

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Thursday 11 January 2024.

Update on the Preparation of the Staffordshire Local Transport Plan

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Note the recent announcements by the Department for Transport.
- b. Review and comment on the outputs and outcomes delivered during the third Local Transport Plan period.
- c. Review and comment on the evidence base that is being collated to inform the new Local Transport Plan.
- d. Review and comment on the progress being made in preparing the new Local Transport Plan, including the Deter, Switch and Improve approach and its application; recognition that the car will remain an important mode of transport in Staffordshire; and behavioural change being a golden thread running through the LTP, essential to realising its vision.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of Councillor David Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Report

Background

1. As a Highway Authority, the Council is required to produce a Local Transport Plan (LTP) under the Transport Act 2008. An LTP sets out a highway authority's vision for the transport network, together with the policies, plans and programmes of schemes to deliver that vision. It includes walking, cycling, wheeling, public transport, rail, car-based travel and freight, together with the management and maintenance of local roads and footways.
2. A paper was presented to the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2023. It set out what was known about the next

iteration of LTPs and how the Council was going to approach its development.

3. Recent announcements from Government suggest a slight shift in national transport policy. In autumn 2023, Government cancelled parts of the High Speed 2 rail programme, including the section through Staffordshire. It also delayed the ban in the sale of petrol and diesel cars. In its recent publication, *A Plan for Drivers*, it states, “used appropriately and considerately, the car was, is, and will remain a force for good”. The national target to decarbonise the UK’s economy, including the transport sector by 2050, remains in place and Government still wants active travel and public transport to be the natural first choice for all who can take them.
4. In March 2023, the publication of the draft LTP guidance was imminent. However, it has still not been published and there is no indication as to when it will. The approach set out in this paper is believed to be correct based on available information.
5. In the absence of guidance, officers are continuing to prepare the new LTP. This is because:
 - a. It influences the Council’s Highway Maintenance and Integrated Transport Block allocations;
 - b. It influences and supports bids for other Government and external funding, including the recent announcement regarding Network North (see para. 45);
 - c. It gives communities, partners and Government clarity regarding the Council’s approach to improving, managing and maintaining the transport network, and supports the development of district and borough council local plans;
 - d. It is a large and complex document to write, requiring the involvement of colleagues from across the organisation and from external partners; and
 - e. It is good practice. Several other highway authorities have already published their new LTPs.
6. A wide range of resources are being used to help develop the new LTP, including:
 - a. An extensive evidence base, which includes information on transport and travel trends, current and future challenges and opportunities, best practice and emerging technologies.
 - b. Ongoing stakeholder engagement through the external LTP sounding group and via the ‘Let’s Talk Transport’ online portal. Through the portal, Councillors, residents, visitors, businesses and other

stakeholders, will be able to let the Council know their views on the LTP's direction of travel.

- c. A Combined Impact Assessment, which is being developed alongside the LTP and is reviewing its emerging policies on health, equality and environmental objectives.
- d. Ongoing multi-disciplinary work by officers from across the Council via the internal LTP working group.

7. The timeline for preparing the LTP is set out in Figure 1.

Outputs and Outcomes delivered as part of LTP3

- 8. An important first phase in preparing a new LTP is to reflect on what has been achieved over the last LTP period.
- 9. The existing LTP was published in 2011, against a backdrop of public spending cuts. This meant that emphasis was placed on delivering more with less.
- 10. The objectives contained in the existing LTP and an overview of performance against these is set out below. Not all the datasets that were used in 2011 are still collected. Where this is the case, proxy indicators have been used to show progress.

Improve journey time reliability in Stafford, Burton and Newcastle

- 11. Data from the Department for Transport indicates that there has been an overall increase in the number of vehicle miles travelled in the county, from 5.63 billion in 2011 to 5.87 billion in 2022. The reason for this growth may, in part, be attributed to the increase in population (by 28,000 over the same period) and an increase in the number of new jobs created in the county, which has risen by 12,000 since 2015 (Office for National Statistics).
- 12. Traffic management schemes, junction improvements and urban traffic control, have sought to facilitate the expeditious movement of people and goods in Staffordshire's main towns. New roads, such as Stafford Western Access Route and Lichfield Southern Bypass, have created additional road capacity to accommodate strategic development sites and free up space on more congested roads. Despite this, data from the National Highway and Transport (NHT) Satisfaction Survey shows an 8% fall in levels of satisfaction with addressing congestion between 2008 and 2022.

