

Delegated Decisions report



29 November 2022

PROPOSAL TO EXTEND THE CURRENT E-SCOOTER TRIAL IN MILTON KEYNES UNTIL MAY 2024

Name of Cabinet Member	Councillor Jenny Wilson-Marklew (Cabinet member for Climate and Sustainability)
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Exempt / confidential / not for publication	No
Council Plan reference	Not in Council Plan
Wards affected	All wards

Executive Summary

Milton Keynes City Council launched a trial of E scooters in August 2020. This followed a local evaluation of potential benefits of deploying e scooters along with requests from Government for local areas to launch trials of licenced electric scooters to support mobility. This at a time when the UK moved out of lock down but with guidance which advised people to avoid public transport.

The trials were initially programmed to last for twelve months at which point legislation was expected to be in place to allow regulated services (should data and evidence show user / mobility benefits).

To support the trials in Milton Keynes, the Council established a collaborative stakeholder group to help identify and address concerns as they arose.

Due to continued pressure on parliamentary time, Department of Transport (DfT) have stated legislation will not be in place before 2024 and as a result, rather than halt the trials the opportunity to extend trials has been offered to all current trial areas (to 31 May 2024).

The service in MK is regarded by many as a success in supporting lower cost, sustainable mobility and the ride data suggests this has had a positive impact on people's ability to access all parts of the city using primarily our redway network. So far, we have provided approximately 1.6m journeys, with 90% being utility journeys (point to point) and have replaced an estimated 390,000 car journeys - saving 128t carbon.

However, there have been some issues particularly in the early months of the trial around poor rider behaviour, poor parking, and inappropriate speeds. Many of these issues have been addressed through scheme changes and enforcement action. But a few isolated incidents still occur, and we, like many other trial and non-trial areas have issues with illegal (non-licenced) scooters.

1. Decisions to be Made

- 1.1 That the continuation of the current trial of E-scooters in Milton Keynes until 31 May 2024 be approved.
- 1.2 That Cabinet consider, by the end of 2023, whether the Council would want to support the continuation of E-scooter operations beyond the trial period should appropriate legislation / regulation be in place.

2. Why is the Decision Needed?

- 2.1 The Council has been given the option by the DfT to extend the current set of e-scooter trials beyond the current planned end date (end November 2022). The Council could choose to end the trial now and await forthcoming legislation (programmed for Spring 2024) but this would mean a gap of 18 months without services. The decision however invites the continuation of the current operations to support users and to benefit from further data and experience from running the trial in largely 'business as usual' environment (i.e. no covid restriction and all season operations). The Council would also be better placed to influence future legislation and regulation. This would then allow the council to make a more informed decision about a long term 'permanent' scheme post spring 2024.

3. Benefits and Risks

- 3.1 Additional benefits of the recommended approach are that users can continue to use the E-scooter services for a mix of uses (commuting, leisure, shopping). Evidence in the summary table below and the attached **Annex** suggests that the services are popular with many users, provide a lower cost alternative and can assist in reducing car use and carbon emissions.

Table 1 - Summary Statistics - E-scooter use in Milton Keynes

Max number of scooters	1,300 (spread across 3 operators)
Total rides	1,578,000 trips
Total distance	3,318,000 kms
Average ride distance	2.1 kms
Total users	30,000 (est)
Car trips replaced	Estimated at 350,000 – 400,000*
Carbon saved	128 Tonnes**
Regular use	87% of riders are regular users

* Replacing car trips, taxi and ride hail, from University of Salford study

** based on DfT guidance on vehicle emissions per km.

Financial

- 3.2 The are no financial implications for the Council. The cost of operation, any new infrastructure, insurance and maintenance are the responsibility of the operator. The Council’s day to day scheme management is reducing as the scheme becomes more established and therefore can be resourced from existing staff budgets.

Reputational

- 3.3 The Council has been at the vanguard of e scooter trials and operates what data suggests is one of the most successful trials in the UK, and the only location in the UK with multi operators - multi operators gives better consumer choice and incentivises the operators into maintaining quality services because of competition being available.
- 3.4 Whilst there have been a number of issues and incidents, these have largely been dealt with by maintaining strong dialogue with the operators and addressing the issues raised by residents and stakeholders in frequent forum discussions. This has meant that issues have been addressed swiftly and the scheme evolving into a stable and well-run trial. The measures adopted through this dialogue include a reduction in speeds across Milton Keynes. Further speed reductions in Central Milton Keynes. Parking measures (e.g. all scooters need to be photographed when parked to ensure considerate parking) and area restrictions to remove scooters for certain sensitive areas.
- 3.5 The operators have brought in stronger enforcement measures for users with bans and ‘fines’ applied to users who do not follow guidance. It is estimated that 300 individual sanctions have been imposed since the trial launched.

Operational

- 3.6 The scheme is now well established and operates in line with trial requirements set by the Council and DfT. The trial extension does not permit any increase in e scooter numbers or the introduction of any further operators.

Risks and Mitigations

- 3.7 Without a trial extension, a number of users who rely on e scooters will be left (in the short term at least) without this mobility option. This could be mitigated if the decision was to gradually withdraw from the trial. However, this could lead to increase car use and / or using more expensive modes further increasing pressure on some household budgets at a time when perhaps cost increase would be felt the most.

4. Implications of the Decision

Financial	no	Human rights, equalities, diversity	no
Legal	no	Policies or Council Plan	yes
Communication	no	Procurement	no
Energy Efficiency	yes	Workforce	no

(a) Financial Implications

There are no financial implications with this decision.

(b) Legal and Procurement Implications

The Council operates the trial via an operational agreement with the operators. This requires (in summary) the operators to:

- use e-scooters which have the necessary approval from DfT;
- maintain timely data on operations and supply this to the Council / DfT;
- take direction from the Council to address operational issues and maintain KPI around responding to incidents/reports;
- operate only on legal routes (e.g. highway (not footpaths));
- operate at agreed lower speeds in sensitive areas; and
- enforce appropriate rider checks and operate enforcement to improve rider behaviour.

The Council has the right to give notice to operators to cease their operation should poor performance jeopardise rider and other highway users' safety, fall foul of DfT licence conditions or stop delivering the outcome the Council desires.

(c) Legal Planning / Highways Implications

DfT have issued operator licences which provides the legal framework for e-scooter operations. E-scooters are classified as a 'motorised' vehicle therefore all vehicles need to be roadworthy, have insurance and have a rider with a driving licence. The necessary checks are undertaken by DfT prior to licences being issued.

(d) Council Plan Implications

The Council Plan has key priorities for action on Climate Change and Sustainable Mobility with the ambition to become Carbon Neutral by 2030. The scheme is demonstrating reductions in carbon by reducing car borne transport.

5. Alternatives

5.1 The Council could halt the trial, and under the current agreements we have with the operators ask the services to be halted within 20 working days. This would effectively mean the trial ends by the end of the calendar year. This would impact current users who benefit from the service and may lead to further growth in illegal scooter usage.

5.2 We could scale back the trial and/or only operate in certain areas. This would require the Council to consider impact on users, equity, and address 'complexities' of service areas and impact it may have on encouraging illegal users.

6. Timetable for Implementation

6.1 The scheme would operate under current operating conditions until 31 May 2024. It is expected national regulations will be in place in the run up to this date and the Council can take a further decision on operating any permanent services beyond this date.

List of Annexes

Annex E-Scooter Usage and Analysis

List of Background Papers

None