have reduced this in key areas in response to local conditions. They do not, however, mandate formal training or the wearing of helmets, providing recommendations only.
- 2.24 It is impossible to de-risk every form of mobility, but we have worked to make sure that the Buckinghamshire schemes are the safest possible by implementing mitigation measures such as:
- Mandatory rider education/training via the booking app
 - Offering free helmets
 - Geo-fencing to reduce speeds and exclude e-scooters from specific areas which are considered less suitable for e-scooters or may pose safety risks
 - Additional hygiene requirements to address Covid-19 (additional cleaning, anti-viral wraps on handlebars, advice to sanitise hands before and after use on the app)
 - Specifying journey start and end locations in marked bays to promote good parking practice and reduce obstructing other members of the community such as visually impaired or blind residents.
 - Warning riders when there are reports of misuse and banning some riders for anti-social riding.
- 2.25 The result of this has been effective with over 43,000 rides and only one reported Health and Safety incident reported in Buckinghamshire during the trials.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 The extension of the deadline is voluntary.
- 3.2 The advantages of extending the end date means that we continue to offer a wider range of travel options and are able to gather more data through the Covid recovery period to get a better understanding of use and issues when towns are busier and continue to return to some normality. It also provides a sustainable means of travel as we come out of lockdown especially as Covid rates are currently rapidly rising.

- 3.3 The dis-advantage of extending the end date is that there may be a continued sense the e-scooters are legal which could lead to further private e-scooter purchases and illegal use.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 An experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) was required to facilitate the trial and is still in place under emergency covid regulations.
- 4.2 Legal were asked what the costs would be to extend the ETRO. They confirmed the costs would be the advertising of experimental notice in the press which would be around, £500.
- 4.3 The e-scooter service is provided on a cost neutral basis to the Council. No money has been put into the trial so far as it being run as a business by Zipp Mobility. We have used existing staff resources to project manage the trial.
- 4.4 If the trial end date is extended, then officer time will be required until the end of March 2022. This would be existing officer time so would be at no additional cost.

Risks

- 4.5 There is a risk that once the trial ends, users who have utilised our e-scooters will purchase their own and use them illegally. In order to mitigate against this risk we will use media articles to highlight that the trial has come to an end and that private e-scooters are still illegal.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 Participating in the trial fits with the Corporate Plan priority of “Improving our Environment” and being a “living lab” for innovation.
- 5.2 It also supports the Climate Change Strategy approved by Cabinet on 15 July 2020 by proactively providing opportunities to promote sustainable transport.
- 5.3 An EQIA screening was completed prior to the start of the first trial which is attached to this report. The EQIA highlighted concerns regarding the impact on residents who may be blind, visually impaired or hard of hearing. The main concern, as with cyclists, is the potential of collisions. A key aim of the trial is to provide evidence to assess safety for the users, other road users and the wider community.
- 5.4 The scheme is considered value for money as no Council funding is provided for the running of the scheme.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 With regard to extending the e-scooter trial in High Wycombe, members were briefed at a workshop on the Highway Wycombe Transport Strategy on the 1st June 2021. There was no objection to this proposal.
- 6.2 A briefing was also provided at the Improving the Environment Action Group (Aylesbury) on 12th July which provided an update on the trial so far and our plans for an extension. Only 2 Members attended the action Group and they were both supportive of the proposed extension.
- 6.3 The Risborough members we consulted as part of updates with the current trial.
- 6.4 An email was sent to Members of affected wards to further gauge their opinions on the proposed trial extension. Only one Member responded confirming they were supportive of the trial extension.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 Informal engagement was undertaken before the trial commenced with key stakeholders, including:
 - Local disability groups
 - Members through the Active Travel Steering Group
 - Town and Parish Councils and Town Committees
 - Town centre partnerships
 - Aylesbury Garden Town
 - Chiltern Railways
 - Thames Valley Police (TVP)
 - BTVLEP
 - Transport for Buckinghamshire
 - Buckinghamshire Road Safety Team
 - Buckinghamshire NHS Trust
- 7.2 With regard to the extension of the trial local members were consulted as outlined above.
- 7.3 If this decision is supported it is suggested by the Cabinet Member for Transport that the extension be announced alongside a Myth Busting and FAQs on the scheme

along with ridership data. This has been arranged with Sue Robinson from the communications team.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 If the extension of the end date is approved, we will inform DfT that we wish to extend and will work with them to amend the ETRO. Officers will then work with Zipp Mobility to agree an extension to their contract, publicise the extension and inform Key Stakeholders of the extension. We will also continue to monitor feedback and manage the operator until the new end date.

9. Background papers

- 9.1 The E-scooter trials: guidance for local areas and rental operators can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-local-areas-and-rental-operators/e-scooter-trials-guidance-for-local-areas-and-rental-operators>

- 9.2 The Electric Scooter Trials and Traffic Signs (Coronavirus) Regulations and General Directions 2020 came into force on 4th July 2020, to facilitate e-scooter trials can be found here:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/663/made>

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 of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@bucksshire.gov.uk