Improve access to employment

13. Improving access to existing and new employment sites has been a focus for the Council as it facilitates economic growth. One scheme is on the A34 at Meaford, north of Stone. Here, a new roundabout, road realignment, and improved access for pedestrians and cyclists, has opened up a new employment site, with the aim of creating 2,200 jobs. Other highway improvements that have facilitated access to jobs include Kingswood Lakeside in Cannock, Redhill in Stafford, Keele University Science Park, JCB junction on the A50 near Uttoxeter, and at Branston, south of Burton.
14. Softer measures to improve access to employment include the preparation and delivery of travel plans. Working with both employers and developers, the Council supports this activity, which seeks to encourage behaviour change, leading to the use of more sustainable modes of travel to and from employment sites. Also, the county-wide Wheels 2 Work scheme helped over 1,750 people access employment and training, including courses at further and higher education institutions. The scheme ceased in 2021 due to the ending of regional grant aid and the impact of COVID-19.
15. Whilst employment levels are not directly linked to transport improvements, during the LTP3 period, levels have risen, along with a reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training when compared to the county's 'nearest neighbours'.

Maintain current condition of the highway network

16. Maintaining the condition of the highway network has been challenging since 2011 due to reduced Government funding, rising costs and increased road usage.
17. In March 2023, the Council announced that it was to invest an extra £30m into highway improvements and maintenance during 2024/25 and 2025/26. This is in addition to the £50m annual spend on highway maintenance activities.
18. With the recent announcement regarding funding for highway maintenance as part of Network North (see para.45), the Council is cautiously optimistic about the impact all these funding streams will have on the condition of the highway network.

Increase bus patronage levels

19. Following national trends, bus patronage has declined significantly during the LTP3 period. In 2009/10, levels stood at 22 million passenger journeys and in 2018/19 this dropped to 15.9 million. Although this

decline was occurring prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was severely exacerbated by the pandemic, which saw patronage levels decline to 9.1 million in 2021/22.

20. There are some bus services that have seen growth, including in Tamworth and between South Staffordshire and the West Midlands Conurbation. There has also been continued investment to make bus travel more attractive, including investment in bus stops, real-time passenger information (in the main urban areas) and interchange facilities such as at Stafford's bus terminus.

Improve access to town centres

21. The Council has invested into several town centre regeneration schemes, including in Lichfield and Burton. In Newcastle Town Centre, using a combination of public and developer funding, the Council enhanced the Centre's public realm and options to access the Town Centre via public transport, walking and cycling.

Reduce cost of travel for the young, elderly and those with disabilities

22. Schemes that have sought to reduce the cost of travel for young, elderly and those with disabilities, included the concessionary fare scheme for people over 66 years, the concessionary fare scheme for disabled people, Staffordshire Young Persons' Travel Card, and the Wheels 2 Work Scheme. Some schemes no longer exist due to a range of reasons including budget availability and changes in the market introducing more competitive fare structures.

Reduce the number of road casualties

23. Reducing road casualties remains a priority for the Council and Staffordshire continues to perform well. Countywide programmes such as Safer Routes to School and Bikeability focus on children – one of the county's main vulnerable road user groups. It is estimated that around 120,000 pupils have received Bikeability training since 2010 - Level 1 playground-based training, Level 2 road training and Level 3 advanced road training.

24. Clusters of accidents have been addressed through local safety scheme measures such as anti-skid surfacing, average speed cameras, junction modifications, traffic calming, speed limit reviews, gateways, signing and improved road markings. For example, the A515/B5234 Mitre Crossroads in East Staffordshire was identified as a road casualty cluster site. The Council realigned the junction, installed a splitter island, laid new road

markings, extended the 50mph speed limit, added gateway features, and installed advanced warning signs to complement existing vehicle activated signs.

