

BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Review of Business Travel

23 February 2016

Report of Chief Officer (Environment)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present, as requested by Budget and Performance Panel, details of the extensive business improvement work that was undertaken by Human Resources and Organisational Development on the council's business travel arrangements. The report also outlines initial plans to realise benefits and efficiencies from service improvements going forward.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) **That Budget and Performance Panel considers the report and appendix, making any comments and recommendations for officer consideration as necessary**
- (2) **That progress on plans in place and being developed around business travel be reported to a future meeting of the Budget and Performance Panel**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's energy strategy recognises the importance of practical and obvious ways of reducing energy usage, and as such includes a review of business travel in the agreed action plan. During 2014/15 a major business improvement review was undertaken to determine the extent of business travel across the council and to gain a clear understanding of current business travel needs from both an operational and customer perspective.
- 1.2 Detailed process analysis of the council's business travel arrangements has been undertaken. This has led to the setting out of numerous options and solutions that could be considered and implemented by individual members of staff and/or at an operational and corporate level to reduce and, in some cases, eliminate business travel.
- 1.3 It is recognised that much needs to be done and that strong leadership will be essential to fully realise the benefits of the review and deliver efficiencies and service improvements. Chief Officers undertook to take a lead on reassessing business travel when reviewing service provision and structures to make best advantage of the options and opportunities set out in the review.

2 Details

- 2.1 *Appendix A* sets out the detailed activities and findings resulting from the business travel review identified under four distinct themes:
 - **Right People** – are the right members of staff generally undertaking travel and is there a business need from an operational and customer perspective?
 - **Right Places** – covered a number of issues around staff work bases; places visited in carrying out work, location of assets / materials needed in the conduct of work and how that generates travel, and travel to and from home

- **Right Reasons** – considered business travel generated from proactive, planned and reactive work
 - **Right Approach** – looked at route mapping, vehicle usage, fleet management and potential alternatives to car travel
- 2.2 The completed review identified a large number of potential opportunities and options for reducing or eliminating business travel when undertaking work through:
- alternative transport arrangements;
 - increased / better use of technology and mobile and remote working;
 - better understanding of customer demand and considering opportunities to change customer expectations of the services the council provides;
 - business improvement techniques and the redesigning of work activities and travel planning;
 - better use of business intelligence and analytics;
 - improved communications to provide a 'one-stop-shop' of information on work travel; journey planning; available technology (i.e. audio and video conferencing), guidance and policy;
 - reviewing the council's fleet management and use of telemetry
- 2.3 Organisational Development have recently worked with officers from Regeneration and Planning Services on a service modelling review of the Development Management function in which actions were agreed to, amongst other things:
- undertake a trial of remote networking tablet devices when on planning visits to aid mobile working;
 - trial online route planning software to help assess the most efficient route for all trips taken and;
 - work up more formal arrangements for sharing workloads when officers are on site visits in an area where other work is also required
- 2.4 Supplementary to the business travel review, arrangements have been made with the agreement of Chief Officers, for the phased cessation of the essential car user designation and allowances by 31 March 2016, based on a consideration and analysis of the characteristics of officers work activities and related mileage data.
- 2.5 Arising from the business travel review and in line with the Council's stated aim of *'no employee being under any obligation to use their own vehicle for business use'*, Organisational Development took a lead on arrangements to establish the management and administration of a pool of vehicles for business use.
- 2.6 Based on an initial assessment of need, six vehicles – three in both Lancaster and Morecambe - were acquired on a flexible hire agreement from suppliers who already provide hire vehicles to the Council. The current agreement runs until the end of February 2016, at which point there will be the potential to consider other opportunities (including an assessment of the potential use of electric vehicles in the future).
- 2.7 The current arrangements commenced on 01 July 2015. Based on an assumption that officers with essential car user allowance will either use the pool cars provided, or their own vehicle and claim casual rather than essential user mileage rates, savings of between £7,200 and £10,700 in 2015/16 and £55,000 and £93,900 in subsequent years have been projected.

