

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 17 March 2015

Active Travel Governance and Funding

Item number	7.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	

Executive summary

The new Active Travel Forum with its sub-forums covering walking and cycling, has built a further element of partnership, into the governance of the Active Travel Action Plan.

A new capital budget heading for walking-related enhancements has been created, whilst the secondment of the Active Travel (Walking) Officer has been extended and the creation of a permanent post is being considered, as part of the Transport Service Review.

This report also recommends that enhanced opportunities are created for members of the public and the Neighbourhoods, to influence the Council's investment in cycling.

Links

Coalition pledges	P28 , P33 , P44 , P45 , P50
Council outcomes	CO9 , CO10 , CO19 , CO22 , CO23 , CO24 , CO25 , CO26
Single Outcome Agreement	SO2 , SO4

Active Travel Governance and Funding

Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - 1.1.1 agrees the changes in Active Travel Action Plan Governance reported here;
 - 1.1.2 agrees the proposal to enhance the involvement of Neighbourhoods in identifying local projects for inclusion in the programme for cycling spend; and
 - 1.1.3 discharges the Committee actions referred to in paragraph 2.1 and 2.2.

Background

- 2.1 A report to this Committee on 3 June 2014, noted the intention to review the governance and funding arrangements for the Active Travel Action Plan (ATAP), the intention to continue employment of an Active Travel (Walking) Officer, and the fact that these matters would be the subject of a subsequent report.
- 2.2 At the June 2014 meeting of this Committee, in response to a report covering the 2014/15 7% budget spend for cycling , the following motion was passed:

“Further consideration to be given to devolving funding for small scale cycle improvement schemes to Neighbourhood Partnerships in 2015/16 and to promoting and publicising the small projects funding stream in local communities.”

Main report

ATAP Governance

- 3.1 Until late 2014, detailed progress on the Active Travel Action Plan was overseen at officer level. Following discussion at a specially convened subgroup of the Transport Forum, oversight has been widened by the creation of the Active Travel Forum, with sub-forums for walking and cycling. As discussed in a report to this Committee on 26 August 2014, the forums include stakeholder and interest-group representatives, but also members of the public who applied to join the forums through a publicly-advertised process.

- 3.2 The three new forums met for the first time on 26 November 2014. At the first meeting, the forums discussed their remits and concluded:
- a) that the walking and cycling forums will, in general, consider in depth a single issue relevant to their remit at each meeting – for example the next meeting of the Cycle Forum is due to consider the experimental George Street cycle route and how it relates to the proposed east-west city centre cycle route as part of the 'family cycle network'; and
 - b) that the Active Travel Forum will take a strategic view of progress on the Active Travel Action Plan, including consideration of budget and programme matters.
- 3.3 On 16 January 2015, a subgroup of the Active Travel Forum considered and commented on draft proposals for spending the Council's £446K share of the Scottish Government 2015/16 'Smarter Choices Smarter Places' funding allocation. It is proposed that the Forum and/or its walking/cycling subgroups should have an increased role in considering other walking and cycling related spend in future.

ATAP funding and resourcing

- 3.4 The commitment to allocate a percentage of overall transport spend to cycling funding has helped maintain consistent progress in this area. Another report to this Committee meeting provides a summary of the planned cycling spend in the 2015/16 financial year.
- 3.5 The city's streets include a large element of pedestrian infrastructure in the form of footways. There is a significant annual spend on footway renewals, amounting to approximately £2.5M in 2014/15, with a further important component of transport capital spend on enhancements for pedestrians (around £0.5M in 2014/15). These enhancements have recently included improved routes to tram stops, new pedestrian crossings, dropped kerbs and walking-related improvements funded as part of safer routes to schools projects.
- 3.6 As noted in the report to this Committee in June 2014, the seconded Active Travel (Walking) Officer post has been continued and the secondment has now been extended until March 2016. Redeployment of staff to enable creation of a permanent post with this remit is being considered as part of the Transport Service Review.

Management of cycle spending

Current situation

- 3.7 Most capital cycling schemes (from small-scale to large) are currently led by the Council's Cycle Team. The Cycle Team has a high level of knowledge and experience in delivering cycling projects and provide advice to other areas of the Council. Total budgeted cycling spend in 2014/15 is £2.369m (part of the Council's 7% Commitment). Of this, £962,000 is from the Council's Capital Cycle Block budget and £472,000 is from the ring-fenced Scottish Government Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets (CWSS) fund. The remaining £935,000 is from the Sustrans 'Community Links' fund, which is awarded in a competitive bidding process requiring at least 50% match finance, project by project. This matching finance is taken from the previously-mentioned Cycle Block budget and the CWSS fund.
- 3.8 Due to the need to deliver city-wide infrastructure related to the Active Travel Action Plan, particularly a joined up 'family cycle network' and to attract external funding from Sustrans, the large majority of the cycle schemes progressed are strategically driven. However some smaller-scale local cycle/pedestrian improvements suggested by members of the public or through Neighbourhood Partnerships are taken forward.
- 3.9 The significant uplift in overall investment enabled by large scale external funding relies on clear evidence of a coherent strategic investment programme. Applying for funding often requires detailed applications to be prepared and for the projects to be monitored carefully in liaison with the funder. Staff resourcing issues and economies of scale also mean that it makes sense to adopt a strategic approach.
- 3.10 Very often, significant opportunities for external funding emerge at short notice. Further, individual projects often encounter delays which require re-programming to ensure that budgets can be spent. Responding to opportunities and delays can require considerable flexibility in managing the overall programme (eg delaying a smaller project to enable a larger project to proceed quickly enough to benefit from external funding). This is easier to do with a centrally managed budget.

