Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy

January 2019

1. Introduction

1.1. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 extended the statutory duties of local authorities to support parental choice of school through the consideration of travel and transport arrangements. The new section placed a general duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel to school, and publish a Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy, to be updated annually.

1.2. The duty relates to journeys to and from institutions where education or training is delivered and applies to children and young people of compulsory school age who travel to receive education or training in a local authority's area.

1.3. Warrington's original 2006 strategy was adopted as part of Local Transport Plan 2 (LTP2) and although updated regularly, this refreshed strategy is offered for public consultation as part of LTP4 development. This update identifies the issues that have arisen since the original was approved, and provides solutions in view of the current economic climate of reduced local authority financial support.

1.4. There are five main elements to the duty that all local authorities must satisfy:

- an **assessment** of the travel and transport needs of children, and young people within the authority's area;

- an **audit** of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority's area that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions;

- a **strategy** to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are best catered for;

- the **promotion** of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions; and

- the **publication** of the current Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy.

1.5. This document details how we propose to continue to meet these five elements in the light of current financial restrictions and staffing reductions, and how this can best be achieved within the context of local and national issues.

2. Setting the Context

2.1. Warrington's resident population now stands at 209,700, an increase of 16,000 since 2006. There are 36,500 children and young people attending in excess of 90 schools and colleges, both within and outside the borough.

2.2. There are 85,000 households in Warrington, with almost 36,000 of them owning one car, 33,000 of them owning two or more cars, and 80% of all journeys are made by car.

2.3. The Travel Choices team within the Transport for Warrington service already works with a wide range of council departments, schools and other organisations to enable and promote sustainable travel to school. This document sets out how that work can be sustained, albeit in diminished capacity under continuously reducing government funding.

2.4. Central funding for regional and local school travel advisers (STAs) was provided until March 2011, with the aim of ensuring every school had an effective School Travel Plan. Although this funding was continued at a reduced amount after the change of government in 2010, it was unringfenced which allowed local education authorities to determine how it was used. In Warrington the funding has remained within the general education budget and has not been used to sustain the STA post.

2.5. Additionally, a considerable number of schools have or are planning to become academies which distances them from local authority financial control. This presents new challenges in communication and co-operation, but also opportunities to seek funding for services ranging from travel planning and parking management to road safety education and training.

2.6. At the local level, there are a number of relevant policy aims that this plan supports and feeds into, including the Local Plan, the Council's Corporate Strategy and the Active Warrington strategy.

3. An assessment of the travel and transport needs of children, and young people within the authority's area

3.1. The guidance advises that local authorities should base their assessment of children and young people's travel and transport needs on the data provided by schools or colleges, often contained within school travel plans.

3.2. Effective school travel plans, updated as necessary, put forward a package of measures to improve safety and reduce car use, backed by a partnership involving the school, education, health and transport officers from the local authority, and the police.

3.3. Although at the time Warrington met the government target of all schools having a travel plan by 2011, many have not been updated since then and are now inadequate and out of date. The intention that schools would update their own travel plans has not materialised, and the resource that the council can currently devote to this results in school travel plans only being developed or updated as a result of planning conditions placed on new or expanding schools, or when the schools themselves request assistance.

3.4. A part-time School Travel Adviser is available to support schools that require help to produce and implement their travel plans. This function also offers a programme of support that schools can choose to include in their travel plans. This includes classroom and assembly awareness raising lessons,

walking bus and scooter training, programmes to support transition from primary to high school, junior PCSO schemes to help with parking enforcement, etc. These measures are jointly run with colleagues from Road Safety and the Police.

3.5. New government-approved software is being promoted through the sustainable travel organisation Modeshift. STARS, (Sustainable Travel Accreditation and Recognition Scheme), is an online tool created to support local authorities and schools with their travel planning development and measures.

3.6. STARS is a paid-for tool which will require exploration of alternative funding streams to ensure continuation, specifically from those council departments, schools and organisations which depend on the delivery of the duty and sustainable travel promotion to support their own objectives.

3.7. The benefit of this facility is that it provides an online, user-friendly template which once introduced to a school can be easily accessed and updated by school or council staff. It provides all the sections required in a travel plan and a facility to record, analyse and present travel survey data.

3.8. The data on how children currently travel to school and how they would prefer to make this journey is key to assessing their needs. Until 2011 this data was collected from each school within the national school census, but the government's direction to reduce pressure on data collection from schools resulted in these travel questions being withdrawn. This data has not been routinely collected since then, except on an ad-hoc basis when travel plans are updated.

