

STAFF TRAVEL

Report author: Anne-Marie Scott
Business Manager, Human Resources
01865 252547
amscott@oxford.gov.uk

Lead Member: Councillor Baker

Overview &
Scrutiny Committee: Finance

Key Decision: No

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 1. Members are asked to note revised action plan and endorse action.*
- 2. Members are asked to comment on priorities for further action given the current resource constraints.*

1. Staff Travel

The Environment Scrutiny Committee has been considering the issue of sustainable travel for staff and councillors and how this can be improved and encouraged. A survey was conducted amongst staff to gather information about current travel arrangements both to and during work, and the attitudes and circumstances around those choices.

An initial action plan was produced with 12 proposed actions. This has now been consolidated into 5 main areas: **Incentives, Policy, Facilities, Awareness, Alternatives**. A revised action plan is attached. There are a number of 'quick wins' in the proposed action, some of which have already been implemented such as awareness raising at induction and pre-employment. However the areas likely to have more significant impact will require resources both to plan and implement.

Since the main survey was undertaken, a 'Quick Poll' on the intranet has provided some more information around the use of bicycles which is considered to be the most likely alternative to driving within the city. In response:

- 47% staff said that **lack of facilities** stops them from cycling to work
- 44% said cycling is **not an option** for them
- 9% said **they cycle to work** already

The main reasons given for cycling 'not being an option' were distance and childcare responsibilities. It is unlikely that we will be able to achieve significant change where these obstacles exist but the lack of facilities appeared as the most significant barrier. Although within our control there are resourcing implications.

A mini-survey of shower and locker facilities suggests that space will be as much a limiting factor as money in achieving a better standard of facilities. However both will provide barriers to achieving the type of facilities staff and councillors would be more willing to use. Any action in this area will also need to take account of the work of the accommodation strategy group to ensure that we consider whether investment is feasible against medium-term options for accommodation. For example, although there are shower facilities in St Aldate's Chambers they are communal and this is unlikely to be considered fit for purpose for a large percentage of staff. Whether the investment required to modernise these facilities is reasonable against the medium-term plans for this building will need to be considered. Further, whether resources can be made available given the current budget constraints will need to be clear.

2. Progress to date

Progress has been made on raising awareness of the current incentives and facilities and linking to health initiatives. Our newly revised recruitment pack provides information on all travel options and incentives. Information is also available on the intranet and will be circulated on payslips early in 2006.

Further work is being done on health initiatives including the re-launch of support to quit smoking and alternative health promotion initiatives such as making therapies (reflexology, reiki, massage) available in the city centre and at other locations and making facilities available for activities such as Pilates.

Policy progress has also been made with the Homeworking policy in final draft and out for consultation. This fits within a suite of flexible working policies which will be made available to managers early in 2006. The combination of these policies should also make more travel options available due to more flexibility in working hours and reduce travel through options such as condensed and annualised working hours.

The car-sharing scheme continues to be supported and investigation is underway on the feasibility of providing a further salary sacrifice, or discount scheme, for staff to purchase bicycles.

3. Next Steps

To make more significant progress in this area both wider policy and resourcing implications will need to be considered. In policy terms, whether car parking spaces should be made available at non city-centre sites will be controversial among those staff that currently have access to them and is likely to lack credibility if the space is not made use of in some other way.

Whether resources to achieve improved facilities is a priority will determine whether the issue of showers and storage can be addressed. Similarly, increasing incentives such as bus fare concessions will depend on business units being able to find further cuts in their budgets to compensate.

Work will continue on awareness raising and non-financial incentives. Further information will also be gathered on what might motivate staff to change their travel arrangements.

| No | Recommendation | Tasks | Timescales | Dependencies | Progress |
|----|---|--|--|--|--|
| 1 | Incentives Investigate/provide both financial and non-financial incentives to encourage staff to review travel habits | Review staff travel allowances, including car user, bus fare concessions, park and ride incentives. Consider introduction of cycle purchase (salary sacrifice scheme). | April 2006 Jan 2006 | Financial Capacity to administer scheme, rules on salary sacrifice maximums | Research in progress |
| 2 | Policy Ensure that all staffing policies support green travel objectives. Consider whether to continue providing car-parking space at non city-centre locations. | Review criteria for car allowances Introduce suite of flexible working policies including homeworking Consider whether feasible alternatives are available for staff travel. Consider consequent effect on staff morale. Consider how travel during work will be facilitated (see 6) | April 2006 March 2006 | Financial None | Draft policy in consultation |
| 3 | Facilities Provide adequate and appropriate storage and washing facilities. | Upgrade shower facilities and provide lockers for storage | | Space Financial | |
| 4. | Awareness/Education Raise awareness of current and new initiatives to both existing and potential staff. | Add to pre-employment and induction processes On-going publicity of schemes and incentives available. Link to health initiatives including smoking and alternative therapies | Oct 2005 On-going Jan 2006 | None None Occ Health contract | Information is now part recruitment and induction processes. |
| 5 | Provide alternatives | Consider pool car/bike scheme Car-share scheme | TBC Complete | Financial, organisational capacity, feasibility | |