

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET – 5 JUNE 2018
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING
AND GOVERNANCE)

HATFIELD BIKE HIRE SCHEME

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council is part of the Hatfield 2030+ Renewal Partnership, to help deliver policies in the emerging Local Plan and objectives in the Hatfield Renewal Framework, both of which have been prepared in consultation with the community, businesses and other interested parties.
- 1.2 One of the ambitions of both documents is to improve the transport situation in Hatfield and to encourage more sustainable modes of travel. As a result the Partnership supports the principle of a bike hire scheme for the town.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Council supports the efforts of the Hatfield Renewal Partnership in the trial of a bike hire scheme for the town, with a desired start date of September 2018 to match the academic term.
- 2.2 That the Council accepts that some issues are likely to arise as the scheme is implemented, and that officers, members and other partners may have to work with the operating company to resolve these issues.
- 2.3 That the Council communicates the scheme to interested parties and landowners and publicises the scheme to the wider community. It should be made clear that the scheme is for all of the town's residents, workers, students and visitors, as a cheap and easy alternative to driving.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 The Hatfield Renewal Framework contains a vision to renew the New Town's pioneering and entrepreneurial spirit and an objective for walking, cycling and transportation, to improve the experience of walking and cycling, connect diverse areas of the town and break down the east-west division. It is intended that this will be implemented through a wide variety of measures, including the Local Transport Plan for Hertfordshire and a Growth and Travel Plan for the borough.
- 3.2 The Hatfield Renewal Partnership has expressed support for a bike hire scheme for the town. Early indications from potential operators are that the presence of the university, as well as the railway station, town centre and business park makes it a commercially attractive place to launch such a scheme. The distance between the key locations in the town makes cycling a feasible option for many people and an increase in cycling should reduce the number of journeys that might otherwise be taken by car.

3.3 It is anticipated that a scheme would use 'dockless' bikes and a mobile phone application. People who download the app and register would then be able to find an available bike using online mapping software, unlock it using a barcode, pay for it using an online account and then lock it at their destination. There are a number of these schemes currently in operation elsewhere in the country, such as Oxford, Norwich and a number of London Boroughs, with new schemes starting regularly in other towns. A dockless scheme also removes the need to install costly racking systems.

3.4 The bikes themselves are usually brightly coloured, of sturdy construction to limit damage, with solid rubber tyres to avoid punctures, bespoke components and fixings, integral locking systems and a basket for bags. Costs are typically 50p per 30 minutes, with free or low-cost membership. They have integrated GPS to enable them to be located by users and to discourage theft. Small rewards are offered where users park the bikes in sensible locations and fines or bans are issued where bikes are abused or taken outside of the scheme area.



Examples of dockless hire bikes

3.5 In terms of operating arrangements, the bikes are provided and maintained by the operating company. There are no direct capital or revenue costs for the Council or any other partner. The role of the Council, Hertfordshire County Council and other landowners is to identify suitable locations where bikes should preferably be left in-between use. This would be done by demarking suitable areas and installing signage in the town centre, outside the railway station, within the business park, etc. It is also likely that the Council would have to work with the company to resolve any issues that arise as the scheme starts being used.

3.6 In order to select the preferred operator, it is suggested that a number of service standards should be identified and be adhered to:

- Sharing of usage data – to understand the gender, age and other characteristics of people using the scheme
- Sharing of mapping and route data – to understand how bikes are being used, in order to help improve the cycle network
- Redistribution of bikes throughout the day as appropriate, to ensure they are in places where people wish to hire them
- Regular servicing and removal of any broken, damaged, discarded bikes
- [Service times to resolve certain issues](#)
- BikePlus accreditation – see <https://www.carplusbikeplus.org.uk/>

- Compliance with General Data Protection Regulations
- Partnership with local bike shops, to offer discounts on helmets, cycle clothing, etc