3.9. To give a full current picture, a borough-wide primary classroom hands-up survey was undertaken in the autumn term of 2018. This involved class teachers, when willing, and council staff attending schools and surveying the children in a classroom hands-up.

3.10. The results of the primary school survey are shown below together with the data previously collected in 2011 and the previous 3 years. It shows a marked reduction in walking to school, with an increase in being driven. Cycle and scooter training appear to have had a positive effect with an increase in both modes.
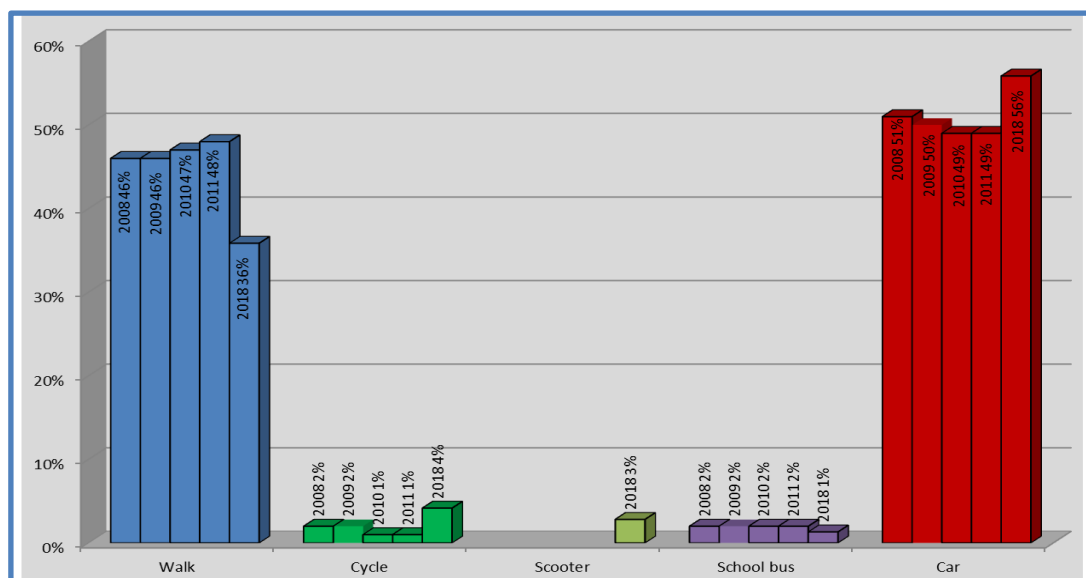
3.11. There are several possible reasons for the increase in driving to school, including the high employment rate of Warrington residents (parents dropping off children on the way to work) and the ability to choose a school which is not necessarily the nearest to home.

3.12. We propose to repeat this every two years, a similar high school survey is proposed for spring 2019, and together with the information gathered during travel plan updates we will use this to support this first element. Although challenging to collect, this continued process will help to assess the specific travel needs of pupils through the school travel plan and survey data.

3.13. Actions to fulfil this element:

- Continued development and update of school travel plans when required by planning applications and requested by schools.

- Investigate funding opportunities to continue to use Modeshift STARS to help deliver the programme

- Continue to press schools for travel-to-school surveys to collect data to support the assessment of need.

4. **An audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority's area that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions**

4.1. Much of the information required for the audit of the infrastructure supporting sustainable school travel is already collected as part of the consideration of accessibility to key services like education as an integral part of the Local Transport Plan.

4.2. Annual catchment area maps linked to pupil postcode data are produced by the Education Service. These are useful to identify the relative distance pupils are travelling to school and evaluate the potential numbers likely to walk, cycle or are located on a bus route. The council also offers an online mapping system with various layers available to inform users of the available routes and infrastructure in local areas.

4.3. Any rebuilding or expansion of schools and colleges is also an opportunity to look at travel and transport provision. Travel planning is a standard requirement of planning consent which brings collaboration between several council departments, working together to provide highway infrastructure and identifying where additional links to schools and colleges will be required.

4.4. The council also has a Home to School Transport Policy which outlines which pupils are eligible for subsidised transport to school, often by school bus or taxi. This relates to distance from home to nearest school rather than following specific mapped routes. It also provides for children with special educational needs or disabilities. The policy and eligibility guidance can be found on the council's website.

4.5. Commercial bus services also provide for the journey to school and most bus companies offer discounted travel for under 19s in full-time education. Certain routes are provided by smaller independent operators, whilst the majority of the network is covered by the larger operators, such as Warrington's Own Buses and Arriva. The larger operators offer season tickets which further subsidise use of public transport and enable additional

journeys to be made during the evenings, at weekends and in the school holidays, further promoting sustainable and independent travel. Maps of routes and services are available online at the respective websites.

