Midlothian Council Travel Plan 2008 - 2012

Report by Ian L Young, Director Strategic Services Division

1 Introduction

This report seeks approval for a Travel Plan for the Council. A travel plan is a package of measures aimed at promoting sustainable travel within an organisation.

2 Background

Set within the context of the National Transport Strategy (2006), the Regional Transport Strategy (submitted to Scottish Ministers in March 2007) and the Council’s own Local Transport Strategy, the proposed ‘Midlothian Council Travel Plan 2008 – 2012’, as appended to this report, has as its aim:

“To reduce the adverse impacts of travel, most particularly car travel, associated with the activities undertaken by Midlothian Council in the provision of its services whilst improving the ease with which the Council can be accessed.”

This overall aim is developed into a series of objectives and targets together with a programme of action to ensure successful implementation. The terms of the programme of action are cognisant of the likely level of available resources; the first year essentially focussing on the management, resources and partners, together with profile raising through information, awareness and promotional measures. Details of the programme of action can be found in section 5 of the Travel Plan document.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resources

This emerging Travel Plan has been taken into account in the development of the Council’s new corporate priorities and budget setting. Most of the listed actions within the Travel Plan will require staff time only and will have to be met from the existing human resource. All actions with a financial implication for the Council will require costing, and whilst their inclusion within the Travel Plan presumes strongly in favour of their implementation, this is ultimately dependent on the availability of financial resources, internally or externally.

3.2 Risk

The National Transport Strategy expects all local authorities to have operational travel plans by April 2008. SEStran, to which this Council is a partner, attaches the highest priority to local authority travel plans in its
Regional Transport Strategy. A travel plan is a commitment in the Council’s Local Transport Strategy. Failure to approve a travel plan at this time would result in the Council having defaulted on a significant commitment.

3.3 Policy

Strategy

Approval of the Travel Plan would deliver on specific commitments to doing so in our Sustainability Strategy and Local Transport Strategy. It would also accord with Objective 4b of the Council’s Corporate Priorities 2008 – 11 which states “Contributes to sustainable development including in securing Best Value”.

A Council Travel Plan is a specific intention included within the Council’s Sustainability Strategy and its Local Transport Strategy.

Consultation

The Travel Plan has been developed with the assistance of a working group of officers across the Council representing personnel, fleet transport, cycling, public transport, sustainability, school travel planning, facilities management, health and carbon management interests.

A travel survey questionnaire was distributed to all staff and elected members during February 2007 and presented to the working group along with a summary of the findings. An internal consultation on the initial draft of the Travel Plan prompted a number of issues raised by various services of the Council; these have been addressed in subsequent draft versions of the Plan.

Equalities

In drafting the Travel Plan it has been recognized that there may be provisions which may impact positively on those who do not have regular access to a private car. In taking the Plan forward it will be necessary for the Council to be vigilant in assessing any potential equalities implications.

Sustainability

A Council Travel Plan is a commitment in the action plan accompanying the Council’s Sustainability and Local Transport Strategies. It would contribute to realising reductions in operational greenhouse gas emissions expected through the Council’s involvement in the Carbon Trust’s Local Authority Carbon Management Programme, in turn helping deliver the Council’s commitments as a Scotland’s Climate Change Declaration signatory.

As the Travel Plan is not of a “public character” in terms of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act, it did not require to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment.
4 Summary

A Midlothian Council Travel Plan will demonstrate the commitment of the Council to reducing the impacts of travel, most particularly car travel, associated with the activities undertaken by the Council in the provision of its services whilst improving the ease with which the Council can be accessed. Accordingly, the plan provides a local context for a key theme of the national and regional transport strategies. The proposed Travel Plan, attached at Appendix I, provides a measured and manageable approach to achieving its central aim.

The Plan document will require to go through a design process prior to publication.

5 Recommendation

Cabinet is recommended to approve the Midlothian Council Travel Plan 2008 – 2012 document which comprises Appendix 1 to this report.

Report Contact: Brian Forsyth  Tel No. 0131 271 3473

Background papers:
File Ref: PU/PP/TRAN/004/56189
Regional Transport Strategy (2007)
National Transport Strategy (2006)
Midlothian Council Local Transport Strategy (2007)

Ian L Young
Director

28 August 2009