

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Date:	31 October 2022
	Cabinet		9 November 2022
Subject:	Green Travel Plan		
Report Of:	Jon McGinty, Managing Director.		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Jon Burke – Climate Change and Decarbonisation Lead		
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Appendices:	1. Mobilityways Scoping Report		

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with oversight of the Gloucester City Council Green Travel Plan.
- 1.2 Please note that the Green Travel Plan pertains to Gloucester City Council employees. Work on wider surface transport emissions, both corporate and private, will form part of the forthcoming Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the information in the report and make any recommendations to Cabinet.
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that the recommendations set out in paragraph 7 of this report be adopted.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Gloucester City Council declared a climate emergency on 11 July 2019, committing to net zero emissions across its own operations by 2030, and carbon neutrality within the broader district by 2050. The latter of these

commitments was brought forward to 2045 with the approval of Gloucester City Full Council on 23 September 2021.

- 3.2 While assistance for the delivery of the Gloucester City Council Climate Change Strategy and Action is currently being prepared for tender, officers are nevertheless aware that this document should not act as a constraint on decarbonisation measures in the interim. To this end, the Managing Director of Gloucester City Council requested that the Climate Change and Decarbonisation Lead continue the work – delayed by the coronavirus pandemic – of their predecessor to deliver a Green Travel Plan for City Council Officers.
- 3.3 The key aim behind the Travel Survey was to obtain data on the commuting habits and preferences of Gloucester City Council employees, to ensure that the City Council is on-track to meet its net zero ambitions in this area. The key guide is compliance with the provisions of the 6th Carbon Budget, adjusted for 2030 net zero emissions, as per the City Council's corporate target, rather than the U.K Government's 2050 target. This means, as a minimum, achieving a 17% reduction in miles n by car commuting employees by 2030, and fully electrified/zero tailpipe emission motor vehicles operated by those who continue to need commute to motor vehicle by 2030.
- 3.3 In partnership with Active Businesses Gloucestershire and surface transport emissions analysts Mobilityways – a Gloucester City Council Travel Survey was prepared for officers with the aim of capturing rich data about their commuting patterns.
- 3.4 The Travel Survey was circulated to Gloucester City Council officers on 28 June and remained open until 31 August. Reminders were sent to staff via e-mail on 01.07.22, 08.07.22, and 29.07.22, and officers were also informed by the Managing Director and Climate Change and Decarbonisation Lead at several staff meetings.
- 3.5 Of 228 recipients, there was a response rate to the survey of 59% (135), which is regarded by Mobilityways as 'approaching best in class', with a margin of error of circa 7%. The survey was opened by 82% of recipients.
- 3.6 It should be noted that since the Green Travel Survey was conducted during the summer months, this may have impacted survey responses to some extent. Consideration should therefore be give to conducting future annual surveys (if adopted - see 7.8) on a rolling seasonal basis, to adjust for weather-related responses, in order to provide richer data.

4.0 Travel Survey Results

Overview

- 4.1 City Council employees have an average one-way commuter distance of 5.95 miles – the UK average of roughly 10 miles. The average travel to site days is 1.8 days –the UK average is 3.5 days.

- 4.2 62% of employees frequently work from home, 27% of whom work from home 5 days per week and 25% work from home 3 days per week. As there are cash costs associated with home working in terms of energy usage - though these are offset partially or wholly by savings from travel - increased domestic energy costs may alter these preferences, which the flexibility of the City Council's 'agile working' policy allows.
- 4.3 When not working from home, 67% of employees worked at Shire Hall (Westgate St). We can reasonably conclude that a similar number will have transferred to the new Eastgate office. A further 7% of employees work at City Museum (Brunswick St); 7% work at Guildhall (Eastgate St); and 13% travel to 'Other' locations, including: Eastern Avenue Depot, The Gateway, Robinswood Hill Country Park and Cathedral Quarter.
- 4.4 When not working from home, 50% of employees travel alone, in a fossil fuel motor vehicle, despite only 3% of City Council employees being registered Blue Badge-holders. An additional 14% of employees routinely walk/run to site; and 14% of employees use public transport to get to site (7% bus, 7% train).

Reasons for commuting choices

- 4.5 64% of Gloucester City Council employees choose their current mode of travel for convenience; 46% for time savings; 26% for cost reasons; 19% for the school run; 18% for environmental reasons; 11% for health reasons; 10% for business travel purposes; 10% choose their current mode of travel due to ease, cost and availability of car parking; and 21% choose their current mode of travel as they believe they have no other option.
- 4.6 Of the generalised reasons for commuting choices, focusing on convenience (64%), time (46%), and cost (26%) have the greatest potential for emissions reductions.

