

Cabinet

12 October 2021

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change - Councillor J O'Boyle

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Director of Transportation and Highways

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

**Title:**

Coventry Transport Strategy

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**Is this a key decision?**

Yes - the proposals involve financial implications in excess of £1m per annum and are likely to have a significant impact on residents or businesses two or more electoral wards in the City.

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**Executive Summary:**

Coventry City Council has developed a draft Coventry Transport Strategy (see Appendix 1 to the report). The strategy sets out a long-term (15 year) vision for the way that people and goods will travel to, from and around the city in the future. It is intended to achieve 4 broad objectives - supporting the city's economic recovery and enabling long-term growth, delivering a sustainable, low carbon transport system, ensuring equality of opportunity and maximising health and wellbeing – and seeks to exploit new technologies and ideas, which are being developed in the city, in order to achieve these.

The draft strategy is closely linked to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the region as a whole. The LTP is currently under review, and the Coventry Transport Strategy will form part of the final West Midlands LTP.

It is proposed to carry out public consultation on the draft Coventry Transport Strategy (CTS), with a view to asking Members to adopt a final version before the end of March 2022.

The strategy is supported by a separate draft Implementation Plan (see Appendix 2 to the report), focused primarily on the first five years (2022/23 – 2026/27). This sets out the specific transport schemes that will be delivered in order to implement the strategy and reflects an expected five-year funding settlement between the Department for Transport (DfT) and the WMCA - the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) – which is expected to provide the bulk of the funding required for many of these schemes.

Discussions between DfT and WMCA are still ongoing, however it is expected that a final funding allocation will be confirmed before the end of 2021 as part of Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. The draft Implementation Plan will therefore be updated to reflect this, prior to Members being asked to adopt a final version before the end of March 2022.

### **Recommendations:**

Cabinet is requested to:

- 1) Approve the draft Coventry Transport Strategy as shown in Appendix 1 to the report, for public consultation.
- 2) Note that following the consultation, a further report will be produced for Cabinet to adopt the Coventry Transport Strategy.

### **List of Appendices included:**

- Appendix 1: Draft Coventry Transport Strategy
- Appendix 2: Draft Implementation Plan
- Appendix 3: TfWM Local Transport Plan Green Paper
- Appendix 4: Draft WMCA CRSTS Prospectus
- Appendix 5: Summary of Let's Talk Survey Results

### **Background papers:**

None

### **Other useful documents**

The draft strategy makes reference to a number of recently published Government strategy documents, including:

- [Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain](#)
- [Bus Back Better: A National Strategy for England](#)
- [Gear Change: A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking](#)
- [Great British Railways: The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail](#)

### **Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No – However, a Briefing Note and Presentation on the Coventry Transport Strategy were considered by the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) at their meeting on 8 September 2021.

### **Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?**

No – However, a presentation on the draft strategy was considered by the Disability Equality Action Partnership at their meeting on 12 August 2021

### **Will this report go to Council?**

No

## **Report title:** Coventry Transport Strategy

### **1. Context**

- 1.1 The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is the statutory transport authority for the West Midlands area, including Coventry. The WMCA has a duty to prepare and implement a Local Transport Plan (LTP).
- 1.2 The current LTP, Movement for Growth, is currently being reviewed to reflect recent national and regional policy changes, notably in relation to climate change, and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), the transport delivery body for the WMCA, has published a Green Paper to start this process. This is currently out for consultation and has been appended to this report for reference (see Appendix 3 to the report).
- 1.3 Coventry City Council is closely engaged with this review and it has been agreed that the WMCA's LTP will be integrated with local Transport Strategies for each individual constituent authority (although the four Black Country authorities are working together on a joint strategy for the Black Country). Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull are therefore all producing individual Transport Strategies for their areas and, subject to Cabinet approval, it is now proposed to carry out public consultation on the draft Transport Strategy for Coventry.
- 1.4 Delivery of both the WMCA LTP and Coventry's associated Transport Strategy will be strongly linked to the availability of required funding, including the recently announced City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS).
- 1.5 CRSTS comprises £4.2 billion of Government funding which will be allocated across the eight English Mayoral Combined Authorities to spend on transport schemes. The Department for Transport (DfT) has advised the WMCA that the West Midlands can expect to receive somewhere between £780 million and £1.28 billion from this fund. Some additional funding for core Integrated Transport and Highway Maintenance programmes will also be added to this and TfWM/Coventry City Council will also still be able to access various separate funding streams including, for example, the £50 million already secured to deliver an All Electric Bus City.
- 1.6 The WMCA has recently submitted a prospectus to DfT (see Appendix 4 to the report) which includes proposals for £1.7 billion worth of investment in transport schemes in the West Midlands. It is expected that DfT will confirm a final funding settlement before the end of 2021.
- 1.7 The draft Coventry Transport Strategy and draft Implementation Plan are therefore intended to reflect both TfWM's emerging LTP and the proposed CRSTS funding arrangements, as well as the City Council's own strategic policy objectives for the city.

