



AGENDA ITEM: 5(f)

CABINET: 17 March 2015

Report of:	Assistant Director Planning
Relevant Managing Director:	Managing Director (Transformation)
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	Councillor M Forshaw
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SUBJECT: SKELMERSDALE & UP HOLLAND (RE)CYCLE TO WORK SCHEME

Wards affected: All Skelmersdale Wards and the wards of Up Holland, Wrightington and Bickerstaffe

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of the progress made with the (re)Cycle to Work scheme, which provides job seekers with reconditioned bicycles to enable them to travel to employment.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the success of the pilot scheme be noted and the scheme to be continued.
- 2.2 That delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development, to review and as required, amend the terms of the scheme, including membership criteria and operational management.
- 2.3 That S106 money from the Walkers (Pimbo) development continues to be used to support this service.

- 2.4 That S106 money from Maple View is used to extend the (re)Cycle to Work scheme to serve the White Moss Business Park.
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3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In order to help improve connectivity and help those seeking employment in Skelmersdale to access work, the Borough Council has been developing a range of options to help link residential and employment areas, utilising available S106 funds. To date, these options have included provision or improvements to cycle/footpaths and the setting up of a Demand Responsive Transport Service (DRTS). (The DRTS provides a pre-bookable, subsidised taxi service to provide an affordable means of travel to the Pimbo employment area.)
- 3.2 In November 2013, Cabinet approved a (re)Cycle to Work scheme, whereby job seekers could apply for a grant to assist them to purchase a reconditioned bicycle, from a nominated supplier, to help them access employment. Due to limitations incurred from the conditions on the S106 funding source, the scheme was restricted to those trying to reach employment on the Pimbo Employment Area.
- 3.3 In order to ensure bicycles are provided to those with a genuine need, an eligibility criteria was put in place, reflecting the criteria used in the DRTS scheme. To be eligible for the scheme, applicants are required to live in the Skelmersdale/Up Holland area (see Appendix A), work or have an offer of employment on the Pimbo Employment Estate, earn under £17,500 per annum and not have access to private transport.
- 3.4 Applicants were to be referred to the scheme by Job Centre Plus or private recruitment companies and must submit an application form to the Council to have their eligibility checked. Upon membership approval, an order is raised with the bicycle supplier to purchase a reconditioned bicycle, and the applicant is informed when they can collect the bicycle. Bicycles are supplied with safety equipment, at a cost of £50 each. The bicycles conform to the relevant British Standards.
- 3.5 Only one grant per person is available to purchase a bicycle (enforced through the requirement of photo identification). Bicycles are then the property of the employee and they are responsible for maintenance/upkeep and security. No additional grants will be given for bicycles that become damaged or are stolen.
- 3.6 Cabinet requested that an update be provided on the scheme following its 9-month pilot.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Since Cabinet approval, the Council have appointed Skelmersdale company **Exsel** as the nominated bicycle supplier and put in place the necessary administrative procedures required to operate the scheme. The (re)Cycle to Work scheme went live on 1 June 2014.
- 4.2 To date, the Council have had 14 applications for reconditioned bicycles. Of which, one was refused due to the applicant working outside of the Pimbo employment area and two were not collected as a result of the applicants' changing circumstances. Six bicycles have been collected. Five of the applications have recently been approved and bicycles await collection.
- 4.3 The November 2013 Cabinet report estimated the costs of the (re)Cycle to Work scheme based upon take up of the DRTS at the time – which had 248 members. Assuming that the cycle scheme had the same level of demand, it estimated the annual running cost of the cycle scheme would be £9,920 although caveated that expectations would be that take-up levels would be far lower (cycling may not appeal to all people and in winter months bicycle usage generally reduces).
- 4.4 In the first 9 months of the scheme, there have just been 13 approved applications and only six bicycles collected. Current costs for 2014/15, based on the *collected* bicycles, stand at £300. Assuming that the five remaining bicycles are collected in 2014/15, and accounting for a small number of further applications, it is anticipated that the first years cost would be approximately £750.
- 4.5 Clearly, the take-up of the cycle scheme has been significantly lower than hoped for. To try and kick start the scheme, officers contacted local employers and offered them the opportunity to directly refer their employees to the scheme, in addition to the referrals from job recruitment agencies. Despite this marketing, uptake of the scheme has remained limited.
- 4.6 Following the changes to the membership of the DRTS in 2014, those exiting the DRTS were advised that they could apply for the (re)Cycle to Work scheme. Whilst 313 people have registered on the DRTS, and most of those since left, the (re)Cycle to Work has had just 13 approved applications. This is just 4% of the DRTS take-up, and perhaps suggests a reluctance by people to use bicycles to get to work.
- 4.7 Nevertheless, the scheme is considered to be of value – it recycles bicycles, provides local employment, supports sustainability, improves the environment, promotes health and exercise and facilitates access to employment. S106 money remains available to fund and sustain the scheme.
- 4.8 It is therefore considered that the scheme should continue, but a series of initiatives will be explored to encourage greater take-up of the scheme. Proposals include increasing the salary cap from £17,500 to £25,000 per annum to extend the service to a greater number of employees, and removing the condition relating to car ownership in order to encourage the take-up of sustainable transport methods. The focus therefore becomes on encouraging

sustainability as well as providing access to employment. This is in keeping with the stipulations of the planning obligation and it is hoped that these changes may generate some further uptake. Officers will also explore potential revisions to the scheme to improve the aesthetic quality of the bicycles, whether the scheme can offer financial grants to enable employees to purchase new, discounted bicycles at cycle stores, and improved marketing of the scheme.