Lower emission alternatives of private motor vehicles

- 4.7 14% of employees are regularly walking/running to site; **11% of those who don't walk/run would consider walking/running as an alternative**. 17% of employees live within a 30-minute walking distance, making walking a viable alternative.
- 4.8 17% of employees could be encouraged to walk all/part of their journey by access to reliable public transport connections; 9% of employees could be encouraged by improved lighting/security; 7% of employees could be encouraged by flexible working hours; and 6% of employees could be encouraged by storage lockers and improved shower and changing facilities.
- 4.8 5% of employees are regularly cycling to site; **20% of those that don't cycle would consider cycling as an alternative**; 57% of employees live within a 30-minute cycle distance, making cycling a viable alternative.

- 4.9 20% of employees could be encouraged to cycle if secure and accessible bike parking was available; 20% of employees could be encouraged with shower & changing facilities on site; 19% of employees could be encouraged if safer routes and roads were available; 17% of employees could be encouraged with discounts/loans on cycle equipment; 12% of employees could be encouraged with access to bike/E-Bike hire; and 10% of employees could be encouraged with mileage rewards/expense claims for travelling by bike.
- 4.10 14% of employees currently take public transport to site (7% bus, 7% train). **23% of those who don't take the bus would consider taking the bus as an alternative**; 6% of those who don't take the train would consider taking the train; and 29% of employees could use the Park and Ride services.
- 4.11 56% of employees have viable Public Transport options available to them, within a x2 driving factor (that is, an alternative that takes twice as long as driving). 88% of employees have a Public Transport option available to them within a x4 driving factor. 30% of employees could be encouraged if more frequent & reliable services were accessible.

5.0 Decarbonisation effects of home working

- 5.1 4% of Gloucester City Council employees work from home permanently; 27% of employees regularly work from home 5 days a week; 25% of employees regularly work from home 3 days a week; 17% of employees regularly work from home 4 days a week; and 14% of employees do not work from home at any time.
- 5.2 26% of employees would like to be regularly working from home this time next year. 31% would consider doing so as an alternative to their current mode of travel.
- 5.3 73% of employees agree that there are no barriers to working from home as a Gloucester City Council employee. However, 24% of employees believe that there are barriers, including: 32% are unable to work from home, due to providing face-to-face or frontline services; 24% believe their equipment is unsatisfactory for home working; and 7% are concerned about the cost of working from home; and 5% responded with management or peer pressure as their main barrier. For some employees, the barrier was self-imposed: 10% prefer working from the office.

6.0 Conclusions

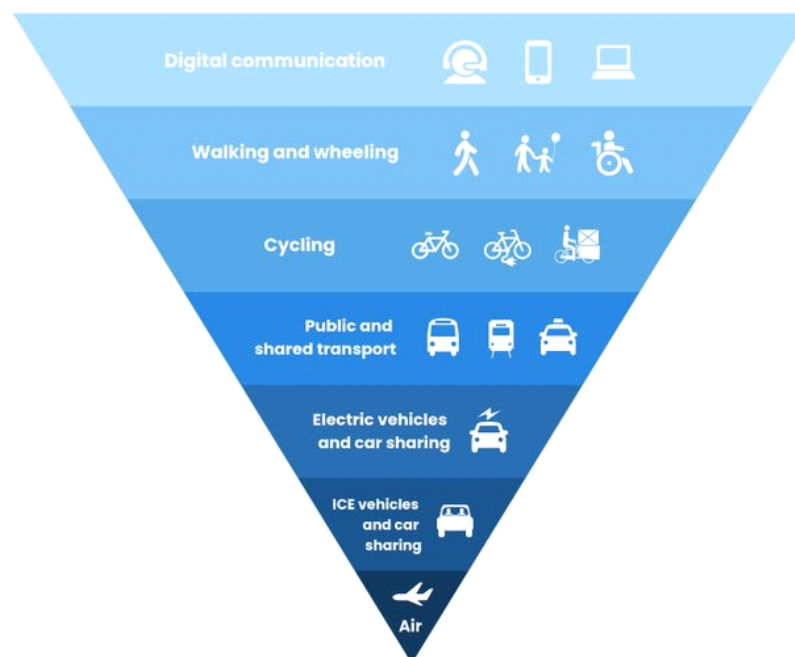
- 6.1 The home working culture precipitated by the coronavirus pandemic has led to significant reductions in the carbon intensity of the per capita commuting emissions of Gloucester City Council employees. The City Council's average annual employee commuting emissions currently stand at 185kg of CO2 equivalent, against a national Average Emissions Level Opportunity (ACELO) of 281kg.

