

Agenda Item IMD26

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REFERENCE IMD: 2023/26

TITLE	My Journey S106 drawdown for next three years
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways - Paul Fishwick
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	29 November 2023, 11:30 Shute End, LGF 6
WARD	(All Wards);
DIRECTOR / KEY OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framalocco

PURPOSE OF REPORT (Inc Strategic Outcomes)

To request that My Journey funding is released from S106 for the 2023/24 programme and two future financial years (2024/2025 and 2025/2026).

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Executive Member for Active Travel, Highways and Transport approves the proposed drawdown amounts for the My Journey Wokingham programme.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The My Journey Wokingham programme is a behaviour change campaign that delivers improved accessibility and increased levels of walking, cycling and public transport use. Interventions are mainly targeted across three identified workstreams (schools, workplaces and the community). The core programme is funded through S106 developer contributions and as such, much of the activity is focused around new developments to help reduce the impact development has on traffic levels across the borough.

The My Journey programme has been operating for several years and has evolved into a successful programme which includes various activities with children and adults from the age of 2 (Balance bike club) to over 60 (Shine) as well as catering for those with disabilities and assisting those who are unable to afford a bicycle. As well as working in the community the team work closely with schools and businesses to help them increase sustainable travel. Work within developments includes Personalised Travel Planning (PTP), distribution of "Welcome Packs" and use of cycle hubs across the borough where numerous activities and events are held for both new and existing communities.

This paper sets out the proposed expenditure this financial year and the subsequent two years in line with our constitution which enables the Executive Member to approve this drawdown for this three year period.

Background

My Journey Wokingham is a behavioural change campaign, which looks to reduce car travel by increasing active and sustainable travel.

My Journey Wokingham started in 2012 and was the result of a successful funding bid to central government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). This initial three-year programme received £2.27 million from LSTF to support the cost of implementing a range of sustainable transport measures. My Journey Wokingham has continued to grow over the years and is now funded in a range of ways including from S106 funding secured from local developers and successful funding bids to the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Over the years My Journey Wokingham has delivered a targeted package of proven behavioural change interventions. It is recognised that, not only do walking and cycling offer alternatives to car use over short distances, but also as part of multi-modal journeys by public transport. In light of this, our local bus and rail networks are also promoted by the initiative to help people switch to sustainable modes for all or part of their journey.

A number of activities included within the My Journey Wokingham programme are currently running and proving extremely successful. Including:

Teaching children from the age of 2 to cycle, this includes a successful **bikeability programme** which offers cycle training to all year 6 children in the borough

Providing cycling activities for all including an over 60's group and Woky wheels for All; *(for people with disabilities, bicycles can serve as valuable mobility aids that can offer greater independence and convenience compared to walking. According to Wheels for Wellbeing, 75% of disabled cyclists consider their cycles as mobility aids).*

ModeShift Stars which rewards schools for producing and maintaining travel plans and increasing sustainable travel to school.

A **Personalised Travel Planning (PTP)** programme which operates annually in new development areas. All new residents also receive travel packs to help them make sustainable choices from the moment they arrive to live in the borough.

Better Points and **Love To Ride** initiatives which gamify and incentivise cycling, walking and using public transport.

Work with Businesses to help them develop their travel plans and sign up to various initiatives, including the recent cargo bike hire scheme which enables them to trial e-cargo bike deliveries before going on to purchase their own.

Numerous **community events** promoting active travel and road safety.

Ongoing development of our **marketing and social media campaigns** as well as maintaining a popular and valuable website myjourneywokingham.com.

Business Case (including Analysis of Issues)

My Journey Wokingham is part of a borough-wide strategy developed and delivered by Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) for promoting sustainable travel options. Walking, wheeling and cycling are low carbon modes and, along with public transport, are the most efficient uses of limited road space. By encouraging modal shift from private car to active and sustainable travel we can move more people on our streets, reduce congestion and improve local air quality.

Following the success of the LSTF funded work, a decision was taken to enable developers to contribute to the programme in place of the need to provide a Travel Plan for their developments. This has made it possible to focus on the new developments and particularly new residents when they move into the borough and provide them with travel planning assistance and information to help them start new travel habits before they establish car-based travel as the norm.

