

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PLANNING)
TO THE EXECUTIVE
3 FEBRUARY 2006

The Vale Green Travel Plan

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 The Council is committed to the development of a Green Travel Plan (GTP) for its staff and elected Members which embraces travelling thoughtfully to, from and whilst at work. In doing so, the Council acknowledges the frequently held view that the success of a Green Travel Plan depends on its ownership by staff.
- 1.2 The first Vale GTP, developed in 2004/05, received only limited support from staff and unions. Accordingly, in listening to the comments made on the original Plan, the Council now aims to take forward a new GTP which contains a range of more moderate measures which would be easier to implement; and to proceed at a more measured pace whilst continuing to signal the Council's commitment to green travel.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to up-date Members on the development of the revised GTP and seek the endorsement of the Executive on the measures proposed in phase 1 of the plan, which will allow this phase to be developed through to implementation.
- 1.4 The Contact Officer for this report is Gordon Willcox, Section Head (Transportation) telephone 01235 540390

2.0 Recommendations

That the Executive :

- 2.1 *Endorse the measures for phase 1 of the Vale's Green Travel Plan as set out in appendix C of this report, whilst noting that this project is not a Council Priority, and requests that the Assistant Director (Planning) commence the detailed planning of the individual measures within phase 1 of the Plan, subject to budgetary constraints and the availability of staff resources.*
- 2.2 *Agree that the Assistant Director (Planning) in consultation with the Executive Member responsible for the Vale's new Green Travel Plan, at the appropriate time, determine the launch date for the Plan, and advise the Executive accordingly.*
- 2.3 *Expressly for the purpose of Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, agree that the necessary deemed consent be sought for the provision of new cycle parking adjacent to The Abbey House, Abingdon.*
- 2.4 *Request that the Chief Executive undertake a review of the Council's existing Flexible Working Arrangements Policy*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

- 3.1 This report supports the Council's Vision Strands A, D and G.
- 3.2 This report supports the Council's sustainable transport strategy and policies.

4.0 **Background**

- 4.1 In September 2003 work started on researching and developing a Vale Green Travel Plan for staff and Members. A Travel Survey was conducted which was supported by 82% of staff. The main headlines of the survey showed that 76% of staff travel to work by car, whilst 20% either walk or cycle; only 2% travel by public transport.
- 4.2 The Council has a Local performance Indicator (LPI/TR1) measuring the percentage of staff, working at Abbey House, commuting alone by car. The target for this LPI is a reduction of 5% by 2006/07.
- 4.3 The Aims and Objectives of the GTP were agreed in February 2004 by the Staff Consultative Advisory Group, and it will be important to ensure that any proposed measures in a new GTP contributes towards the agreed Aims and Objectives. Members may wish to remind themselves of the Aims and Objectives of the GTP and they are therefore attached to this report as Appendix A.
- 4.4 In 2004 a draft GTP was developed which proposed a range of measures, over four implementation phases. In February 2005 staff were consulted on the draft Plan. Whilst there was support in principle for a GTP, staff reaction to the measures in the proposed GTP was largely negative, indeed only 25% of staff responded. The principal reason for its rejection was founded in the GTP's references to staff car parking and many comments expressing strong feelings were returned with the questionnaires.
- 4.5 In response to the question "Are there any measures not currently in the Plan, which we may have forgotten, which if introduced would encourage you to change your travel habits", the most popular measure was to increase the ability for home working, with the Council providing good IT links between home and office. The Council has an existing Flexible Working Arrangements Policy (October 2001), which includes the issue of home working, however, in the light of this report, the Executive may wish to request that a review of the policy be undertaken.
- 4.6 Progress with the introduction of a GTP and its acceptance was also likely to have been affected by a number of other issues which have been of concern to staff, such as:
- Review of pay and grading
 - Senior management restructuring
 - Moving staff parking from Abbey House to the Charter multi-storey
 - Withdrawing car leasing.
 - Review of essential and mileage allowances

and against this background, Vale staff have not enthusiastically embraced the concept of green travel which will impact on their choice of travel mode. As a result

progress with the GTP faltered to some extent. A summary of the consultation feed back is attached as Appendix B.

5.0 **The Way Forward**

- 5.1 Officers understand that Members wish to press on with implementing a GTP for the Vale but acknowledge some of the concerns raised by staff and Unions following the consultation on the draft GTP in February 2005. However, now would seem to be an appropriate time to move forward with the Plan given the Council's new corporate aim to create a cleaner, greener, safer and healthier community and environment.
- 5.2 Officers would suggest that the way forward is to proceed with a new revised GTP at a moderate pace, bringing forward, in a new phase 1, those measures which are less contentious to staff and which are relatively easy to implement. In doing so, the Council is

signalling its commitment to green travel, and providing a platform for implementation of more difficult measures in future phases.

5.3 Accordingly a new GTP phase 1 needs to be developed and implemented, which meets the following criteria:

- a) The individual measures must contribute to meeting the agreed Aims and Objectives of the GTP.
- b) The implementation and future management of the GTP must not adversely impact on current service commitments.
- c) The cost of implementation of the GTP must not exceed the revenue budget of £10,000.
- d) The overall revenue effect of the GTP measures should be aimed at being cost neutral.
- e) The cost of Phase 1 measures must not exceed the capital budget of £30,000.
- f) Account should be taken of the staff consultation feedback, particularly where strong opposition has been shown.