- 2.8 The use of pool cars is being monitored and the initiative is proving to be popular with a good level of utilisation against availability so far. Each vehicle is fitted with a vehicle tracker which provides useful data that is helping to understand and inform business travel and flag up potential efficiencies. A detailed report, specifically on the use of the pool cars will be presented after 31 March 2016.
- 2.9 Vehicle trackers are now fitted to nearly all of the council's fleet, including refuse collection vehicles, panel vans, large goods vehicles, road sweepers and various grounds maintenance equipment, providing data on the number of journeys made, when the vehicles/units are in operation and the amount of time taken on each journey, routes travelled and driver behaviour (i.e. instances of speeding and inefficient braking).
- 2.10 Monitored centrally by Organisational Development the data and information has resulted in a greater understanding of the reasons for business travel using the Council's fleet and has led to some immediate efficiency changes in how work is undertaken and improved utilisation of the fleet.
- 2.11 It is recognised that there are opportunities for further efficiencies to be made connected to the strategy and management of the Council's fleet and related work. This work is being picked up as part of other wider service reviews, including the Repairs and Maintenance Service.
- 2.12 Arising from the business travel review, recent budget proposals and changes for 2016/17 – 2019/20 considered by Cabinet, Budget and Performance Panel and subsequently full Council have included '*use of the vehicle [sic] tracking system to improve the management of the Council's fleet*' with estimated savings of over £56k. Plans are also being made for a project to consider the installation of electric charging points from 2017 / 18 that has the potential to generate £30k in additional income to 2019 / 20, and also the viability of use of electric vehicles within the Council's own fleet.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 The review of council business travel focused on gaining a clear and broad understanding of the work and related needs and demands, from both an operational and customer perspective, that generates necessary travel in order to fulfil officer responsibilities and deliver services.
- 3.2 The review covered all Services and identified numerous opportunities to achieve wide ranging efficiencies and savings from the reduction, or elimination of business travel that can be achieved through changing customer expectations and the way that work is carried out. Efficiencies can also be realised through more investment in information technology, like the introduction of In-cab technology in refuse collection vehicles that will provide the added benefit of real time data that will provide useful information, such as the reasons for bins not being collected.
- 3.3 In order to achieve these benefits, it will be important for options to be considered and/or tested as part of service remodelling and effectively coordinated and managed where solutions to reduce travel across the Council are identified.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None directly arising from this report but improvements in driver behaviour and reduce any risks to driver safety.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Outline information is contained in the report. There is the potential to realise further substantial savings through a coordinated approach to reducing and/or eliminating business travel across the Council.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**Human Resources / Information Services / Property / Open Spaces:**

Investment in information technology as part of the review of the needs of Services and exploitation of the digital workplace programme will realise further improvements and efficiencies.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and at this stage, all she would add is that there is a need to ensure that savings are monitored and captured within future budget updates.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Business Travel Review

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1. Right People

Activity	Findings	Options
Right staff undertaking travel	<p>Senior officers undertake certain tasks and journeys that could be fulfilled through alternative means</p> <p>Staff acknowledge that, wherever possible, alternative and existing arrangements could / should be used and / or that such journeys should be part of other activities being undertaken at the time</p>	<p>1) Consider whether journeys need to be made or could be fulfilled through alternative means (i.e. use of technology / courier)</p> <p>2) Consider whether certain activities can be carried out by other members of staff within the Service and / or as part of other activities being undertaken that are close to the destination</p> <p>3) Set up a mechanism that will enable staff to carry out certain tasks on behalf of others from across the council where they are planning travel to, or are located nearer to, the required destination</p>
	Operational services staff travel to meet officers in support services at Lancaster Town Hall	4) Consider whether travel could be reduced by support staff temporarily working in another location and for a set period where the work demands it
	Staff undertaking travel that could fit better with officers in other work areas	5) Consider scope for better communication and understanding of work across the council
Customers	The business travel review has helped to develop an understanding of current business need from both an operational and customer perspective	6) With the support of the Organisational Development team carry out Service specific reviews of business travel and transport from the perspective of customers and operational needs
	There is an improved understanding and acceptance that work should be considered from the perspective of the customer and based on an analysis of demand.	7) Develop and establish business improvement and demand management across the council relating to the work and its impact on business travel
	Staff accept that more efficiencies could be made through managing customer expectations and whilst not yet widespread across the council this is starting to develop.	<p>8) Develop opportunities to change customer expectations in the delivery of Services to reduce business travel and operational need (See also 45) below)</p> <p>9) Review and communicate statutory duties and responsibilities and the operational work of Services to improve understanding across the council and to help reduce the risk of managing customer expectations having a negative impact on other Services (See also 28) below)</p> <p>10) Encourage all staff, no matter where they work, to suggest ways in which the council could manage customer expectations and realise efficiencies in business travel</p>

