

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF:

Executive Member
for Public Health and
Wellbeing and
Executive Member
for Growth and
Development

LEAD OFFICERS: Strategic Director of Place
Director of Public Health

DATE: Thursday, 12 August 2021

**PORTFOLIO(S)**

AFFECTED: Public
health, growth and
development

WARD/S AFFECTED:

All

KEY DECISION: Y

SUBJECT:

EB Blackburn with Darwen Walking and Cycling Plan

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blackburn with Darwen's first Walking and Cycling Plan envisions a future where walking and cycling are first choice methods for making shorter journeys and enjoying local communities in a safe and healthy way. The plan aims to coordinate the efforts of multidisciplinary stakeholders to increase walking and cycling uptake within the borough.

The plan's aims complement national, regional and local priorities in the realms of health and wellbeing, strategic planning, air quality, climate change and road safety. The plan pulls together the ongoing work around walking and cycling, aims to increase co-ordination between partners and stakeholders, and lays out our future ambitions for active travel.

The principles running through the plan include:

- Taking a life course approach
- Aiming to increase access and reduce inequalities in walking and cycling uptake
- Focusing on joined-up and partnership working

The benefits of walking and cycling are wide ranging, highlighted in the plan are:

- Improved health and wellbeing
- Improved air quality
- Reduced carbon emissions
- Reduced congestion
- Local economy benefits
- Improved amenity and quality of place

Taking a whole system approach, the building blocks of the plan to improve walking and cycling are made up of:

- Improved walking and cycling infrastructure

- Community engagement
- Business engagement
- Walking and cycling at the heart of policy
- Monitoring and evaluation

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Note the content of and approve the Walking and Cycling Plan.
- Support the priorities set out in the Walking and Cycling Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

Improving access and uptake of walking and cycling within Blackburn with Darwen is an agenda that cuts across a number of important council priorities. Higher rates of walking and cycling in the borough will compliment multiple varied ambitions, including priorities to increase physical activity, reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured on our roads and become carbon neutral by 2030.

Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant challenges, there are opportunities to be capitalised upon. Periods of 'lockdown' saw an increase in people using walking and cycling to get outside in their local areas. As we move into the recovery phase of the pandemic, building on this increase in walking and cycling should be part of developing a healthier, happier, more connected and more prosperous borough.

Blackburn with Darwen is also a growing borough, partly as a result of the council's established growth strategy, with a focus on improvements to housing, employment and town centres. In order to maintain continued growth, a new Local Plan is emerging which anticipates a further 7,000 homes and 5,000 jobs over the next 15 years.

One of the core policies of the emerging Local Plan highlights accessibility as a key strategic objective for Blackburn with Darwen, requiring developments to be accessible by a choice of active travel modes, therefore encouraging a modal shift and reducing the need for people to travel by car, contributing to a healthier lifestyle. A suite of connectivity studies have been prepared to appraise the potential impact of development on local walking and cycling networks and provide recommendations as to potential improvements which could be provided by or funded via the developments. In addition, a borough-wide transport study is underway, evaluating the network and suggesting improvement schemes for both the highway and sustainable transport network. A comprehensive borough-wide public consultation on the draft proposals took place in Jan-Feb 2021, with the next consultation due to take place in Jan 2022 before the Local Plan is submitted to Government for examination.

The Walking and Cycling Plan will build on this comprehensive evidence base and will ensure that key interventions are included within the council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan to secure delivery of the objectives. The Blackburn with Darwen Walking and Cycling Plan outlines how the council will work with residents and partners to allow our communities to be safe, active and enjoy their local areas via walking and cycling.

This Walking and Cycling Plan formulates as a daughter document to the impending Local Transport Plan 4. Delivery of the plan will be supported through engagement activities targeting schools, businesses and communities through the imminent DfT 'Capability' Fund. Infrastructure delivery will be delivered and supported as part of current and future Capital Active Travel Funding and aligned strategically with both the (in development) Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and East

Lancashire 'Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans' (LCWIP's). The development of the BwD LCWIP will establish a strategic approach to identifying long term cycling and walking improvements required at a local level. The LCWIP approach is a key driver to support the Walking and Cycling Plan building block looking at '*improving walking and cycling infrastructure*'. The LCWIP's will:

- Devise network plans which identify preferred routes and core zones for further walking and cycling development;
- Prioritise a programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment in the short, medium and long term
- Consider cycling and walking within both local planning and transport policies and strategies
- Ensure Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is well placed to make a case for future cycling and walking investment.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has committed to improving rates of physical activity as part of the Eat Well, Move More, Shape Up Strategy. Increasing rates of walking and cycling will increase physical activity within the borough and help to reduce the risks of physical inactivity including heart disease, diabetes and mental health problems. This plan will support efforts to implement World Health Organisation recommendations and NICE Guidelines for physical activity to combat the rise of non-communicable disease. In addition, Blackburn with Darwen has high levels of deprivation, which are key drivers for major health inequalities. There is evidence that policies that promote active travel can benefit the most disadvantaged provided they are designed and delivered in a way that acknowledges and aims to reduce inequalities.