- 6.2 The ACELO is a measurement of what per capita emissions from commuting could be achieved if all employees both travelled to the office five days per week and utilised the lowest carbon method of commuting available for their specific circumstances. Gloucester City Council's ACELO is 311kg per annum. Given the likelihood that at least half of employees would drive to the office in a fossil fuel motor vehicle if mandatory office working were implemented, the City Council could expect per capita emissions to be significantly higher than 311kg per annum if everybody were to return to the office five days per week, widening the gap even further from current emissions.
- 6.3 However, while working from home has led to a significant reduction in the carbon footprint of the City Council's employees, this should not be viewed as an opportunity to avoid policy measures that seek to achieve additional emissions reductions in this area. The further the Council reduces emissions across one of its functions, the more carbon 'headroom' there will be to allow higher than target emissions in other 'hard to abate' areas, if necessary.
- 6.4 When not working from home, 50% of employees travel alone, in a fossil fuel motor vehicle, despite only 3% of City Council employees being registered Blue Badge-holders. This indicates a high degree of discretionary driving. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that 64% of Gloucester City Council employees choose their mode of transport based on convenience, the most significant influencing factor by a margin of circa 50%.
- 6.5 Reducing motor vehicle use and eliminating internal combustion engine vehicles amongst those employees who continue to drive for non-discretionary reasons (isolated domestic location, Blue Badge-holder etc) should therefore be high priority.
- 6.6 While reducing motor vehicle tailpipe emission and miles driven (even from electric vehicles, which still produce emissions from tyre, road, and brake wear, as well as emissions from grid electricity) has proven particularly challenging at both the sectoral and national level (with surface transport being the single largest sectoral contributor to U.K terrestrial emissions, and the only major component of our emissions that have grown in recent decades), the data acquired by the Travel Survey indicates significant potential for reductions from Council employees.
- 6.7 Postcode data provided by the Council allowed Mobilityways to assess the potential for alternative means of commuting to the motor vehicle by City Council employees and found that 94% of employees have at least one sustainable travel alternative to the motor vehicle available to them. This extended to four sustainable travel alternatives for 65% of employees.
- 6.8 11% of those who don't walk/run would consider walking/running as an alternative; 20% of those that don't cycle would consider doing so; 23% of those who don't take the bus would consider taking the bus; 6% of those who don't take the train would consider taking the train; and 29% of employees could use the Park and Ride services. This indicates significant levels of willingness amongst staff to use lower carbon alternative transport modes.

- 6.9 However, it should be noted that there is limited evidence for ‘modal shift’ to lower carbon forms of transport in the absence of demand-side policy to actively discourage private motor vehicle journeys. This is reflected in the recent work of Kuss and Nicholas in *A Dozen Effective Interventions to Reduce Car Use in European Cities*, which concluded that the top three approaches, by a wide margin, were all ‘sticks’, rather than ‘carrots’: Congestion Charging, Parking and Traffic Control, and Limited Traffic Zones.
- 6.10 The following recommendations therefore reflect the need to utilise both supply-side and demand-side policies to achieve meaningful reductions in surface transport emissions.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 Based on the Gloucester City Travel Survey results, and wider literature on reducing surface transport emissions, the following next steps are recommended:
- 7.2 Gloucester City Council should adopt and embed the Energy Saving Trust’s transport decarbonisation hierarchy in its approach to transport decarbonisation. The inverted pyramid shows, in descending order, what the Council’s preferences ought to be when developing policy:



- 7.3 Although this travel plan largely pertains to commuting, the Council should also adopt this hierarchy for the purposes of meetings, training, conferences etc. There should be an outright prohibition on aviation for domestic travel by City Council employees for work purposes.

- 7.4 The informal home working policy employed since the coronavirus pandemic has led to a substantial reduction in per capita emissions of Gloucester City Council's employees. The most conservative estimate, which assumes that pre-pandemic, every Council employee was taking the most carbon efficient mode of transport, is a 41% reduction in emissions in little over two years, while maintaining average weekly workplace attendance of almost two days per week.
- 7.5 To secure and extend these carbon savings, Gloucester City Council should maintain its successful 'agile working' policy, which has been instrumental in reducing surface transport emissions from commuting.
- 7.6 Since 24% of Gloucester City Council employees believe unsatisfactory equipment is a barrier to working from home, all service managers should ensure that their teams have appropriate I.T hardware/software and communications equipment to undertake their role remotely when necessary.
- 7.7 The City Council should emphasise the carbon savings achieved by its flexible approach to home working as part of its recruitment process.
- 7.8 The City Council should conduct an annual travel survey, to assess the impact of policy changes, monitor the changing travel preferences of staff, and measure per capita commuting emissions.
- 7.9 All existing and new employees should receive a travel plan, noting their various options for travel to and from Council sites. This is currently being offered pro-bono as part of the Mobilityways package funded by Active Businesses Gloucestershire.
- 7.10 To make low carbon transport alternatives to the motor vehicle relatively more attractive, and to ensure that the price of driving more accurately reflects its social and environmental costs, the parking permit scheme should be reviewed to ensure that the City Council's approach to staff parking incentivises reductions in staff driving in a fair and managed way.
- 7.11 Although the City Council has taken steps to eliminate the need for most staff to require a motor vehicle for work purposes through the provision of pool cars (full electrification of which is under consideration) and is considering the potential for electric assist bicycles to provide a similar function, the current transport fringe benefits offered to City Council employees are not well-advertised. Some fringe benefits also operate on an informal 'custom and practice' basis because of policies that were never formally adopted by officers. A full review of transport-related benefits should be undertaken to ascertain the financial and administrative scope for widening the existing offer. It is notable, for example, that for those employees living in distant, isolated areas that are poorly served by public transport, the City Council currently offers no salary sacrifice equivalent of the Bike2Work scheme for the purposes of expediting the shift to zero tailpipe emission vehicles, though such schemes exist.

