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To: Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee
18 September 2015

Subject: **An Active Travel Strategy for Kent**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: The draft Strategy will be reported to this Cabinet Committee, Environment and Transport and Adult Social Care and Health. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport will ultimately take the decision to adopt the Strategy.

Electoral Division: Countywide

Summary

Active travel (specifically choosing journeys by bicycle and on foot instead of by car wherever possible) can reduce congestion, improve the environment and the air we breathe. It can improve our health and can increase levels of physical activity in school-aged children leading to improved attainment. It is crucial to establish healthy habits in young people in order for them to be sustained in later life.

In Kent, almost half of adults fail to meet recommended levels of physical activity required for good health, and one third of Kent's children are overweight or obese by the time they leave Primary School. One in three adults in Kent is at high risk of developing a disease condition through a lack of physical activity. Evidence suggests that objectives and measures to increase active travel will help deliver positive outcomes and that these will be across all KCC directorates.

It is proposed that an Active Travel Strategy be developed and adopted as County Council policy. The strategy will be cost-neutral and provide strategic guidance in order to maximise existing investment in projects.

The development of the Strategy was reported to the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 21st July 2015. A report to the Adult Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee will be considered on 11th September 2015.

Recommendation

The Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee is asked to comment on the development of an Active Travel Strategy for Kent.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. Over 26% of adults in Kent are classed as physically inactive and at high risk of developing disease conditions as a result of their sedentary lifestyle. Over 43% fail to meet the recommended levels of activity required to maintain good health. 21% of children in Kent are above a healthy weight when starting Primary school, increasing to 33% by the time they leave.
- 1.2. By 2050, the NHS cost attributable to obesity and overweight will be £9.7 billion and the total costs will be £49.9 billion. The direct costs of illness as an outcome of physical inactivity to the NHS are quoted to be as much as £1.0 billion per annum, while costs to the whole economy are estimated at £20 billion per annum.
- 1.3. Active travel is the recognised public health term for journeys made by bicycle and on foot instead of by car, and includes part-journeys that involve public transport. It can reduce congestion, improve the environment and the air we breathe, and it can improve our health as well as attainment in school-aged children. Healthy habits established in young people are more likely to be sustained in later life. Delivery of actions through schools is also crucial in terms of impacting on congestion. In the morning peak around 20% of traffic is 'on the school run'.

2. An Active Travel Strategy

- 2.1. Kent County Council currently does not have a corporate strategy for increasing active travel for every-day journeys such as to school, to work or for shopping. Evidence (see **Appendix 1**) suggests a co-ordinated set of policies and measures will have a positive benefit to reduce traffic congestion, improve the environment and improve public health. Further, if developed, an Active Travel Strategy will provide a commissioning framework for all directorates and partner organisations; it will inform local transport and health policies; it will provide a context for bids for external funding; and deliver an increase in walking and cycling to contribute to keeping Kent moving and healthy.
- 2.2. This Strategy will support National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) commissioning guidance that recommends schools foster a culture that supports physically active travel for journeys to school and during the school day, through encouraging children to walk or cycle.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1. The Strategy will be developed as a cost-neutral document and require no additional investment from Kent County Council budgets. The Strategy will act as a commissioning framework to provide strategic guidance on where existing programmes of work can deliver higher returns and maximise existing investment in projects

- 3.2. Further, the Strategy will be used to support bids for external income, including anticipated Government funding through the Infrastructure Act (2015) which specifically provides for investment in walking and cycling.

4. The Strategic Statement and Corporate Objectives

- 4.1. The Strategy is in line with the KCC Strategic Statement 2015-2020; specifically outcome 2: Kent Communities feel the benefits of economic growth by being in-work, healthy and enjoying a good quality of life.
- 4.2. In the Growth Environment and Transport Business Plan (2015-2016), the Strategy accords with priorities 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7: to contribute to the delivery of the growth and infrastructure outcomes, create successful bids to secure funding; facilitate partnerships between transport providers; delivery of the Kent Environment Strategy; and specifically to contribute to Public Health by facilitating and promoting active travel.
- 4.3 The Strategy delivers against objectives in the Public Health Outcomes Framework, specifically indicators 2.13i (proportion of adults achieving at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week), 2.13ii (proportion of adults classified as inactive) and 1.16 (utilisation of outdoor space for exercise or health reasons).
- 4.4 Schools, Early Years Settings and Children's Centres have responsibilities to promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people. The Strategy will support their efforts. Both Kent's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the KCC Health Inequalities Action Plan, 'Mind the Gap' also highlight the importance of the early years of a child's life, and most crucially that health prevention through increasing levels of physical activity at this age will deliver long-term benefits for all family members, and improve a child's readiness for school.

5. Timescales for consultation and adoption

- 5.1 The Strategy will be developed by a cross-directorate working group. Partner engagement is planned to take place between September and October 2015. Workshops are proposed in October in the east and west of the county with further engagement planned for schools and young people. A draft Strategy will be developed between October and December, with full consultation beginning in January 2016. A final Strategy, taking into account consultation responses, will be presented for consideration to the three Cabinet Committees reviewing this paper during Spring 2016. It is proposed to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment that the Strategy be adopted as Kent County Council policy, subject to the views of these Cabinet Committees at that time.

6. Conclusions and Recommendation:

- 6.1 Increasing the number of journeys made by active modes of travel will have benefits for the residents and visitors to Kent. An Active Travel Strategy will ensure that the Kent population, with particular reference to populations at risk of poor health through a lack of physical activity or pollution, are enabled to choose active modes of transport more regularly and for a wider range of journeys.
- 6.2 It is crucial to establish healthy habits, including walking and cycling to school and for leisure activities, in young people in order for them to be sustained in later life.

Recommendation

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Appendix 1: Background Documents

- 7.1 The evidence base for policies to promote active travel includes the following:
- National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (2012) - Walking and Cycling: Local Measures to Promote Walking and Cycling as forms of Travel or Recreation.
 - Public Health England (2014) - Everybody Active, Every Day. A Physical Activity Strategy.
 - Public Health England (2014) - Public Health Outcomes Framework.
 - Kent & Medway Public Health Observatory Library (2014) - Active Travel Literature Review (unpublished).
 - Department of Health (2011) - Start Active Stay Active: A Report on Physical Activity from the 4 Home Countries.
 - National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (2008) - Physical Activity and the Environment.

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