- 4.9 Unfortunately, the restrictions of the S106 agreements involved mean that the scheme cannot be extended to other employment areas of Skelmersdale or the wider Borough. Use of S106 monies must be geographically linked to the location of the development from which they stemmed.
- 4.10 However, appropriate monies (£14,056) are available from the S106 at Maple View which would enable the scheme to be extended to serve the White Moss employment area, and it is recommended that such monies are used to try and expand the take up of the (re)Cycle to Work scheme.
- 4.11 It is therefore recommended that the scheme continues, but that delegated authority is granted to the Assistant Director Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development, to review and as required, amend the terms of the scheme, including membership criteria and operational management to improve the performance of the scheme.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 5.1 Subject to its on-going success, the (re)Cycle to Work scheme should meet many of the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy. It will assist in getting people to work and will reduce the use of private cars and therefore reduce the amount of carbon emitted. Thus it will have economic, environmental and social benefits.

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The continuation of the scheme can be funded through existing S106 monies specifically acquired for provision of sustainable transport initiatives such as this scheme.

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Some of the Section 106 funding is ring-fenced specifically for improvements to sustainable transport within Skelmersdale and contractually will have to be returned to developers if not spent within a set timescale for schemes such as the (re)Cycle to Work scheme.

Background Documents

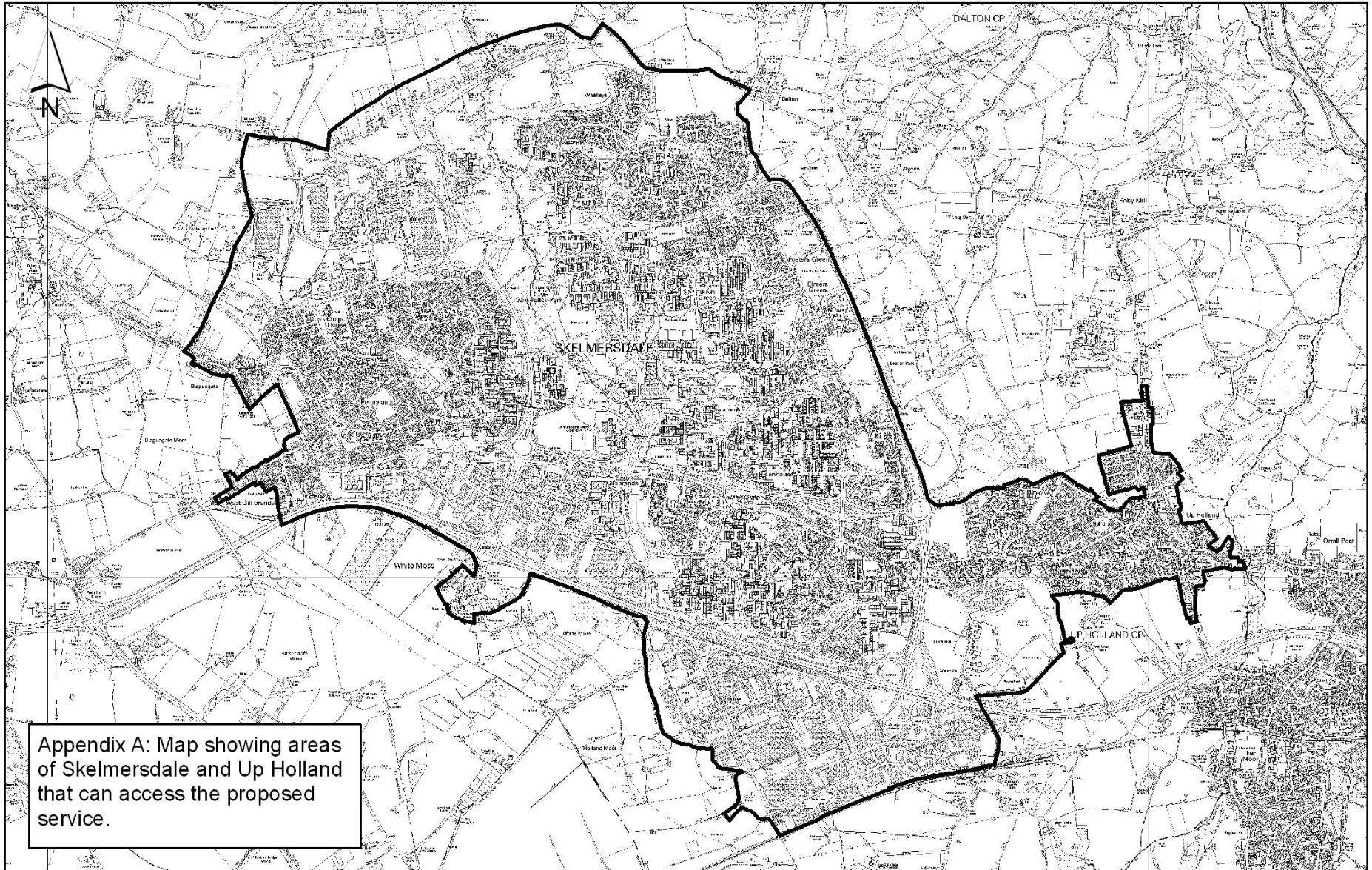
There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Article.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a significant direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account when undertaking the actions detailed within this article.

Appendices

Appendix A- Map showing the areas that can access the proposed scheme
Appendix B – EIA



Appendix A: Map showing areas of Skelmersdale and Up Holland that can access the proposed service.