4 Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct legal implications associated with the recommendations in this report. The bikes and mobile phone application would be owned by the operating company and membership and usage would be on their terms. It is understood however that firms are unlikely to operate a scheme in Hatfield without the general agreement of the Council and Hertfordshire County Council. It is therefore low risk.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report. It should be noted that the Council may incur indirect costs in terms of officer and member time to resolve any issues that might arise as part of the implementation and operation of the scheme. It is therefore high likelihood but low risk.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 A bike hire scheme could have a reputational impact on the Council and Hertfordshire County Council as the highway authority. Bikes may be damaged or stolen, ridden irresponsibly or left in undesirable places and there will be an expectation of resolution by the Council, when in actual fact it will be a matter for the selected operator. This is likely and there is therefore a degree of risk. It is intended that close engagement with the selected operator at the beginning of the project will help to resolve these issues.
- 6.2 BikePlus is the representative body for UK bike share schemes and seek to accredit and work with operators in terms of data analysis, information sharing, delivery and partnerships. This is intended to provide assurance to councils on an agreed set of standards expected by operators when they provide bike hire services. This reduces the risks associated with the selection of an operator.
- 6.3 The risk management proposals are that relevant landowners should demark areas on their land where bikes should preferably be left. For the Council this is likely to be key entrance points into the town centre. Other obvious locations are likely to be outside the railway station, the University of Hertfordshire's College Lane and De Havilland campuses and park-and-ride, Hatfield business park, Hatfield House and Park, Hatfield Galleria, Oldings Corner, leisure centres, neighbourhood centres and within residential areas. This is intended to reduce the risk of hire bikes being left in awkward or disruptive places.
- 6.4 Potential operating companies have indicated that they would introduce bikes into the town over a period of time, to match interest and demand. This will avoid an over-supply of unused bikes. It is likely that 100-200 bikes will be available at the start of the scheme, with increments of 25-50 bikes as appropriate. This will allow the scheme to expand organically and perhaps to other towns and villages in the borough. This will reduce the risk of too many unused bikes in the town.

- 6.5 Usage and mapping data allows the operating company to understand where bikes are hired and deposited and the route chosen. The Council will seek access to this information to help identify where improvements can be made to the cycle network and to avoid any conflict with cars and pedestrians. Usage data also helps the operating company to identify and mend faulty bikes. This will reduce the risk of hire bikes being distributed in the wrong places or being left unattended for long periods of time.

7 Security and Terrorism Implications

- 7.1 There are no security implications associated with this report.

8 Procurement Implications

- 8.1 There are no procurement implications associated with this report.
- 8.2 It is anticipated that the Hatfield 2030+ Partnership will engage with interested operating companies and select their preferred company for a trial period. The Partnership will monitor the success of the scheme to help decide whether it should continue thereafter. At present, it is anticipated that the selection of an operator will be led by the University of Hertfordshire, with the engagement of other members of the Hatfield Renewal Partnership.
- 8.3 Hertfordshire County Council are also looking at the long-term merits of a more formal procurement exercise to introduce a bike hire scheme to other towns, as this would ensure consistency and reduce the risk of competing schemes.
- 8.4 Even if the Partnership selects its preferred operator, there is nothing to stop another operator also introducing bikes into the town. This is low risk however as potential operators have indicated a desire to have some form of support from the Council before introducing their bikes into the area.

9 Climate Change Implications

- 9.1 It is intended that a bike hire scheme will offer an attractive alternative to driving for residents, students, workers and others, particularly for short journeys between key destinations such as the railway station, town centre, business park and university campuses.

10 Policy Implications

- 10.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report. Policies are already in place in the adopted District Plan, Submission Local Plan, Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan and Hatfield Renewal Framework to support sustainable transport and the principle of a bike hire scheme.

11 Link to Corporate Priorities

- 11.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Business Plan 2015-2018 and particularly Priority 1 to maintain a safe and healthy community and Priority 2 to protect and enhance the environment.

12 Equalities and Diversity

- 12.1 An EqIA was completed on 10 May 2018.
- 12.2 The EqIA found that there is the potential for negative impacts. This is because the ability to use a bike is dependent on a variety of personal characteristics, the notable ones being age, disability and pregnancy/maternity. There is likely to be a minimum age of 16 or 18 to hire a bike. Users will also need a smart phone capable of downloading the app.
- 12.3 However these impacts are justified on the grounds that a bike hire scheme is of benefit to the community and it is essentially a matter for individuals to decide whether they are capable of riding a bike in accordance with the Highway Code.

Name of author Colin Haigh, Head of Planning
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Background Papers:
Hatfield Renewal Framework <https://www.hatfield2030.co.uk/>