- 7.12 To promote walking/running to those employees who expressed an interest in switching to this mode of transport, the City Council should explore with the Highways Authority (Gloucestershire County Council) the mapping of safe, low-pollution walking routes from each of the City's wards. The City Council should also promote, and/or improve shower/changing facilities and storage lockers at all main Council office sites.
- 7.13 To promote cycling to those employees who expressed an interest in switching to this mode of transport, the City Council should introduce/improve on-site facilities to encourage active travel (as per recommendation 7.7); promote seasonal active travel campaigns; and engage with local cycle equipment suppliers to gauge the potential for discounts for City Council employees. Over the longer term, and as part of the Council's wider decarbonisation work, provision of segregated cycling infrastructure within the City should be actively explored with the Highways Authority (Gloucestershire County Council), as such infrastructure is known to increase cycling engagement; particularly amongst novice and nervous cyclists.
- 7.14 To promote public transport to those employees who expressed an interest in switching to this mode of transport, the Council should use proposed individual travel plans to actively promote local public transport routes and ensure employees are made aware of the lowest cost ways of using public transport. In addition, the Head of Policy and Resources should explore the costs of formalising and extending the historic bus assistance scheme, which rebates 10% of the cost of public transport. This scheme, which has the potential to increase uptake of relatively low carbon public transport, has never been formally adopted but is currently utilised by two officers.
- 7.15 10% of Gloucester City Council employees would consider car sharing. If adopted widely, car sharing could reduce both cash costs of commuting and greenhouse gas emissions. Car-sharing via an established platform, such as Liftshare, should be actively promoted to City Council employees. Adoption could be incentivised by reducing the costs of parking for those travelling in groups.

8.0 Environmental Implications

- 8.1 The principal goal of the Green Travel Plan is to provide a route map for reducing commuting emissions in line with the commitments of the Gloucester City Council Climate Emergency Declaration. As such, it is anticipated that the recommendations arising from the Green Travel Plan will assist in reducing surface transport emissions and improved air quality.

9.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 9.1 Consideration was given to whether a staff travel survey conducted in early 2020 should be used as the basis of a draft Green Travel Plan.
- 9.2 While comprehensive, the earlier survey lacked key data such as the demographics and home postcodes of GCC officers, which constrained the

contribution it could make to the recommendations of a Green Travel Plan. Further, as the survey was conducted close to the commencement of the Coronavirus Pandemic in 2020, it was agreed that subsequent changes to GCC officers' commuting patterns would potentially produce radically different responses in 2022. Based on these considerations, it was concluded that a new survey was required.

10.0 Financial Implications

- 10.1 As the software – Mobilityways – used to distribute and analyse the survey data was provided free-of-charge via Active Businesses Gloucester, there were no financial implications to participation.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report).

11.0 Legal Implications

- 11.1 As the Travel Survey was being conducted with the support of an external third-party organisation (Mobilityways), a Data Protection Impact Assessment was undertaken to ensure GDPR compliance.

(One Legal has been consulted in the preparation of this report).

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

- 12.1 No PIA was required to conduct the Travel Survey, but it is anticipated that one would be undertaken in respect of the Green Travel Plan. To this end, a broad range of demographic questions were included in the Travel Survey to ensure that policy recommendations arising from the Green Travel Plan are consistent with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

- 13.1 None anticipated.

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

- 14.1 None anticipated in respect of the Travel Survey, but in the event of policy recommendations aimed at reducing the Council's emission in-line with its decarbonisation commitment of Net Zero emissions by 2030 being adopted, there may be contractual and/or 'custom and practice' concerns by trade unions. Cabinet should therefore carefully consider what level of consultation it would like to see undertaken with trade unions ahead of the publication – internal or otherwise – of the Green Travel Plan.