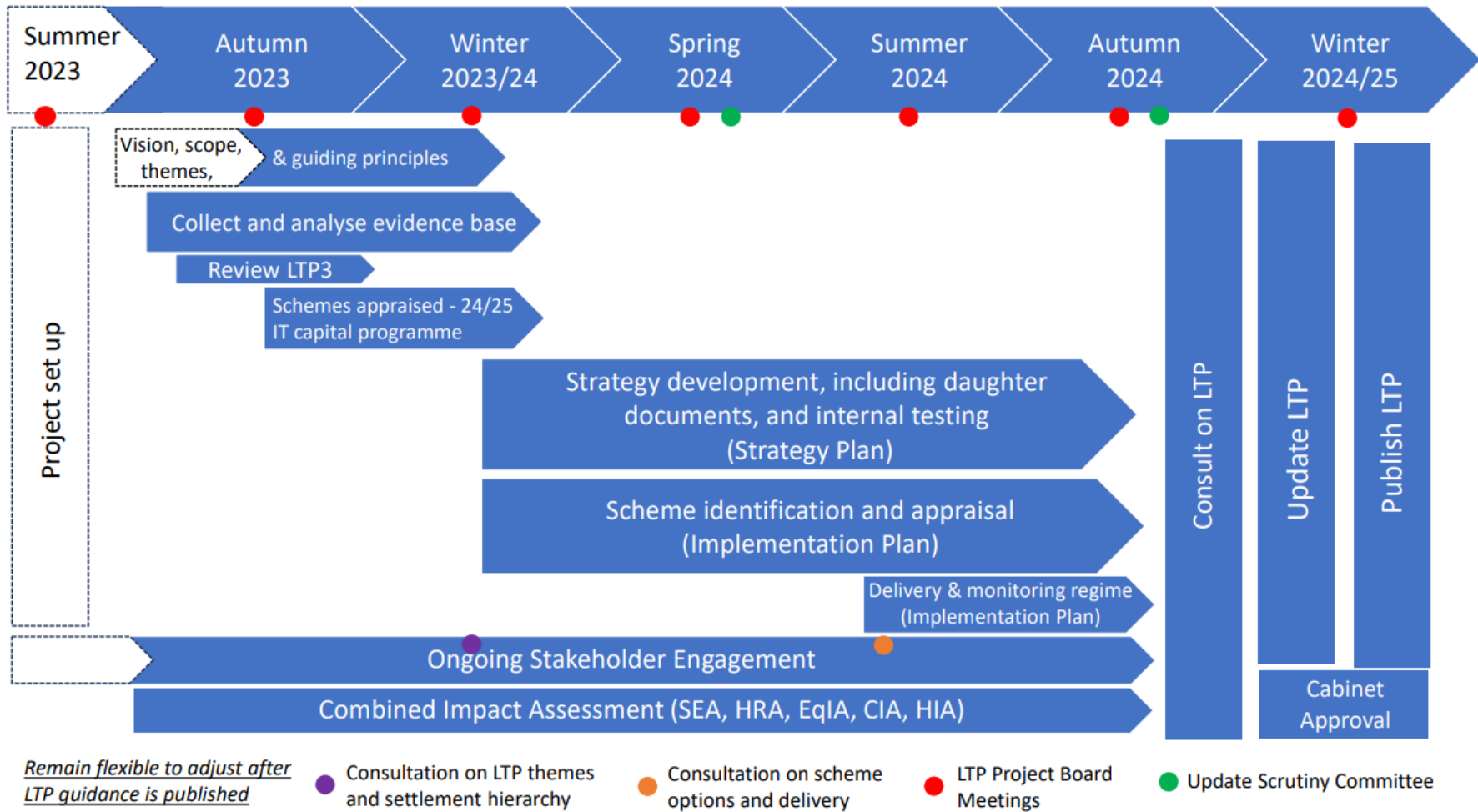
Reduce road transport CO₂ emissions

25. CO₂ emissions from road transport on the local road network is estimated to have fallen from 1659.8 kilo tonnes in 2008 to 1173.7 kilo tonnes in 2020. This is mainly due to the advances in vehicle and fuel technology made over this time. This advancement is also evidenced by the number of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the county. During the period of LTP3, 6 AQMAs have been revoked. Whilst 11 remain, many of those on the local road network are showing improved air quality.
26. Other funding opportunities have existed during LTP3, which have aimed to increase levels of walking and cycling in urban areas and thereby reduce overall levels of CO₂ emissions as well as localised poor air quality. Recently, the Council secured Levelling Up Funding, which will kick start the introduction of electric buses in the county, initially starting in Burton, Cannock and Stafford.

