

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

Explanatory Note

The Leader of the Council has established Delegation Schemes by which certain decisions may be made by the relevant cabinet member or specific officers.

Cabinet member decisions are subject to review under the Call-in Procedure.

From the date the notice of the decision made is published there are five working days during which any five Councillors may sign a request for the decision to be reviewed (called in) and deliver it to the Proper Officer.

If, at the end of the period, no request has been made, the decision may be implemented. If a valid call- in request has been made, the matter will be referred to the Scrutiny Panel

Part A – To be completed by the appropriate Cabinet Member/Officer

Title of Report

Essex Walking Strategy Consultation

Delegated Power

To promote and procure the implementation of the Borough Council's Transport Strategy in partnership with Essex County Council, the responsible Transport Authority and other partners to improve infrastructure.

To promote partnership working with Essex County Council, the responsible Transport Authority.

Decision Taken

The Portfolio Holder is requested to agree Colchester Borough Council's (CBC) response to the Essex County Council (ECC) consultation on the Essex Walking Strategy.

Key Decision

No

Forward Plan

No

Reasons for the Decision

To influence the content of the Essex Walking Strategy.

Alternative Options

Not to respond to the consultation. This would mean losing the opportunity to influence ECC on how the level of walking can be increased.

Conflict of Interest

None

Dispensation by Head of Paid Service

None

Dispensation by Monitoring Officer

None

Approved by Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment & Transportation

Signature Cllr Martin Goss

Date 17 July 2019

(**NB** For Key Decisions the report must be made available to the public for five clear days prior to the period for call-in commencing)

Part B – To be completed by the Proper Officer (Democratic Services)

Portfolio Holder Decision Reference Number

WAS – 003 - 19

Implementation Date

This decision can be implemented if no request for the decision to be reviewed (call-in) has been made **after 5pm on Friday 26 July 2019**

Call-in Procedure

The Decision Notice for this decision was published on the internet and placed in the Members' Room and the Customer Service Centre on **Friday 19 July 2019**

A request for reference to the Scrutiny Panel must be made by **5pm on Friday 26 July 2019**

Signature of Proper Officer
K Barnard



Portfolio Holder for Waste, Environment and Transportation

Item

25 June 2019

Report of: Assistant Director Policy and Corporate

Author: Jane Thompson
☎ 508642

Title Essex Walking Strategy Consultation

Wards affected All

This report concerns the consultation being carried out by Essex County Council regarding the content of the new Essex Walking Strategy.

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To agree Colchester Borough Council's (CBC) response to the Essex County Council (ECC) consultation on the Essex Walking Strategy.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To influence the content of the Essex Walking Strategy.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 Not to respond to the consultation. This would mean losing the opportunity to influence ECC on how the level of walking can be increased.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 Essex County Council has launched a consultation on the draft Essex Walking Strategy. The Strategy is a strategic document which sets out the purpose of the report and the benefits of walking.

It has the following objectives -

1. Increase walking for everyday trips
2. Improve road safety for pedestrians
3. Better design and enhanced accessibility
4. Enabling physical activity and walking for health
5. Enabling more walking to schools
6. Promoting walking for leisure
7. Supporting economic development
8. Improving neighbourhoods and supporting the development of new communities
9. Encouraging walking by changing attitudes and behaviour

- 4.2 The Strategy recognises that walking is the most sustainable form of travel, whether walking for the whole journey or as part of a journey, for example walking to the bus stop or train station.

- 4.3 More people switching from cars to walking in urban areas will free up road space. Planning for more walking journeys and fewer cars in new developments will mean less space is needed to accommodate cars, both in road space and parking spaces.

- 4.4 ECC produced a Walking Strategy many years ago and recognises that the Government policy framework has moved on, for example the National Planning Policy Framework, and new initiatives have been launched e.g. Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy and the Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans.

- 4.5 Department for Transport data indicated that walking is an important part of urban travel and should be promoted. The challenge is -

- 44% of car trips are under 2km – a walkable distance for most people
- 1 in 5 car trips during school start and finish times in the urban area are school trips
- Increasingly aging population
- Road network capacity issues
- Walking trips have declined and over 26% of people are now classed as 'inactive'

- 4.6 Walking has many benefits -

- Reducing congestion in urban areas
- Health – improved fitness, better air quality
- Equitability - most people can walk and no special investment is needed
- Supporting economic development – more people being able to access more jobs without having to have access to a car or bus network.
- Regeneration – pedestrians considered first in design can mean thriving urban and town centres.

- 4.7 The purpose of the Strategy is to set out the key elements of a long term plan that will lead to a significant and sustained increase in walking, establishing it in the public's

mind as a 'normal' mode of travel, especially for short trips, and as a major participation activity for all ages. ECC has taken account of current UK policy, data on walking levels within Essex and best practice from around the world.

