

12 January 2023		ITEM: 10
Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Active Travel Needs Assessment		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Joanne Ferry, Strategic Lead for Place, Environment and Communities		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sara Godward, Assistant Director of Public Health		
Accountable Director: Dr Jo Broadbent, Director of Public Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The Council's Public Health team have completed an Active Travel Needs Assessment, it was developed in consultation with internal stakeholders from planning, transport, education and road safety. It examines the potential for active travel, how the situation currently looks, identifies needs, and describes factors that should be addressed. In doing so this will ensure Thurrock is providing a co-ordinated and effective approach to delivering the physical infrastructure, information and support that will generate the necessary changes required to increase levels of active travel.

Key Objectives of the document:

- Provide a summary of local data analyses and evidence to describe the current status of active travel within Thurrock.
- Provide information on evidence of effectiveness of interventions that promote and enhance active travel which will help to shape future plans.
- Review local approaches and barriers identified within Thurrock's Active Travel Strategy 2020 and include any new evidence that supports active modes of travel or prevents people walking/cycling to their destinations.
- Provide an understanding of current policies relating to active travel (including any updates since the production of the Active Travel Strategy).
- Inform and guide the development assessment of future policies and strategies within Thurrock ensuring active travel requirements are fully supported.

- Review the local economic impact of active travel, highlighting benefits that will inform the strategic narrative to help secure future investment.
- Provide an understanding of the potential of active travel for improving air quality in Thurrock.
- Contribute to the borough's aims for improving health and the local environment by encouraging more active lifestyles.
- Provide evidence on the potential of new developments and regeneration schemes to include walking and cycling infrastructure as standard.
- Provide relevant and reliable data to cabinet members and decision makers to help them make evidence-based decisions in favour of active travel.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Committee review the needs assessment and the recommendations contained within and provide comment.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Thurrock's Transport Strategy states 'Thurrock is a well-connected borough although there is not always efficient movement of goods and people'.
- 2.2 As our population grows so has a prevailing driving culture, and some road networks are now struggling to cope.
- 2.3 Continued investment in more roads from many perspectives is no longer accepted as positive, with consequences such as poor air quality, obesogenic environments and increasing congestion now prevalent in many areas.
- 2.4 The benefits of Active Travel are outlined within this document. There is evidence that walking and cycling can have significant **mental and physical health benefits**, creating a fitter population as well as saving the NHS and local authority money in health and social care costs.
- 2.5 For **society**, Active Travel has the potential to make our high streets and public places more prosperous and vibrant, it can create a better quality of life and more cohesive communities.
- 2.6 For the **environment**, Active Travel, can reduce congestion, thus lowering emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), particulate matter (PM) and CO₂ helping to tackle climate change and improve air quality.
- 2.7 Studies have consistently shown that investment in active travel delivers value for money in achieving these health, community, environmental and transport benefits.

- 2.8 Cost benefit analysis studies of walking and cycling investment suggests substantial economic benefits of walking and cycling interventions.
- 2.9 On average cycling and walking schemes within the UK have a very high benefit to cost ratio of around 5.62:1, for every £1 spent an investment return equivalent to £5.62 is achieved once you consider health savings, reductions in congestion and pollution, and other associated co-benefits such as lower school transport costs.
- 2.10 Despite our understanding of the long-term benefits of active travel, the National Travel Survey published in 2018 by the Department for Transport (DfT) confirm that cycling and walking have remained almost at the same level for the last two decades.
- 2.11 Figures from the latest National Travel survey show that whilst Thurrock residents maintain similar rates of walking to residents in neighbouring areas, they have lower rates of cycling, and have shown little improvement in either domain in recent years.
- 2.12 A total of 21 specific recommendations have been made by the needs assessment covering: strategic development; statistical analysis; schools and workplaces; road safety; and funding for active travel.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The final version of the needs assessment was completed in April 2021 and was subsequently approved by the Public Health Leadership Team.
- 3.2 As this is a needs assessment there is no requirement of the Committee in relation to options, beyond reviewing the content and offering comment.

4. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 4.1 The needs assessment itself contains significant engagement with relevant professionals from planning, transport, education and road safety. It also captures the voice of local residents through reference to Local Plan consultation, 'Your place, your voice'.
- 4.2 The needs assessment was reviewed by the Public Health Leadership Team where conditional signoff was granted.

5. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 5.1 The Thurrock Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-26 is committed to improving accessibility and equity of access to education, employment,

healthcare and green spaces **through walking and cycling infrastructure**, and improved public transport.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Bradley Herbert**
Senior Management accountant

There are no direct financial implications of reviewing the content of the Active Travel Needs Assessment and providing related comments.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Kevin Molloy**
Principal Solicitor

There are no legal implications of reviewing the content of the Active Travel Needs Assessment and providing related comments. The document contains no confidential information and has been produced through a combination of publicly available information and research conducted in line with standard ethical guidelines.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager, Community Development and Equalities

There are no Diversity and Equality implications of reviewing the content of the Active Travel Needs Assessment and providing related comments.

6.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children

None

7. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

8. Appendices to the report

- Active Travel Needs Assessment

Report Author:

Joanne Ferry

Strategic Lead – Place, Environment and Community

Public Health

Needs Assessment Author:

Tracy Finn

Health Improvement Officer

Public Health