Maintain levels of recreational cycling

27. Sustainable and active travel is an increasing priority for the Council and Government who have made significant levels of funding available to facilitate this. Investment has been made to improve sections of the National Cycle Network, including routes linking to Stafford and Newcastle, as well as cycle connections serving Uttoxeter, Burton and the Staffordshire Moorlands.
28. A scheme which involved significant investment via the National Park Cycle Fund and encourages both commuter and recreational cycling was the Pedal Peak Phase 2 – The Staffordshire Moorlands Link. This was a multi-authority project, which delivered cycling improvements comprising, 14km of new off-road cycle track, along the Caldon Canal towpath, and 22km of new on road improvements, signing the section from Leek to the Tittesworth Reservoir and from Cheddleton to the Manifold Track at Waterhouses.

Figure 1: Local Transport Plan Timeline



Evidence Base for the LTP

29. A strong evidence base is key to enabling policy development and scheme prioritisation, as well as supporting the assessment of carbon impacts. It is important that the evidence base is multi-modal and therefore the emerging LTP will use:
- a. Traffic flow data on key routes within Staffordshire;
 - b. Analysis of journey time delays for key routes in strategic urban settlements using Tom Tom data;
 - c. Bus patronage and reliability data;
 - d. Rail ticket data, identifying key station destinations for Staffordshire residents;
 - e. Flows of active modes where infrastructure is being delivered using Vivacity AI sensors; and
 - f. Data from the 2023 household travel survey, which includes a one-day travel survey, and information regarding modes of travel and journey purposes.

Progress on developing LTP4

30. Government has set a target to decarbonise the UK's economy, including the transport sector, by 2050. Whilst the Council supports this, it recognises that in Staffordshire, the car is, and is likely to remain, an important mode of transport for many residents.
31. The LTP will prioritise active and sustainable travel and will promote efficient use of motorised travel. For example, it may encourage people to substitute car journeys for alternative modes, car share, undertake multi-purpose journeys, and make the switch to electric vehicles. The Council will facilitate sustainable motorised transport as it drives the economy and enables personal freedom.
32. The LTP's two Guiding Principles¹ have evolved.

¹ Statements of intent enable the Council to make the right decisions in terms of delivering the LTP's vision.

Guiding Principle 1 - Provide a transport system that promotes high quality, prosperous places and puts people first

33. This principle, which aligns with the County Council's outcomes and priorities, as set out in the Strategic Plan, 2022-2026, has been expanded to include sustainability and equality. Transport can have significant positive and negative, direct and indirect, impacts on individuals and businesses. When developing transport improvements for the LTP, it is important that this is done in a way which:

- a. supports economic prosperity by improving access to jobs, education training, and shops; enables the expeditious movement of goods and services; and facilitates new employment and residential growth. These areas form a key part of the Staffordshire Economic strategy: 2023-2030, and the Rural Economic Strategy: 2023-2030.
- b. protects the natural environment, supporting the Council's emerging Nature Recovery Strategy;
- c. protects the health and quality of life of Staffordshire's residents and visitors, aligning with the vision in Staffordshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy: 2022-2027;
- d. allows as many different people as possible the same opportunities for accessing education, training, services and activities, ensuring accessibility is not a barrier to participation in community life; and
- e. strengthens social bonds, connecting neighbourhoods and fostering community interaction, which will form part of the forthcoming Staffordshire Communities Strategy.

Guiding Principle 2 - Reduce dependency on petrol and diesel vehicles

34. The focus of this principle is transport decarbonisation, which remains a Government aim and aligns with the Council's Climate Change Framework. However, the 'Avoid-Shift-Improve' approach has been tempered and is now called, 'Deter-Switch-Improve' as shown in Figure 2.

35. A one size fits all approach will not work in Staffordshire as its settlements and local transport networks vary. What may work well in one part of the county may not necessarily be successful, applicable or cost-effective in another part. This also applies to the pace of change, with some settlements being more accepting of change than others. As such, the Council will apply deter, switch and improve measures differently across the county.

36. Varying settlement types (e.g. larger towns, smaller towns, larger villages and rural/dispersed) will be identified and the focus in each will

be different. For example, efforts to encourage people to change some of their car journeys to active or shared transport (switch), or develop sustainable places (deter), will be more suitable in populated areas. In less populated areas, encouraging the take up of electric vehicles (improve) and digital access solutions (deter) will be more suitable.