2. Right Places

Activity	Findings	Options
<p>Consideration of staff 'main work base' and where this is in relation to their work</p>	<p>The main work base for a number of staff is not the nearest location to where the majority of their work currently is.</p> <p>An analysis of travel data identified that an offer based at WLD rather than his current work base would reduce annual mileage by 811 miles. Similarly another officer could reduce travel from 1578 to 973 miles by being based at WLD.</p> <p>Conversely, there are staff located at WLD and MTH whose work is predominantly in Lancaster and rural districts</p> <p>Planned work is predominantly located in one geographical area of the district, away from the officers main work base.</p>	<p>11) Provide staff with the flexibility to work from any of the councils buildings and to consider this as their 'main office base' where it is practicable and more efficient to do so</p> <p>12) Any such plans should involve Property Group (as well as other officers as necessary) and be cognisant of any planned accommodation and service reviews</p>
<p>Use of other premises for planned work</p>	<p>Some officers working on council projects have 'temporarily based' themselves at a council building other than their 'main work base'</p> <p>Other officers regularly travel to undertake work on council projects, sometimes travelling from MTH to the project site on two or three occasions a day. This has included visits where travel to the project site was the only purpose of the journey</p> <p>Officer's travel to one location for planned work from their main work base and return after reason for the visit</p>	<p>13) Actively encourage staff to manage planned working arrangements such that council buildings and external partners premises are used as the work demands and for the duration of the work / activity</p> <p>14) Build travel plans into project management arrangements and service / work reviews</p> <p>15) Manage officer expectations and review corporate policy (staff contracts / T&C's) regarding any premises being considered as the work base for the period of the work</p>
<p>Staff travel to carry out work and return to their main work-base on a number of occasions in a day</p>	<p>A number of staff have outward and inward journeys to their main base on numerous occasions during a day's work.</p>	<p>16) Review the root cause / reasons why staff return to their main work base several times a day and consider alternatives that will reduce mileage and save time travelling, whilst adding value to customers</p>
<p>Staff travel to carry out work and return to their main work-base on a number of occasions in a day (continued)</p>	<p>A number of staff have outward and inward journeys to their main base on numerous occasions during a day's work</p> <p>Staff gave a number of reasons why they have to return to their main work base including: the work demands it and there is no viable alternative ; it is a short trip back to the workplace and the officer has not been out for very long; to have a break; to collect equipment; to complete paperwork / use office systems; it is custom and practice</p>	<p>17) Review the root cause / reasons why officers need to travel to merchants and suppliers and, where practicable, consider alternative means</p> <p>18) Consider this review and any impact it may have on the Stores review being undertaken as part of the work of the Can we fix it? Project Group</p>