The popularity of this option for developers has meant that there is sufficient funding for the My Journey programme to continue in the long term. To date, following multiple years of delivery, the initiative has accumulated S106 income which is available specifically and solely for the borough's My Journey Programme. There will then continue to be a regular income for the programme from new developments in the borough in future, assuming they continue to take up the option of contributing to My Journey rather than produce a "traditional" travel plan.

Transport is of the key contributors towards our emissions, and with higher-than-average car ownership in the borough, reducing transport emissions is a priority area for the borough and its Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP). Many of the actions in the CEAP are being delivered by the My Journey programme and many of these were already initiatives underway because the programme has developed to cover health and wellbeing, climate emergency and tackling poverty agendas.

The My Journey Wokingham programme provides our residents, businesses and developers with information on all the alternatives to the private car (empowering our residents to choose), highlights the flexibility of the different travel options, and provides consistent messages about active travel.

My Journey Wokingham aims to:

- Reduce the number and length of car trips;
- Promote health and well-being;
- Improve air quality; and
- Mitigate the impact of new development.

In addition to increases in health, physical activity levels and general well-being, walking and cycling have a real part to play in reducing health and social inequalities. As low cost and low carbon transport modes, walking and cycling are well-suited to those on low incomes or those who are unemployed with no access to a car and / or limited access to motorised alternatives.

To realise these aims, the My Journey Wokingham programme continues to:

- **Utilise our existing assets** – our established walking and cycling network, our dedicated cycle maps and our equipment and resources – to engage with residents to make active travel the norm for everyday journeys.
- **Engage schools** to inspire the next generation to walk, cycle or use public transport for everyday journeys from an early age. We will achieve this through the provision of assemblies, classroom resources and information for parent mail, in social media and at local events.
- Seek to **overcome barriers to cycling**. Including:
 - We start children cycling at a young age, increasing the uptake of Bikeability. Weekly Balance Bike Clubs (age 2-4) are run at our local bike hubs and attended by an average of 30 children each week. We have several children as young as 3 years progressing to riding pedal bikes competently.
 - We continue the culture of safe cycling for children into adulthood by delivering led transition rides to secondary schools and adult cycling sessions.
 - Woky wheels for All – access to trying non-standard cycles for individuals with balance or mobility issues.
- Continue to **work with new and existing businesses** which benefit from good walking, cycling and public transport access to offer workplace events ensuring information provision, support and ongoing communication. This will be further supplemented by businesses taking part in our cycle challenges.
- Encourage both **schools and workplaces to take part in active travel challenges**, including Walk once a Week (WOW), the Big Pedal, and Love to Ride's Cycle September which targets new and occasional cyclists and encourage regular cyclist to cycle more often.
 - To date, our Love to Ride Cycle Challenges have engaged with 126 organisations, 2,770 participants and 197,509 rides and covering 2,448,298
 - Perhaps more importantly than the numbers alone, the behavioural change shows continued significant changes to participants travel patterns, with 31% of all participants riding more frequently 6 months after each challenge.
- **Promote specific campaigns**, such as clean air day, not only to raise awareness of the issues and impacts of car travel and air quality, but also to increase the number of followers and expand the reach of our social media feeds for the future distribution of information.
- **Increase levels of walking, cycling and public transport use** and offset traffic growth from new housing developments.
- **Engage with local community groups**, such as Wokingham Active Travel Community Hub (WATCH), to maintain an open dialog and provide updates on ongoing active travel infrastructure improvements.

Lastly, My Journey Wokingham complements our capital programme which is delivering significant new walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure as we promote new off-road infrastructure and quiet routes suitable for active travel to children, parents, workplaces and the wider community. We achieve this through increased social media/press release coverage, led rides and bespoke mapping.

Changes to existing provision

A review has been carried out into the existing services My Journey provides, this will lead to some minor tweaks in the programme which will help the programme to improve its effectiveness and make better use of staff time. This includes working more with hard-to-reach groups and ensuring we continue to achieve the council's priorities around tackling poverty and equality.

