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Title	Sustainable Transport in Colchester		☎ 282625
Wards affected	All Wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a background to current sustainable transport initiatives, programmes and projects in Colchester.

2. Action Required

- 2.1 The Panel notes the report and subsequent discussion.
- 2.2 The Panel to recommend to Cabinet what further steps could be taken to encourage the use of sustainable transport in Colchester Borough.

3. Reason for Review

- 3.1 At the Policy and Public Initiatives Panel meeting in September 2018, members of the public, as part of an engagement session, submitted ideas for the Panel's work programme. Key themes from the engagement session included provision of cycling, public transport and electric vehicle charging. The Panel recommended, and Cabinet subsequently approved, that an item on Sustainable Transport would be included on the Panel's Work Programme.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 While transport enables mobility, its use has an impact on the environment, lifestyles, and individual and the wider populations health. In particular, single occupancy vehicle transportation increases pollution and congestion while reducing physical activity. However, it is often perceived as convenient and fast, and often as the only reasonable option.
- 4.2 Increasing the use of sustainable travel can help tackle climate change by reducing reliance on the car and thus cutting carbon emissions and reducing congestion. It will also influence health, by improving air quality and most sustainable modes also include physical activity.
- 4.3 One of the challenges is therefore to better understand the factors and reasons behind why people choose to use sustainable transport, and how we provide for and promote sustainable transport as a suitable and viable option for journeys within, to and from Colchester.
- 4.4 Sustainable transport is used to describe all forms of transport which minimise emissions of carbon dioxide and pollutants. The term Sustainable Transport is used as a catch all term to include approaches and topics such as:

- reducing the need to travel;
- reducing car dependence and use;
- greater reliance on cycling, walking and other 'active travel modes';
- promotion and uptake of alternatives such as car sharing, public transport; and
- cleaner transport and new technologies such as electric vehicles.

Transport in Colchester

- 4.5 In order to understand how we promote and provide sustainable transport options and their use, it is important to understand the challenges facing Colchester with regard to transport. The sections below describe some of the opportunities and challenges to providing and encouraging use of different forms of sustainable transport in Colchester. It also summarises some current projects underway to encourage use of sustainable modes of travel.

Air Quality

- 4.6 The main source of air pollution in the Borough is road traffic emissions from major roads, notably the A12, A133, A134, A1232, Brook Street and Mersea Road. Colchester Borough Council has three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's). These are due to emissions from road traffic causing exceedances of Nitrogen Dioxide concentrations at relevant exposure. A report containing further information on Air Quality in Colchester was considered by this Panel in November 2018.
- 4.7 The [Colchester Borough Council Air Quality Action Plan 2016-2021](#) outlines the Borough Councils commitment to reducing the exposure of people in Colchester to poor air quality in order to improve health. It identifies that road transport emissions represent the main sector that the Air Quality Action Plan can exert influence. Priorities include tackling emissions from buses, promoting sustainable travel and focus on exploiting new technology to create a change.

Traffic flows and Congestion

- 4.8 Traffic data is available from the Department for Transport for the strategic and inter-urban road network throughout the UK. The data for Colchester (2017) shows that journey time reliability (how well the traffic flows in peak periods compared to 'free flow' conditions) and traffic delay on urban routes is worst to the east of Colchester including the A134 Colne Causeway, the A1232, and the A133.
- 4.9 For inter-urban routes, the worst reliability and delay is recorded on the routes to the east including the A133. The A12 also experiences poor journey time reliability in peak periods. Encouraging use of sustainable modes of transport will help to reduce congestion and thereby improve air quality.

Transport Patterns

- 4.10 Colchester has a high self-containment rate. Data from the 2011 Census shows that 69% of people live and work within Colchester borough. However, the data showed that the car dominates the mode of transport to work:
- Over 60% of all journey to work trips in the Borough are made by car, as either drivers or passengers;

- 81% of people commuting into Colchester (from external areas) for work travel by car or van;
- 8% of work trips across the borough are made by train; 6% by bus; 4% by bicycle; and 12% on foot;
- 40% of all journey to works trips made by car are under 5km.

4.11 Of those people living and working within Colchester Borough:

- 25% commute on foot;
- 7% of people commute by bicycle.

4.12 Although this data is from the 2011 Census, and only provides us with journey to work data, it provides a good starting point to understand the potential for modal shift. The car continues to be the most popular form of transport to work, although the Census does reveal a rural/urban split in choice of transport with a higher percentage of those in urban areas opting for more sustainable travel to work such as by foot or cycling in comparison to rural areas.

4.13 Many journeys are under 5km and are currently undertaken by car. Some of these journeys could potentially be undertaken by sustainable modes of transport. To achieve this, sustainable modes of travel need to be perceived as, or actually more, convenient than the car.

Active Travel

4.14 Walking remains the cheapest form of transport for all people. Every trip begins and ends with walking. Therefore, walkable communities are key to promoting this mode of travel. Census data reveals that 25% of all work journeys made internally (people living and working within Colchester) are made on foot. Walking is a viable mode of travel for many residents in Colchester and there is potential to further encourage walking as a mode of transport for more trips.