Sadly, BwD has the highest rate in the North West of children killed or seriously injured on the road. By encouraging less cars on the road, initiatives like school streets, and safe walking and cycle infrastructure which prioritises those not in cars can contribute to the aim of improving this statistic. This coincides with the borough's strategy to reduce and prevent such accidents and injuries.

Reducing carbon emissions is a priority for the local authority which has declared a climate emergency and committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Evidence shows that walking and cycling can reduce short car trips by 41% given the right infrastructure and priority setting. This could save an additional 5% of CO₂ emissions from cars, an important contribution considering transport is the only industry in which emissions continue to rise. Although emissions from BwD have been trending downward, total and per capita CO₂ emissions from the borough rose in 2019 compared to 2018. Therefore, now is the time to for concerted action to reduce transport emissions.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This plan details an ambition to put walking and cycling at the heart of policy. The council has already committed to policy objectives supporting walking and cycling including those set out in the Lancashire 10 Year Walking and Cycling Strategy, the Blackburn with Darwen Core Strategy, the Local Plan Part 2 and the Local Transport Plan.

In addition, the plan will support the National Planning Policy Framework requirement for Local Authorities to promote sustainable transport through policies and planning decisions.

The proposals also align with the Blackburn with Darwen Local Transport Plan (LTP3) which provides a strategy and delivery programme of transport investment and improvements for the period 2011-2021. Work is now progressing between the three transport authorities of Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire to prepare a Joint Lancashire Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) covering the period 2021-2046.

Furthermore, the council is committed to working towards improving the health of residents as laid out in the BwD Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the BwD Eat Well, Move More, Shape up Strategy, and the BwD Corporate Plan. Increasing rates of walking and cycling has the potential to improve health via increased physical activity, improved mental wellbeing, better air quality and improved road safety.

The council has also recently signed a Climate Emergency Declaration and sustainable travel is set to be a key priority within the Local Transport Plan. Therefore, this plan aims to cement these commitments to promoting active travel and continue these cross-department conversations and actions.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Emergency Active Travel fund from the Department for Transport and the recently announced Capability Fund (revenue allocation to be confirmed) will support the delivery of the plan. Delivery of the plan is also being supported through the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot funding and the Public Health ring fenced grant.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

As part of this plan, programmes and infrastructure such as school streets (closing of streets at school drop-off and pick-up times) as well as various road safety measures will be piloted and considered. All future schemes considered as part of the plan will be designed and implemented in accordance with relevant highway, transport and traffic legislation. Procurement will occur in accordance with the council's constitution and; where relevant, European directives; and any grant conditions.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Using existing resources, the delivery of the plan will be monitored by the cross departmental 'BwD Stride and Ride' project group which also has VCFS representation. Delivery will also be supported by wider groups such as Active BwD and oversight of the plan will be with the Eat Well, Move More, Shape Up Steering Group.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below.

Option 1 ☒ Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

Option 3 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

10. CONSULTATIONS

Targeted public consultation on the contents of the Walking and Cycling Plan has taken place via an online consultation survey. Opinions have been sought from specific groups including older adults, early years settings, the youth forum, schools and Blackburn College. It was also distributed to Active BwD partner organisations.

The public consultation ran from 31/05/21 – 09/07/21 with 86 responses collected and considered. In addition to this, 126 older adults were asked about walking and cycling as part of a physical activity survey in partnership with AgeUK.

Political leadership from across the council have been consulted on the contents of this plan including the public health, growth and development, adults and prevention, children and young people, and finance and governance Senior Policy Team meetings. The plan was also taken to the Eat Well, Move More, Shape Up Steering Group and will be taken to the next Health and Wellbeing Board.

Feedback from the public consultation and council leadership was used to inform all key elements of the Plan.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

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DATE:	12/08/21
BACKGROUND PAPER:	Appendix 1: Blackburn with Darwen Walking and Cycling Plan Appendix 2: Eat Well, Move More, Shape Up Blackburn with Darwen's Food Physical Activity and Healthy Weight Strategy Appendix 3: Blackburn with Darwen Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight Appendix 4: Blackburn with Darwen Climate Emergency Action Plan Appendix 5: Local Transport Plan 3 Appendix 6: Blackburn with Darwen Corporate Plan