### **2. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 2.1 As noted above, the draft Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan have been developed in conjunction with TfWM's ongoing LTP review and the CRSTS negotiations.
- 2.2 In addition to this, the Strategy has also been informed by:
  - A desktop review of other existing policy commitments and strategies
  - A further review of evidence relating to how the city's transport network currently operates
  - A series of workshops held with internal and external stakeholders
  - A Let's Talk survey of residents (see section 3 of the report).

2.3 Based on all the above, a set of four core objectives have been identified and the draft strategy has been constructed around these. These reflect the Council's broader, emerging priorities. They are:

- Supporting the city's economic recovery and enabling long-term growth
- Delivering a sustainable, low carbon transport system
- Ensuring equality of opportunity
- Maximising health and wellbeing.

2.4 In order to achieve these objectives, a fundamental change is needed in the way in which both people and goods travel to, from and around Coventry. In particular, current levels of car travel will simply not be sustainable in the future as the city continues to grow. The draft Transport Strategy therefore sets out plans to create a city where it is easy, convenient and safe to walk, cycle and travel on public transport, and where most people do not need to use a car to access the services that they need for day-to-day life.

2.5 This includes, for example:

- Making substantial improvements to the city's public transport network, including establishing a Very Light Rail (VLR) system and making improvements to existing rail and bus services
- Creating a better, safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists, including building a network of segregated cycleways and further pedestrianisation of the city centre and other local centres. This will be aimed at ensuring that residents can access most of the services and amenities that they need within a 20-minute walking/cycling distance
- Accelerating the shift towards zero emission vehicles, including establishing a fully electric public transport system and further expanding the existing public network of charge points for electric vehicles. This will be supported by renewable power generated locally
- Delivering targeted improvements to the city's road network. These will be aimed at meeting travel demand associated with new development, removing through traffic from residential areas (by making improvements to more strategic routes in order to reduce 'rat running') and reducing air pollution generated by congestion hot spots, as opposed to increasing the capacity for car travel overall. New roads such as the Keresley Link Road will not be designed exclusively for cars and will also provide for pedestrians, cyclists and/or public transport
- Developing a more seamless transport system, enabled by 5G and making use of innovative transport solutions, such as micromobility and demand responsive transport
- Promoting behaviour change through engagement with local schools and businesses and through schemes that incentivise sustainable travel choices.

### **3. Results of consultation undertaken**

3.1 To inform the draft Transport Strategy, the Council carried out an initial survey of residents via Let's Talk. The survey collected views on the strengths and weaknesses of the city's current transport network and on residents' aspirations for the future. 262 people took part.

3.2 An analysis of the survey results has been appended to this report (see Appendix 5 to the report). However, in summary, the survey showed high levels of support for improved infrastructure for walking and cycling and for investment in the city's public transport system, including establishing a mass transit system, such as VLR.

3.3 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) considered the draft Transport Strategy at their meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The Board raised the following points to be considered as part of the consultation on the draft Transport Strategy:

- That ward Members are kept up to date on activity which is planned for their wards, including formal consultations and consultation results.
  - The connectivity between different modes of transport on key routes across the city and the wider region is highlighted in the strategy.
- 3.4 It is now proposed to carry out further public consultation on the draft Coventry Transport Strategy.

#### **4. Timetable for implementing this decision**

- 4.1 Subject to Cabinet approval, the draft Coventry Transport Strategy will be suitably formatted and subject to a period of public consultation. It is expected that this will include a mixture of further online engagement through Let's Talk and public/stakeholder meetings. The consultation will commence before the end of 2021.
- 4.2 The draft Coventry Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan will then be reviewed to take into account the results of the consultation and the final CRSTS funding arrangements. Members could then be asked to adopt a final version of these documents before the end of March 2022. This timeline broadly aligns with the implementation of TfWM's revised LTP review and the CRSTS settlement, both of which are intended to come into effect in early 2022.

#### **5. Comments from the Director of Finance and the Director of Law and Governance**

##### **5.1 Financial implications**

The production of the draft Coventry Transport Strategy does not, in itself, have any direct financial implications for the City Council. It does, though, provide the strategic policy framework for future bids for funding for transport schemes that the Council intends to bring forward, and will therefore strengthen the business cases that are submitted to funding bodies such as the DfT or the WMCA.

The draft Implementation Plan which sits alongside the draft Strategy lists the transport schemes and programmes that are identified as being necessary to support the successful delivery of the transport strategy objectives, along with the secured and unsecured funding and the sources of that funding. In addition to the CRSTS, there are several funding streams available to the City Council, including the Active Travel Fund, the Bus Service Improvement Plan, the Air Quality Implementation Fund, Large Local Major Scheme funding, Transforming Cities Fund, developer funding secured through Section 106 Agreements, Growth Deal and the Levelling-up Fund.