4.15 Similarly, with many journeys to work being under 5km, there is potential for more of these journeys to be undertaken by bicycle. With the development of the right facilities, bikes can potentially meet the real transportation needs for more journeys.

4.16 The wider built environment can play a crucial role in promoting or hindering physical activity. Well designed, accessible streets can encourage people to walk or cycle more as part of their daily routines, leading to a healthier lifestyle. Walking and cycling routes should be continuous and direct. Walking can also be combined with public transport as part of longer journeys.

4.17 The Governments Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) sets out a national policy framework for walking and cycling. At the local level, the [Essex Cycling Strategy](#) (2016) takes a county specific approach which aims to enable, promote and provide cycling in Essex.

4.18 As part of this, a programme of activities has been developed to implement the strategy. Developing coherent networks are key to fulfilling the aims and objectives of the Cycling Strategy. To support this, draft cycle network plans for all areas of Essex have been produced. The [draft Colchester Borough Cycling Action Plan](#), produced in 2018 by Essex County Council, is targeted towards the specific needs of Colchester residents. This has been developed in

discussion with the Borough Council. Further consultation will continue before the Action Plan and potential schemes are finalised.

- 4.19 A number of key recommendations are included in the draft Cycling Action Plan for cycle enhancements in the Borough including:
- Review existing route signage and lighting;
 - Improve maintenance of existing routes;
 - Develop Flagship Routes through feasibility studies to detailed design
 - Provide new and improved cycle parking;
 - Fill obvious gaps in the existing cycle route network.
- 4.20 Essex County Council are also taking part in a Local Cycling and Walking Investment Programme (LCWIP). The aim is to develop further network plans for both walking and cycling, ensuring gaps in the network are filled, and enabling investment decisions to be prioritised.
- 4.21 To ensure residents and visitors are encouraged to walk and cycle more, work will be continued on developing the walking and cycling networks, to ensure that as funding becomes available, schemes can be delivered. It will also be important to ensure that new developments are linked in with the existing walking and cycling network, ensuring that these modes are the most attractive and viable mode for short journeys and walking or cycling becomes part of new residents' daily routines.

Travel Plans, Car Clubs and Ride Sharing

- 4.22 Travel planning, car clubs and car or ride sharing can all provide part of the solution to reducing car use and ownership.
- 4.23 Travel plans are long term management strategies which support sustainable and active travel at both new and existing developments. Travel plans should create a package of measure to encourage sustainable and active travel and establish targets. Travel Plans are already required for most large residential and commercial developments in the Borough. In some cases, a Travel Plan co-ordinator is employed as part of the development to ensure that the take up of opportunities is maximised.
- 4.24 The Colchester Travel Plan Club was formed in 2004 by several local organisations who needed to manage their demand for car parking, and who were concerned about the impact of traffic congestion. They recognised the benefits of working together to tackle these issues through promoting active and sustainable travel to work. Since its formation, the Travel Plan Club has expanded its network of businesses and organisations including Colchester Hospital and the University of Essex, committed to promoting active and sustainable travel. The Travel Plan Club offers experience and expertise, as well as benefits such as public transport discounts and cycle schemes and a range of resources to assist in creating positive travel behaviour change.
- 4.25 Reducing the number of cars on our roads doesn't have to mean stopping driving altogether. There are also a number of ways to keep using cars and reduce car ownership. Digital technology has enabled the development of many different forms of app-based car-sharing and ride-sharing services that provide benefits of car use without the costs and responsibilities of car ownership. Sharing vehicles is a growing trend and provides an opportunity to reduce the number of vehicles owned and reduce congestion.

- 4.26 Bike sharing systems are also offered in some locations. Bike share systems could be particularly useful for tourists arriving in the town by modes other than the car. They can also be useful for commuters arriving at a station such as the Bike & Go scheme operated from a number of stations in the UK including Colchester station. Some companies also offer electric vehicle and electric bike sharing.
- 4.27 A number of car club schemes operate in existing residential areas across the UK. Car clubs work by giving members access to a car on a short-term basis and charging by the hour on the day. The availability of a shared car for trips may encourage residents not to see the purchase of a car (or a second car) as a necessity and use a car club for vehicle trips that may be difficult using public transport. The pricing structure of the car club normally deters the car being used for commuting which would ensure that the car is not unused and unavailable for a large portion of the day. If car clubs are to be introduced in residential areas, early engagement with potential partners and definition of dedicated car club spaces will be essential.