6.0 **Developing a New GTP**

6.1 Appendix C provides an assessment of the measures which could be taken forward as phase 1 of the new GTP. The assessment considers why and how the measures could be developed, the staff and financial resources required, and the draft GTP consultation feedback.

6.2 Revenue Costs:

Start-up: There is a revenue budget of £10,000 for the implementation of the GTP. The assessment shows that this will be sufficient for all of the measures in phase 1. This does not include the cost of staff time (internal recharges). Officers have prepared a Service and Budget Change Form, for Members consideration, to carry £9,000 of this budget forward into 2006/07.

On-going: The assessments show that the measures in a new phase 1 will require annual expenditure in the order of £2,000. This does not include staff time (internal recharges). The main contributors to these on-going costs are: the subsidy to bus travel and the need to guarantee staff who participate in car sharing, free travel home in the event of an emergency. There is currently no on-going revenue budget to support a GTP and accordingly officers have prepared a 2006/07 Service and Budget Change Form, for Members' consideration. Clearly it will be with the introduction of the measures in later phases (less popular), when the overall GTP will become cost neutral.

6.3 Capital Costs:

Two of the proposed measures, new cycle racks and staff lockers, will require capital expenditure. No detailed costings have yet been prepared, but it is envisaged that both schemes can be delivered within the current budget provision of £30,000. Officers have prepared a budget Capital Appraisal Form for Members consideration, to carry this budget forward into 2006/07.

7.0 **Implementation Programme**

7.1 Appendix D gives an indication of an implementation programme for the new phase 1 measures.

7.2 The programme suggests that the GTP commences with the launch of the web site and that the following measures are in place for this launch:

- Bus timetable information.
- Walking and cycling maps.

- New cycle mileage allowance.
- Free cycle loans.
- Subsidised bus passes.
- Abingdon/Oxford business travel by bus.

A range of other measures need to be progressed, and implemented as soon as possible to ensure the timely completion of phase 1:

- Provision of staff lockers.
- Provision of secure cycle parking.
- Promoting the use of the Council cycles.
- Producing a good practice guide for managing business journeys.

7.3 The promotion of a car share club was well supported during the draft GTP consultation. It is a measure which is always high on the list in any GTP guidance, and with the inclusion of preferential parking, it might well be seen by staff as being a very positive initiative. Setting up the club, using an IT website based system, may take a little time; it is therefore proposed that work on developing a car share club start immediately, with implementation as soon as possible, probably towards the end of phase 1.

7.4 Discussions have taken place with the Council's Head of Communications to consider how to best advertise and launch the new GTP. Whilst the Council will wish to widely publicise its commitment to green travel to demonstrate that it will lead by example, it is felt that initially, promotion should be focused only on staff and Members. An up-date newsletter has already been provided and this will be supported by additional information leading up to the formal launch.

7.5 The actual form of the launch will need to be carefully considered but clearly it will be centred around the access of the travel plan site on the Council's Intranet, and clearly, a number of key measures will need to be in place at that time. It will be important for Members to provide a presence during the launch to raise the profile of and demonstrate their commitment to the project.

7.6 Subject to the Executive's endorsement of these proposals, having regard for the amount of preparation work which needs to be undertaken, and the competing priorities of the Council's Service Plan; realistically, the launch date the Vale's Green Travel Plan appears to be early in the new financial year (2006/07). A specific date will become clearer once detailed discussions are held with key sections such as ICT and the Executive will be informed once a date is known.

8.0 **Consultation with Unions**

8.1 A meeting chaired by Councillor Tessa Ward was held on the 12 December 2005 with UNISON and GMB to discuss the proposed GTP. Both unions have reaffirmed their commitment to green travel and confirmed "in principle" their support for the measures contained in phase 1 of the proposed new Plan.

8.2 Furthermore, the unions put forward the following additional ideas, requesting that they be considered as the Plan, as a whole, develops:

- Relocation subsidy for all members of staff, not just new staff.
- Road Safety Awareness, and training for cyclists.
- Loan of bicycles for a trial period, prior to considering a purchase.

8.3 Further detailed discussions will be held with both unions to ensure that they are engaged in the development of the individual measures and the Council supports the frequently held view that *"the success of a Green Travel Plan depends on its ownership by staff"*.

9.0 **Future Measures**

9.1 The Council will need to consider a range of more difficult, and potentially less palatable measures in future phases, bearing in mind that it will be these particular measures which will produce the most significant impact on staff and member travel habits. These measures will include:

- Reviewing staff and member parking.
- Introducing member parking fees.
- Introducing staff parking fees.
- Removing free parking.

9.2 Clearly, some of these measures will have a wider impact for the Council than just for green travel, eg. they are likely to also contribute to raising general income. Members will need to consider how far they wish to go with these measures, and much may depend on the success or otherwise of phase 1 of the Plan.

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Assistant Director (Planning)

TIM SADLER
Strategic Director

Background Papers:

- Results from the Vale (staff and Member) travel survey.
- GTP Consultation Document (giving details of original Plan)
- Letter dated 20 December 2005 from UNISON, supporting the new Plan.