37. The methodology being used to classify Staffordshire settlements is based on an analysis of:

- a. The residential population from the 2021 Census;
- b. The workplace population from the 2021 Census; and
- c. Access to key facilities within each settlement.

38. Larger towns might include Stafford, Newcastle, Cannock, Burton, and Tamworth; Smaller towns might include Lichfield, Rugeley, Stone, Biddulph, Uttoxeter, Leek and Burntwood; and larger villages might include Wombourne, Gnosall, Cheadle, Penkridge and Eccleshall.

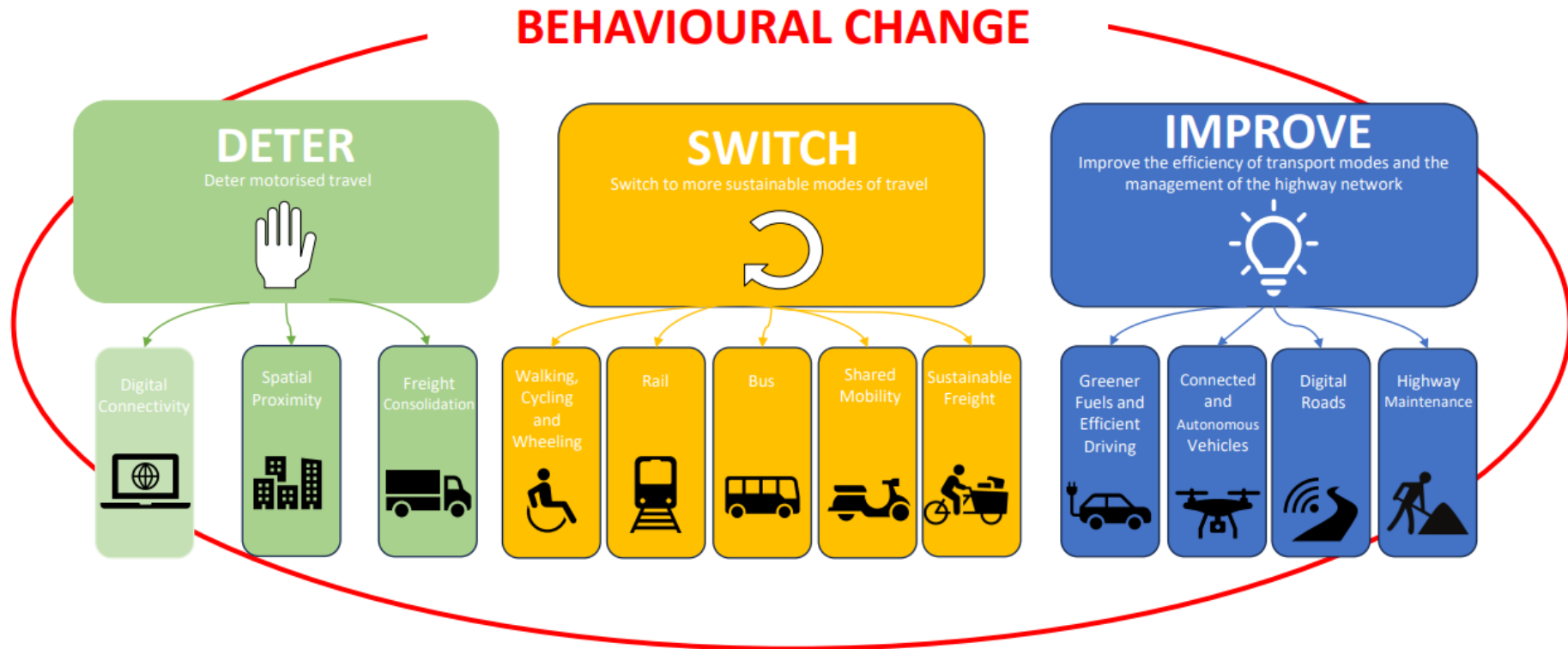
39. As well as a place-based approach to applying deter, switch, and improve measures, a people-based approach will also be used to drive behavioural change. For example, people of different ages are influenced by different factors, both across generations (i.e. cross-sectionally) and within their own generation (i.e. as a 'cohort'). Again, a one size fits all approach will not work as some sections of the population will be more willing and able to embrace deter, switch and improve measures, than others.