2. Right Places

Activity	Findings	Options
Sites, locations and premises visited	Staff visit the same location on numerous occasions	19) Review the root cause / reasons for repeat visits to certain locations with the aim of avoiding / reducing the number of visits and related business mileage 20) Consider more effective data analysis and use of Geographic Information System (GIS) with a view to identifying location 'hotspots' in order to understand the reasons for business travel and to identify areas where specific / alternative action would create efficiencies and improve service delivery 21) Use telemetry software / data to identify and inform decisions on reducing repeat / regular visits to the same location (See also 31) below) 22) Consider whether there is a viable alternative to regular travel to Lancaster University as part of the Active Health Program
	Nature of some work means that visits will be concentrated in one area / location. The work of the Home Improvement Agency is to actively generate repeat visits (based on an initial assessment) to build a relationship with vulnerable persons and as a requirement of funding	See 19); 20) and 21) above
	There are occasions when staff have had an abortive journey that has required a return visit to the same location	23) Pre-plan journeys and carry out checks before travel to avoid / reduce the incidence of unproductive journeys 24) Develop internal communications to ensure that staff across the council whose work may be impacted by any changes are informed so that alternative arrangements can be made and abortive journeys avoided
Travel to / from home	Staff generally plan journeys to coincide with travel to and from home which they consider to be beneficial to the council	25) Review work journeys where they have been planned to coincide with inward and onward travel to / from the officers home to ensure that this is advantageous to the council and has no negative impact on customer demand
Location of assets/materials and travel generated as a consequence	Additional travel is generated on some journeys by a requirement to collect equipment from other council buildings	26) Review working arrangements and the location of assets to establish the frequency of usage and any possible alternatives that will reduce / avoid unproductive travel and 'lost time'

3. Right Reasons

Activity	Findings	Options
Statutory	<p>Some travel is generated to fulfil statutory requirements</p> <p>Notwithstanding statutory responsibilities staff consider that a physical presence is 'highly desirable' where the council is answerable to the public, demonstrating that the council takes its responsibilities and the public's concerns seriously</p>	<p>27) Review and proactively communicate the council's statutory responsibilities (See also 9) above)</p> <p>28) Review work in light of a clear understanding of statutory functions to determine whether it would be advantageous to make changes to the work that will realise efficiencies and reduce business travel</p>
Proactive / planned or scheduled work	Environmental Services supervisors schedule daily visits to check that work is being carried out safely and to the required standards and quality, and staff have the right and adequate equipment to do the job	29) Review supervisory visits to work sites with a view to determining the necessity to do these daily or whether efficiencies can be made without any negative impact on the work and / or the customer
	There are wide variations in the number of visits made in a single journey	<p>30) Review work to gain a greater understanding of the flow and to identify any advantages and efficiencies from alternative arrangements such as visits carried on particular and specified day(s) rather than spread across the whole working week</p> <p>31) Use telemetry software/data to determine how much of the overall journey is spent travelling and to inform any decisions on how this could be reduced (See also 21) above)</p>
	Data highlights predictable peaks in demand for travel in terms of location and possible seasonal variations.	<p>32) Analyse travel data to identify and predict peaks (and troughs) in demand to inform work planning and related business travel.</p> <p>33) Take advantage of predictable travel and any trends to highlight any opportunities for visits to be combined with other business needs and travel within the Service and / or across the council</p>
	Some instances where work is planned around 'evening meetings' based on customer requirements / circumstances.	<p>34) Review flexitime arrangements and, specifically, consider whether it would be beneficial to give staff the flexibility to stagger their working day to meet business needs</p> <p>35) Review work to determine the extent to which customer expectations can be 'nudged' into accepting reduced services and changes to the work that is more in line with the council's capacity and business needs</p>
	Number of visits generated from direct and immediate response to 'complaint(s)' including requiring direct council action (i.e. noisy neighbours and dangerous buildings) and those specifically against the council.	<p>36) Review customer complaints to consider whether this is as a result of failure demand with a view to addressing the causes</p> <p>37) Consider whether an investigation into the complaint requires a journey and the extent to which this can be done through other means (i.e. photographic evidence) or as part of other planned</p>