##### **5.2 Legal implications**

- 5.2.1 The statutory requirement to produce a Local Transport Plan sits with the WMCA rather than the City Council. There is no legal obligation on the City Council to produce a Transport Strategy and as such there are no formal legal requirements in relation to consultation.
- 5.2.2 However, it is considered that having a Transport Strategy in place will strengthen the Council's position when it comes to securing funding for transport schemes, negotiating with third parties such as land use developers, and in working with transport bodies to secure improvements to the transport network and services within Coventry.

## **6. Other implications**

### **6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan ([www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/))?**

The draft Transport Strategy directly supports the following objectives set out in the current Council Plan:

- Developing the city centre for the 21st century by enhancing the quality of public spaces
- Creating the infrastructure for the city to grow and thrive by making the city more accessible for businesses, visitors and local people through better road, rail and digital connections
- Increasing the supply, choice and quality of housing
- Creating an attractive, cleaner and greener city
- Improving health and wellbeing by helping local residents lead healthier lifestyles including better mental health

In addition, by adopting an innovative approach to future transport and by investing in new technologies with local supply chains, such as Very Light Rail, the strategy will help to create new job opportunities in the city.

### **6.2 How is risk being managed?**

The draft Implementation Plan sets out details of a pipeline of transport schemes which will be delivered over the lifetime of the strategy, together with the timescales within which it is currently expected that these will be delivered. However, there are risks associated with the delivery of any infrastructure scheme and, in practice, it is highly likely that over time there will need to be changes to the detail of the Implementation Plan.

This could be, for example, as a result of difficulty securing scheme funding, some schemes being deemed unviable or more suitable alternatives being identified and feedback from public consultations. The long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on residents' travel habits, which are not yet fully understood, also adds a further element of uncertainty to this, and could affect the business case for some individual schemes. To manage this, it is proposed to take a flexible approach to delivering the Implementation Plan and to keep it under regular review.

An Annual Progress Report will therefore be prepared to outline progress in implementing the Coventry Transport Strategy, and to report any changes to the Implementation Plan.

Individual schemes will also be subject to the Council's usual processes for risk management, as part of their governance arrangements. This will be proportionate to the stage of scheme development/delivery which they are at and the level of spend associated with them.

### **6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

There are no direct impacts on the organisation in terms of staffing or resourcing. However, the Transport Strategy sets out plans to reduce the level of car travel in the city overall and this would potentially benefit a number of Council services. For example, it would reduce delays that may currently affect various Council vehicles during their day-to-day business.

Similarly, plans to improve the city's public transport network and to make it easier to walk and cycle around the city could make it easier for many residents to access many Council services.

## **6.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

The draft Coventry Transport Strategy has been discussed at a meeting of the Disability Equality Action Partnership, which will continue to be a key stakeholder as the draft Strategy is developed into the final Strategy. An EIA has been undertaken for the draft Transport Strategy. As set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report, the core objectives of the draft Strategy including ensuring equality of opportunity and maximising health and wellbeing for Coventry's residents and users of the transport system.

In addition, individual schemes within the draft Implementation Plan are all subject to the EIA process as part of their project and programme management process.

## **6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment**

The decarbonisation of the transport system is at the heart of the draft Coventry Transport Strategy, with delivering a sustainable, low carbon transport system being one of the four core objectives of the draft Strategy. This approach is critical to enable Coventry City Council to achieve its carbon emissions reduction targets.

Transport is currently the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, both nationally and in the West Midlands. The draft Transport Strategy sets out plans to address this by bringing about a significant change in the way in which we travel over the next 15 years, with the goal of delivering a sustainable, low carbon transport system through the delivery of projects such as the Very Light Rail network, constructing a network of fully segregated cycle routes, and providing charging infrastructure to support the increased take-up of zero emission vehicles by residents and businesses.

As well as helping to meet both national and regional/local climate change targets, this approach directly contributes to several of the United Nations 17 goals for Sustainable Development, including promoting good health and wellbeing, reducing inequalities and promoting sustainable cities and communities.

## **6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

Delivering a change in the way in which we travel will have significant, and mainly positive, implications for local communities. These will include, for example, reduced air pollution, fewer road traffic accidents and improved levels of physical activity among local residents.

In addition, delivery of the Transport Strategy will also have impacts on other partner organisations, including neighbouring local authorities, private sector public transport operators and local employers. Many of these partners have already been engaged in the development of the draft strategy and there will be further stakeholder engagement as part of the proposed public consultation.

The draft Transport Strategy complements the emerging Local Transport Plans currently being reviewed by the WMCA and by Warwickshire County Council, as well as regional strategies being developed by Midlands Connect, strategies developed by delivery agencies such as National Highways and Network Rail, and operational strategies of transport operators, notably bus and rail companies.

The Partner organisations will need to co-operate in order to successfully deliver the strategy and to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to monitor performance, including measuring the reduction in carbon emissions arising from changes to residents' travel habits.

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