3.11 In addition to larger capital funded cycle programme, the percentage budget commitment to cycling has led to the creation of a ring-fenced budget allocation for revenue funded cycling projects. In 2014/15, £130K of this was allocated to a 'Project Bank' for small scale revenue cycling projects. Neighbourhood teams and Natural Heritage Services bid for funding from this bank which is allocated by agreement between the Cycling Team and a Local Environment Manager. The funding has been used to deliver a wide variety of local improvements including resolving recurring path flooding issues, access improvements and local surfacing improvements. Examples include vegetation removal along shared paths (North Edinburgh Path network), new handrails (Hutchison Cycleway), new signage (Union Canal), path regrading (Bonaly Reservoir, Maidens Cleuch) and white lining of cycle lanes (East Fettes Avenue, Portobello Promenade, Willowbrae Road). Cycling groups have been made aware of the Project Bank but no wider promotion of it has been undertaken to date.

Suggested way forward

- 3.12 With the above in mind, it is proposed that the cycling capital programme continues to be managed centrally, though with an improved ability for the public and Neighbourhood Teams to feed in proposals for cycling-related improvements. This means that the Neighbourhood Teams will be able to put forward proposals for the capital programme as well as the revenue funded 'Project Bank'. As the cycling capital programme for 2015/16 is already committed Neighbourhoods will be able to put forward proposals for the 2016/17 programme.
- 3.13 As described elsewhere in this report, this programme will also be scrutinised by the Active Travel Forum. Consideration will be given as to how to retain the necessary flexibility in budget management, whilst making the changes outlined.
- 3.14 There has also been discussion at the Active Travel Forum about creating the opportunity for the public to put forward suggestions for local cycling improvements. It is therefore proposed that individual members of the public and community groups be invited to put forward ideas for enhancing local cycling provision via the Council's website or through the relevant Neighbourhood Team. These would be assessed (for cost, feasibility and benefits) by the Neighbourhood Roads Team and put forward as appropriate as part of a proposed package of Neighbourhood cycling projects for inclusion in the 'Projects Bank', or where appropriate the capital programme. It is also proposed to consult the Active Travel Forum or Cycle Forum on the proposals that will be going forward as part of the 'Projects Bank' each year.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Creation of a user-friendly mechanism for members of the public to suggest cycling-related improvements.

- 4.2 Scrutiny of proposed 2016/17 capital and revenue cycling spend by the Active Travel Forum and/or Cycling Forum.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The creation of a new capital budget heading for walking has not impacted on the overall Transport capital budget but has required some re-allocation of resource within that budget.
- 5.2 The Council is committed to earmarking a percentage of the total capital and revenue Transport budgets for cycling starting with 5% in 2012/13 and rising by 1% a year to 8% in 2015/16.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The new arrangements described in this report will improve scrutiny of the Council's spending on Active Travel. The new walking capital budget and the Active Travel (Walking) post will help ensure implementation of walking elements of the ATAP.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 The new walking capital budget and the Active Travel (Walking) post will help to deliver a number of ATAP actions that implement policies which enhance rights, for example consistent provision of dropped kerbs enabling journeys to be safely made by wheelchair or mobility scooter.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The actions outlined in this report will further encourage travel on foot and cycle, the most environmentally benign and sustainable forms of transport.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 As noted above, the Active Travel Forum and its sub-forums covering walking and cycling were established through a participative process involving a specially convened subgroup of the Transport Forum. The new forums themselves enable an increased level of continuing consultation and engagement on the Active Travel Action Plan and its priorities.

Background reading/external references

None.

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Coalition pledges	<p>P28 - Further strengthen our links with the business community by developing and implementing strategies to promote and protect the economic well being of the city</p> <p>P33 - Strengthen Neighbourhood Partnerships and further involve local people in decisions on how Council resources are used</p> <p>P44 - Prioritise keeping our streets clean and attractive</p> <p>P45 - Spend 5% of the transport budget on provision for cyclists</p> <p>P50 - Meet greenhouse gas targets, including the national target of 42% by 2020</p>
Council outcomes	<p>CO9 - Edinburgh residents are able to access job opportunities</p> <p>CO10 - Improved health and reduced inequalities</p> <p>CO19 - Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm</p> <p>CO22 - Moving efficiently – Edinburgh has a transport system that improves connectivity and is green, healthy and accessible</p> <p>CO23 - Well engaged and well informed – Communities and individuals are empowered and supported to improve local outcomes and foster a sense of community</p> <p>CO24 - The Council communicates effectively internally and externally and has an excellent reputation for customer care</p> <p>CO25 - The Council has efficient and effective services that deliver on objectives</p> <p>CO26 - The Council engages with stakeholders and works in partnership to improve services and deliver on agreed objectives</p>
Single Outcome Agreement	<p>SO2 - Edinburgh's citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health</p> <p>SO4 - Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric</p>
Appendices	