3. Right Reasons

Activity	Findings	Options
		business travel
Reactive	Some staff commented that there can be a frequent need to have immediate and unrestricted access to a car due to the nature of the work being occasionally urgent / reactive	38) Review the cause of reactive work to determine opportunities to 'switch off' failure demand and determine ways in which reactive work can be reduced or changed to make efficiencies 39) Review data input of business travel through <i>My View</i> to enable an assessment to be made of reactive work and related business travel data
	Some travel appears to have been caused through apparent poor planning / organisation	40) Wherever possible take time to consider ways in which the causes of unnecessary journeys could be eradicated

4. Right Approach

Activity	Findings	Options
Route mapping – Geographical split of duties	Some work is based on geographical area rather than workload / demand.	41) Review work and available travel data and other relevant intelligence / software to determine whether there are any advantages and efficiencies to be gained from work being allocated on geographical area
Route mapping – scheduling beyond current day	Little evidence of work being actively planned and combined beyond a single day with a view to consolidating visits into more efficient journey planning	42) Plan journeys with the aim of reducing the number of journeys made including looking at ways in which work activity can be combined with other planned travel across the working week
	Large number of claims made for a single journeys in a day over a number of consecutive days from office base to location and return	
	Travel to council estates and other locations have been visited on concurrent days	43) Review work with a view to avoiding travel at peak times including changing the work and staggering start and finish times (See also 34) above)
Route mapping – use of technology (Google Maps/ GIS)	Trips are made with little or no route planning to make optimum use of journey time and a reduction in mileage	44) Plan visits using Google Maps or equivalent free software to determine optimum routes to reduce travel time and mileage.
	Route mapping becomes more important where numerous sites are visited to seek ways in which time lost travelling between locations can be minimised (i.e. more value time at sites rather than unproductive time travelling)	45) Review work to establish what triggers the way and order in which visits are made and whether customer expectations can be changed to avoid travel at peak times (See also 8) above) 46) Consider whether work can be managed to identify an optimum ‘round(s)’ where regular visits to the same location are made
Vehicle usage and fleet management	Council fleet vehicles could be utilised more effectively and made more accessible for staff to use	47) Undertake a full review of the council’s fleet and its management to determine what efficiencies can be made
	Instances where car share could have been organised	48) Develop a Car-sharing scheme for the council and / or consider signing up to <i>Shared Wheels</i> a scheme developed in partnership by Blackpool Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and Lancaster University. 49) Improve internal communications within the council with a view to identifying opportunities for car sharing locally and to events / conferences wider afield where public transport is not beneficial
Alternative to car travel	Claims made for short journeys	50) Potential to further promote walking / cycling for short journeys and / or as part of a Healthy Living Campaign
	Little evidence of teleconferencing and video conferencing technology across the council. There is a clear appetite for IT solutions to help reduce travel in the future particularly to facilitate home and mobile working.	51) Review arrangements and use of teleconferencing and videoconferencing and hot-desking facilities. 52) Consider further investment in other IT solutions aimed at reducing business travel and providing the same or better level of service

4. Right Approach

Activity	Findings	Options
Alternative to car travel (continued)	Staff generally feel that the PCSN restrictions has led to an increase in travel and removed the flexibility of home-working	53) Raise awareness of what IT options are available and are being planned for the future and provide necessary training
	Some staff undertake travel by bicycle rather than car	54) Review the cycling policy to ensure that this is encouraged where appropriate but also takes account of the time a journey by cycle may take
Quality of Information (claiming process)	There is an inconsistency in the level of detail provided when making mileage claims with little commentary about the purpose and/or details of the journey	55) Provide guidance and training as necessary on the level of information expected / required to assist with the analysis of business travel and efficiency 56) Ensure that management regularly check business travel data and purpose of journeys, supporting and challenging these as necessary when authorising mileage claims
	Over processing due to multiple claims made on the same day.	57) Raise awareness of best practice for making claims for business travel
Guidance and principles	Staff expressed the view that existing travel policies (largely incorporated in the <i>Employee Expenses and Benefits Guide</i>) are out-dated.	58) Develop business travel guidance and policy and carry out a campaign to change staff culture on alternatives to business travel