40. The LTP provides an opportunity for the Council to refocus its transport policies and programmes under a unifying vision. The draft 2050 vision is for Staffordshire to have:

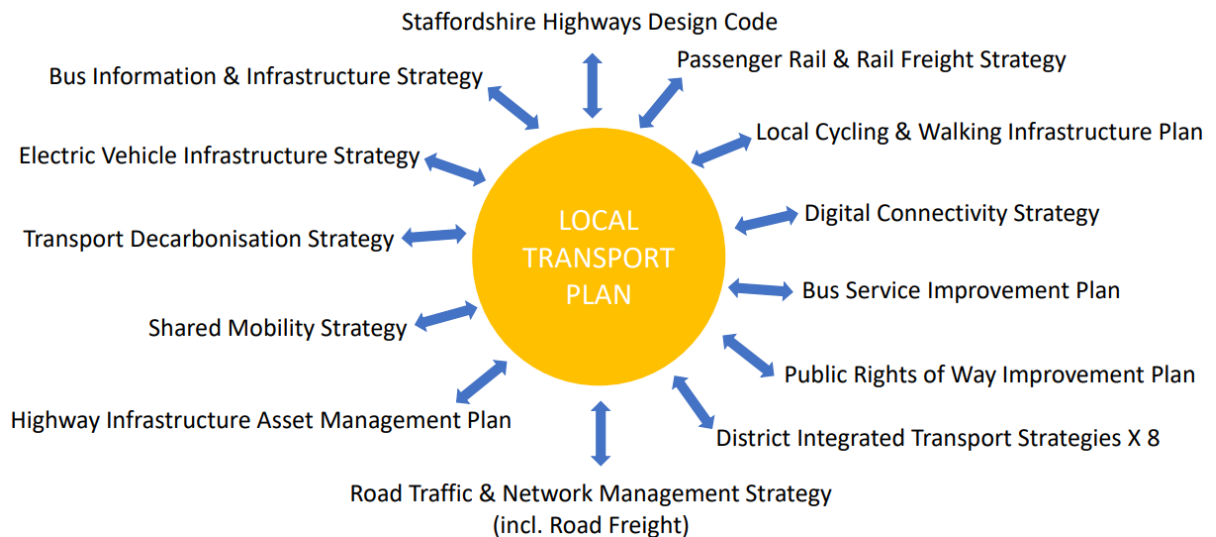
“A net-zero transport system that supports sustainable economic prosperity, healthy, safe and inclusive communities, and excellent quality of life for residents, whilst seeking to enhance the built and natural environments.”

41. In the long-term, delivering the LTP's vision will create a healthier, safer, more prosperous, resilient, and greener Staffordshire. To get there however, residents, visitors and businesses must all adjust their travel behaviour.

Figure 2: Deter-Switch-Improve



42. The strategy documents that will accompany and support the LTP have been identified. Many of these already exist but will need to be reviewed to ensure that they align with national and local transport priorities. The supporting documents are shown below.



43. Eight District Integrated Transport Strategies (DITS) will sit beneath the main document. They will give more details of local challenges and opportunities, together with a programme of planned schemes and future aspirations for each of Staffordshire's districts and boroughs. DITS form a key part of the planning process and will be developed alongside the district and borough councils as they prepare their Local Plans.

44. A Combined Impact Appraisal (CIA) will be conducted at the same time the LTP is being prepared. This will ensure that the potential impact of the LTP on the county's environment, society and economy is assessed. The CIA will play an important role in shaping the LTP, ensuring sustainability is at its core and is central to decision-making.

Network North

45. Network North is a £36 billion plan to improve transport, focussing on the North and Midlands, using the money released from HS2 being abandoned. This is in addition to the local transport and highway maintenance budgets allocated at the last Spending Review. The final list of priorities for Staffordshire that emerge from Network North will be incorporated into LTP4 and will be in line with the LTP's vision.