- 4.8 The strategy proposes a framework to -
- Increase walking which recognises its importance as a mode of travel for short trips
 - Create better and safer street for pedestrians
 - Enhance existing walking networks
 - Design in (prioritise) walking infrastructure for new housing
 - Bid to Government for funding – Access2 (Behaviour change and LCWIP)
- 4.9 The Borough Council has supported walking for many years through a variety of measures and initiatives including through the Colchester Travel Plan club which promotes walking to its members.
- 4.10 The Borough Council are currently working with ECC on the Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans (LCWIP) and Colchester is a priority for ECC. The LCWIP is a Department for Transport initiative and encourages Local Transport Authorities to look at how walking can be increased in urban areas and suggests infrastructure improvements which will meet these aims.
- 4.11 Colchester has some of the highest level of housing and economic growth in the county. Continued traffic growth will add pressure to the road network which is congested at certain times of the day in certain locations. There is also a significant air quality problem in the town centre with pollutants from vehicles being a significant issue.
- 4.12 Traffic congestion and air pollution is a key challenge identified through CBC's Climate Change Risk assessment. Our Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2015-2020 commits to identifying opportunities to deliver sustainable travel. The Walking strategy contributes to addressing both of these issues.
- 4.13 It is interesting to note that for every £1 spent on walking and cycling, £13 of benefits are returned to the economy (DfT 2015); 9 in 10 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) say walking and cycling creates vibrant areas and 83% say it attracts more customers.

5.0 Proposal

- 5.1 It is proposed that Colchester Borough Council broadly welcomes the strategy but makes suggestions to improve the strategy. In summary these are:
- There is a lack of reference to the Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) which provides a local Essex context. The priorities within this JHWS (2018-2022) include physical inactivity as a key priority. This should ideally be referenced in Objective 4 'enabling physical activity and walking for health' on p38
 - There is also a lack of emphasis on air pollution and the health impact of this. Much research had been carried out in terms of impact on existing walkers as well as the potential to reduce air pollution by shifting short car journeys to walking.

These issues should be individually addressed and included in the Strategy.

- Decision makers need to have sufficient powers to promote schemes which prioritise walking away from private cars in urban regeneration schemes as well as new developments.
- Increased funding is essential and will need to include revenue funding for promotion work.
- Colchester is well placed to help deliver growth in walking with a number of initiatives already in place and experience in recent years.
- Improved and early engagement with the local community is essential if the strategy is to succeed. Colchester Travel Plan Club, Walk Colchester, local voluntary sector and Local Development Pilot team (LDP) and other health promoters should be engaged in the programme to help deliver initiatives.
- Continue the partnership working with a range of major organisations in Colchester. Private sector developers need to understand the approach and help deliver new infrastructure which connects their developments to the wider network.
- It is agreed that the coherent routes in new development need to be well designed but improvements to the design, and auditing of existing routes is also required.

5.2 Detailed comments regarding the document are set out in Appendix A.

6. Strategic Plan References

6.1 This response aligns with the Borough's Strategic plan 2018- 2021 -

- **Growth** - Help make sure Colchester is a welcoming place for all residents and visitors Ensure residents benefit from Colchester's economic growth with skills, jobs and improving infrastructure
- **Responsibility** - Create new routes for walking or cycling and work with partners to make the borough more pedestrian-friendly
- **Opportunity** - Promote initiatives to help residents live healthier lives
- **Wellbeing** - Help residents adopt healthier lifestyles by enabling the provision of excellent leisure facilities and beautiful green spaces, countryside and beaches.

7. Standard References

7.1 This is a response to a consultation by Essex County Council. There are no particular references to the consultation, publicity considerations, financial, equality, diversity and human rights, community safety, health and safety or risk management implications.

8. Background Papers

Appendix A – Colchester Borough Council's detailed response to the ECC Walking Strategy

Appendix A – Colchester Borough Council's detailed response to the Essex Walking Strategy

1. Monitoring - suggest adding in 'working with District/Borough authorities, developers and new communities to assess walkable neighbourhoods in new and proposed developments using Building for Life criteria' (3rd edition developed by Cabe in 2015) which includes measures on Connections, Public Transport, Creating well-defined Streets and Spaces, Easy to Find your way around, Streets for All as well as seven other design factors. Incorporate the Building for Life assessment into one of the ten actions. See:
https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/Building%20for%20Life%2012_0.pdf
2. Draft action plan – 'Better street and Corridors' and '10 minute walkable neighbourhoods' needs better explanation within the body of the document.
3. The importance of placemaking and quality public realm needs to be included, along with better urban environment. If people enjoy the walk, feel safe, have places to stop along the route with opportunities for social interaction, they will be more likely to walk. The more attractive walking routes are away from traffic and air pollution as well as having quality visual interest available e.g. shop fronts to browse, artwork or natural environment along the route.
4. Need to emphasise the importance of wayfinding in the report. Wayfinding can 'market' a route by advertising to car users that there is a suitable walking route available to them, thereby increasing the number of people walking. Wayfinding can also give confidence to those already walking the route. Innovative wayfinding can give routes 'identity' and be a pleasant feature of the walk.
5. Need to ensure developers provide quality walking links within their developments and to link to the surrounding attractions. ECC Development Management need to ensure these links are a requirement of development and ensure suitable S106 contributions are forthcoming to make up any shortfall in the routes.
6. Consideration is needed of the quality of the existing walking environment. Issues like poorly maintained surfaces, winter gritting schedules, poor distinction between shared and non-shared paths, overhanging bushes and a commitment to dealing with parked cars blocking routes could all deter walking and a commitment to deal with these issues should be included in the Strategy.
7. Further clarity is required in respect of the relevance of the DfT statistic on p 21 , 2nd paragraph.
8. Reference is made to Manual for Streets 2. Has this guidance been adopted by ECC? The guidance cannot be found on the DfT web site.