In addition to this there are some additional items that require a small increase in drawdown compared to 2022/23. These changes need to be made whilst ensuring that the purpose of the S106 funding (to minimise the impact of new developments on the highway network) is still considered. These are:

Staffing:

The DEFRA Air Quality Grant has been highly successful with the borough being awarded funding annually which has until now given the borough an additional resource to focus on Air Quality in School that are in or around our Air Quality Management Areas. Following DEFRA changing their Air Quality grant criteria, My Journey were unable to bid for funding and so face losing this valuable resource. There does exist, however, a post in the My Journey Team that has not been filled since 2019, in part due to the additional resource the team benefitted from due to the DEFRA project. It is proposed that this post could be filled next financial year to support the existing Active Travel Officer who currently works 2 days per week with schools. This new resource would enable a greater reach in schools and enable delivery of the School Streets programme. As well as supporting other Council initiatives such as Independent Travel Training for SEND students and improving pedestrian skills to help students gain confidence and the ability to travel to school with a greater feeling of safety and independence.

In addition to this there has been an increase in cost overall due to inflation and changing salaries, as well as a change in management where the previous transport planner responsible for managing the team has not been replaced. This is now undertaken by the transport planning team manager.

Activities:

In 2022/23 a DEFRA grant was used to fund the development of the Innovation Valley application. This has proved popular with residents and has encouraged over 1200 residents to travel more sustainably by rewarding them with vouchers. In 2023/24 this was transferred to the Better Points application, and this has continued to be a success, it is proposed that this continues on an ongoing basis.

Lastly the review has highlighted that it is often difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme in reaching some of its objectives due to lack of data. It is therefore proposed that funding is set aside to carry out annual monitoring and ongoing review, evaluation and improvement throughout the lifetime of the project.

Spend Profile

The proposed expenditure, along with the spend from 2022/23 is provided below. It should be noted that these figures represent the maximum amount the team would

need to drawdown to effectively complete the proposed programme. This is based on existing costs with allowance for inflation and salary increases. There are often additional funding opportunities that occur in year which will help reduce this figure and so the actual amount to be drawn down is often not known for certain until towards the end of each financial year:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Total Grant Spend	£ 233,025	£ 264,156	£ 100,100	£ 95,506
Total Council Revenue	£ 29,130	£ 29,130	£ 29,130	£ 29,130
S106 total (ex staffing)	£ 168,367	£ 203,870	£ 237,850	£ 253,869
Staffing	£ 180,633	£ 218,793	£ 264,254	£ 316,620
Total S106 Spend	£ 349,000	£ 422,663	£ 502,104	£ 570,488
Total MJ Spend	£ 611,155	£ 715,949	£ 631,334	£ 695,124

As highlighted above, the required drawdown from S106 for the next three years is:

2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
£ 422,663	£ 502,104	£ 570,488

Remaining funds

The S106 funding which My Journey draws from is specifically worded in legal agreements as “the My Journey Contribution” and as such can only be used for My Journey activities. The proposed level of spend is sustainable in terms of the available funding in that S106 pot, whilst ensuring there are no expired funds.

Throughout the period, further S106 agreements and payments will continue to be monitored in order to ensure that the My Journey team continues to be sustainable. The current level of development is relatively low and it is anticipated that there will be an increase in activity and accordingly increased S106 in the future.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£422,663	yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£502,104	yes	Revenue

Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£570,488	yes	Revenue
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Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
 As described above, there is an ongoing income stream and sufficient to cover the 3-year period, though there is some uncertainty as to the level of future funding beyond this as it is reliant on development in the borough.

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including property and priorities?)
 The My Journey Team works closely with the rest of the Transport Planning and Highways teams, Public Health, Adults and Childrens Services, Sports and Leisure, Economic Development and the Climate Emergency Team. My Journey activities contribute to various objectives of each of these teams.

Public Sector Equality Duty
 An Equality Impact assessment has been completed for the programme and this shows positive impacts. It is important to consider the impact on equalities if the team were not able to continue to operate as this would impact on many protected characteristics and the community as a whole.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Resources and Assets	
Monitoring Officer	
Leader of the Council	

For Highways use only	
<i>If your item is not about a highways matter you do not need to complete the Town and Parish Council information or the Local Ward Member information</i>	
Town and Parish Councils	
Local Ward Members	

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers

Contact Robert Curtis	Service Place
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