46. The Government has announced that the funding will need to meet three priorities:

- a. Driver better connectivity within out towns, suburbs and cities
- b. Drive better connectivity between our towns and cities
- c. Improve everyday local journeys for people

47. Funding opportunities that have been announced so far include:

- a. Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) - circa £330m across local authorities in the Midlands.
- b. Local highways maintenance - circa £2.2bn across local authorities in the Midlands. The additional funding will be allocated from 2023/24 to 2033/34 and will be published shortly.
- c. Major Road Network 2 Programme (MRN2) has been announced with £650m going to the Midlands. Guidance will be issued in the spring of 2024, with a potential scheme being the A511/A5121 in Burton.
- d. A new 7-year £4.7bn Local Integrated Transport Settlement (LITS) fund. This is a new fund for the 27 authorities, outside of the city-regions, in the North and Midlands. It is to fund cross-modal transport interventions that meet local needs such as active travel schemes, reducing congestion, buying zero emission buses, safer routes to school, etc. Indicative funding allocation and guidance on producing LITS Delivery Plans will be published shortly, with funding being available from April 2025.

48. Potential schemes within Staffordshire have been mentioned by Government as part of the Network North announcement, including improving Junction 15 of the M6, addressing the M42 Junction 10 pinch point on the A5 by Tamworth, and improving the A50/500 corridor between Stoke and Derby. Although this is great news, feasibility work and robust business cases are needed to determine what the final list of Network North priorities should be for Staffordshire and which ones should be incorporated within the LTP4 Five Year Implementation Plan.

LTP4 Five Year Implementation Plan

49. It is vital that the LTP long term vision contains 'hooks' which can influence future funding, enable the Council to participate in creative pilot schemes, and enable the Council to be part of new and innovative future transport solutions led by Central Government. The LTP also needs to identify a broad and ambitious mix of schemes that provide value for money and can be confidently delivered by the Council within the next five years up to 2030.

50. In March 2024, a one-day event is planned where officers from across the organisation will identify and discuss their ideas for short-term deliverable schemes within the five-year implementation plan and their medium to long term ideas that will deliver the LTP's vision. Ideas may

need to be bold and imaginative, and there is the potential to move away from the traditional types of schemes delivered by the Council.

51. A long list of ideas will be developed and streamlined by applying certain criteria - including assessing them against the LTP's Guiding Principles in Figure 2 - and categorised into short, medium and long term aspirations. Schemes to be delivered in the short term (i.e. 2025-2030), will need a strategic outline business case to demonstrate value for money and deliverability. Councillors, district councils and key stakeholders will be engaged during this process to ensure that they can input.

Governance Arrangements

52. The LTP governance groups – Internal Working Group, External Sounding Board and Project Board – have all met at least once. Members accepted their roles and responsibilities, and all meetings have been productive and well received. Early on, officers sitting on the two Internal Working Groups – Avoid and Shift, and Improve – agreed that they would work better if they met as one, enabling them to understand the full breadth of themes within the LTP and to share their ideas, knowledge and experience.

53. The LTP External Sounding Board has been constructive and supportive in their comments. Its members include stakeholders, representing people and businesses from across the private, public and voluntary sectors, including:

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|--------------------------------|--|
| Keele University | Network Rail |
| Peak District National Park | National Highways |
| Stoke City Council | Staffordshire Youth Council |
| CPRE | Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce |
| Federation of Small Businesses | Age UK |
| Road Haulage Association | Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association |
| Staffordshire Police | |

54. The LTP Project Board provides overall direction and management of the LTP's delivery. Its members include the Cabinet Member for Highways and senior managers from Business and Enterprise, Highways and the Built County, Public Health, etc. In addition, a representative from the voluntary sector and Staffordshire's district and borough councils are represented on the Board.

Link to other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

55. This paper is an update on the report presented to Scrutiny on 22 March 2023 by Cllr David Williams.

56. Further papers, updating members on the development of the LTP, can be presented to the Committee. It may be advantageous if a paper was presented before the scheme optioneering is completed.

57. The LTP will be signed off by Cabinet before it is published.

Community Impact Assessment

58. Transport is an important part of residents' well-being and quality of life, but it may not be experienced equally. People's transport and access needs will depend upon numerous factors, including age, gender, disability, health, education, ethnicity, income, family structure, and occupation.

59. A Community Impact Assessment has been produced and is provided in Appendix 1. In preparing the LTP, the Council must involve and consult people with protected characteristics. Several existing umbrella groups (e.g. Age UK and the Staffordshire Youth Council) that work with people with a range of protected characteristics have been identified and sit on the LTP External Sounding Board. This group meets quarterly and reacts to LTP proposals as a test of their validity or likely success.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Community Impact Assessment

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