Public Transport

- 4.28 2011 Census data recorded 6% of journeys to work in the Borough are made by bus. This figure is reduced to 3% of journeys to work from rural areas of the Borough.
- 4.29 Buses are an essential form of transport for many people in Colchester. Full utilisation of existing bus services has the potential to remove a large number of car journeys from the network every day. One of the big challenges facing bus transport is road congestion. Road congestion slows down bus speeds and makes it far more difficult to keep reliably to a schedule. Passengers value timely buses and may opt for other forms of transport if they can't rely on buses turning up. Bus priority measures can take various forms including bus lanes, bus gates and bus priority at signals, helping to make bus journeys more reliable.
- 4.30 Bus lanes currently exist in a few areas in Colchester including southbound on North Hill, Middleborough (right turn to North Hill, southbound and north from North Hill), High Street (right turn to Queen Street), North Station Road (south from Essex Hall roundabout), Hythe Hill (eastbound at Maudlyn Street), and Hythe Station Road. However, many bus journeys in Colchester run on un-designated lanes and are therefore affected by congestion and long or unreliable journey times making them less attractive.
- 4.31 Access to public transport such as buses can also be facilitated by providing improvements to infrastructure such as bus stop facilities and good quality pedestrian routes to bus stops. Provision of high-quality travel information and regular bus services is also important. In addition to this, different types of bus services can be investigated to offer more flexibility. For example, demand responsive transport, on-demand or flexible minibuses that take multiple passengers all heading in the same direction, or hopper buses. One such service is ArrivaClick, a Direct Response Travel bus service which means people call the bus to their home or place of work and order/pay on an App. Arriva seeking start-up funding from either S106 or other backers and we understand they might be interested in Colchester.

- 4.32 As with walking and cycling facilities, it is important to ensure that facilities to enable bus services are provided in new developments to encourage sustainable travel habits at an early stage.
- 4.33 Ticketing is also important and multi operator and multi modal tickets can increase bus patronage. In Colchester, products such as the Colchester Borough card allows unlimited bus travel in and around Colchester on First Essex, Arriva Colchester and Hedingham buses. Smart ticketing can also remove a key barrier to the use of public transport by removing the need to pay for the service when boarding.
- 4.34 Park and ride was introduced in Colchester in 2015 providing a 15 minute bus service from the site into the town centre. Bus priority measures exist along the route with stops at Colchester Hospital, Colchester Station, Middleborough and the town centre. The hours of operation have recently been extended, partly to allow commuters working longer hours to use the facility, and new tickets offered to encourage group and family travel. Other measures introduced include bulk ticket discounts for businesses. Opportunities may however exist for further promotion of the Park and Ride service.
- 4.35 The North Essex Rapid Transit Study presents a case for taking forward the planning of a rapid transit system across North Essex. A well-designed system would help meet the transport demand arising from proposed new residential and employment growth across the North Essex districts. In particular, rapid transit will be able to provide a quality east-west corridor across north Essex while connecting the proposed garden communities to the existing centres including Colchester. In so doing, rapid transit will contribute to the mitigation of congestion and environmental problems.

Low Emission Vehicles

- 4.36 A ban on the sale of diesel and petrol vehicles is expected to come into force in 2040, so it is important to ensure drivers can easily switch and make use of alternative fuel vehicles. The support and use of electric vehicles in residential developments provides a number of benefits and therefore the provision of electric charging points within garages or on dedicated off-street parking is being encouraged. Charging vehicles at home is often the most convenient and cost-effective way to recharge an electric vehicle. The emerging Local Plan will require the provision of charging points on new residential, commercial developments and car parks. This will help promote the uptake of ultra-low emission vehicles and will create infrastructure essential for the future.
- 4.37 The Council also supports the introduction of electric vehicle charging points in Council managed car parks but recognises that this is a rapidly changing market. To trial the introduction of charging points in the Borough, the installation of an electric charging point at Priory Street car park is being investigated. This site was chosen due to its mix of residential and business users. The provision of the electricity supply is currently being pursued.

Summary

- 4.38 There are many opportunities to promote a range of modes of sustainable and active transport. Some of these options have been outlined above. More may arise from discussion. It is important that the options and solutions chosen

allow residents, employees and visitors to have a choice of viable alternatives to the private car for their journeys.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 5.1 This report sets out opportunities to promote sustainable transport. An Equality Impact Assessment would be completed on any individual sustainable transport infrastructure schemes.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 Supporting improvements to sustainable transport has been identified as a priority in the [Strategic Plan 2018-21](#)

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Consultation would be undertaken on individual sustainable transport schemes as necessary.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 These actions have a positive effect on health by improving sustainable transport in Colchester.

9. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 Improvements to sustainable transport will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the Boroughs residents, visitors and businesses.
- 9.2 There are no community safety implications.

10. Financial, Health and Safety and Risk Management Implications

- 10.1 None.

Background Papers

Colchester Borough Council Policy and Public Initiatives Panel Meeting, 7 November 2018 Report 'Air Quality in Colchester'

Essex Cycling Strategy November 2016
<https://www.essexhighways.org/uploads/docs/ecc-cycling-strategy-novemeber-2016.pdf>

Draft Colchester Borough Cycling Action Plan 2018
<https://www.essexhighways.org/uploads/files/Getting%20Around/Cycling/Colchester-Borough-CAP.pdf>

North Essex Rapid Transit Study December 2017
https://www.braintree.gov.uk/downloads/file/7435/eb066_north_essex_rapid_transit_study