4.6. In addition all the borough's schools are identified on the Warrington Cycle Map. This not only features cycle routes but maps the entire highway network, colour-coded to highlight where more advanced cycling skills are required. The majority of schools are surrounded by streets identified as quieter, low risk routes where families could consider walking and cycling to school as an option. The map has recently been updated to include crossing points and new infrastructure, giving additional support for routes to school. The map colour-coding is also used to identify barriers to cycling and walking and to help prioritise new infrastructure locations to reduce these obstacles.

4.7. Government funded cycle training, Bikeability, is offered to every 9 year old in the borough through their school. This free instruction provides the skill and confidence to cycle on quieter roads and is ideal to enable cycling from home to school. Other age groups are also catered for, building on the basic knowledge to enable safe cycling to secondary school and eventually to the workplace. Over £400k has been secured to continue this training until 2020.

4.8. Actions to fulfil this element:

- Continue to use the cycle map to identify safer routes to school and to target available funds to reduce any barriers.

- Continue to work together on new developments and through the planning process to identify where new infrastructure is needed.

- Ensure schools are aware of mapping and timetable websites and encourage them to add to their own websites to allow them to promote routes to school and help to identify missing links.

5. A strategy to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are best catered for.

5.1. The ongoing financial restrictions placed upon the authority's resources and capacity to implement these principles necessitate an adjustment of how the actions are delivered.

5.2. The Travel Planning programme will continue but will prioritise schools that are required to implement a travel plan as a condition of planning consent. It will also strive to work with those schools willing to take a pro-active approach and show interest and enthusiasm.

5.3. Due to the current lack of resource to deal with the number of requests for highway infrastructure or enforcement emanating from the school community and local ward councillors, a procedure known as the 'Schools Programme' has been devised. This limits the number of schools receiving intervention and support to 10 per year, but enables a holistic package of 'engineering, education and enforcement' to take place.

5.4. This programme is jointly led by officers from Traffic Management, Road Safety, and Travel Planning to combine several specialist resources. The concept of the programme is based on the '3 Es' which are Engineering, Education and Enforcement.

5.5. The process ensures the engineering measures, such as physical changes in the highway to influence behaviour and manage access, or traffic regulation orders that restrict parking, are correct in the area. There then follows enforcement by the council's parking attendants and Police who focus on obstructive and dangerous parking behaviour. The education activity at the school gates and in assemblies and classroom lessons takes place simultaneously and describes what is being implemented and why it is important to enable all modes of travel to school.

5.6. The most successful schemes are at those schools that have embraced the importance of the education efforts and even nominated a champion within the school to promote changes in travel patterns for pupils. This includes setting up a group where the school, parents and local residents are represented to agree the engineering measures to be progressed.

5.7. Actions to fulfil this element:

- Continue to deliver a reduced travel planning programme

- Continue to deliver the Schools Programme

6. The promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions.

6.1. The sustainable school travel strategy has a broad impact, including providing health benefits for children and families through active journeys such as walking and cycling. It can also bring significant environmental improvements, through reduced levels of congestion and improvements in poor air quality to which children are particularly vulnerable.

6.2. Promotion will continue through the implementation of school travel plans and the delivery of specific schemes identified in them, including the classroom and assembly awareness raising lessons, walking bus and scooter training, transition from primary to high school programmes, junior PCSO schemes, etc.

6.3. Communications using social media and borough-wide news stories will be utilised to more effectively promote national campaigns such as Walk to School weeks, Cycle to School day, the Giant Walking Bus sponsored by road safety charity Brakes, etc.

6.4. Central grant funding has been secured until 2020 to allow the Bikeability cycle training to continue to promote safe cycling to school. It also allows for additional modules to be built-in which include the promotion to parents and teachers, starter programmes for younger children, and advanced training for teenagers in the first years of secondary school.

6.5. Actions to fulfil this element:

- Continue to deliver a reduced travel planning programme including awareness raising assemblies and lessons.

- Continue to deliver the Transition and Schools Parking programme.

- Explore ways of borough-wide promotion through social media outlets.

7. The publication of Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy.

7.1. The original Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy was consulted upon and approved as part of the wider LTP2 development. Once complete it was published on the council's website with the other documents making up the council's transport strategy. It is proposed to follow that procedure for this refreshed strategy during LTP4 development.