

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

13TH FEBRUARY 2024

CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT – COUNCILLOR PHIL LARRATT

Report Title	Bikeability Contract
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List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Cath Whitehead	24 th January 2024
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	24 th January 2024
Other Director	Stuart Timmiss	24 th January 2024
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	24 th January 2024

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1. Purpose of Report

The current Bikeability training contract, managed by a third-party provider, concludes on 31 March 2024. There will be a period of extension to allow for new tendering process with a view to start a new contract on 2 September 2024 subject to this being legally permissible, which is being considered by the legal team. The value of the new contract is in the region of £598,607 for the proposed duration including extensions. This report is to seek approval to procure a new Bikeability contract.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Bikeability, a national cycling proficiency scheme funded by the Department for Transport, equips the next generation with skills and confidence for safe cycling. Comprising three levels, the program spans basic to advanced skills, targeting children from learning to ride until secondary school age.
- 2.2 Bikeability Plus complements levels 1, 2, and 3, addressing barriers to cycling by encouraging non-riders, involving parents, and facilitating access to cycles and local cycling routes. The initiative is underpinned by the National Standard and is delivered across West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) areas through annual grant funding.
- 2.3 The government's £20 million investment emphasises the commitment to promoting cycling, aligning with the ambition for 50% of urban journeys to be walked or cycled by 2030. With funding in place since 2007, the continuity of Bikeability funding seems likely in the years ahead.
- 2.4 There is potential risk to young people's safety and informed travel choices in WNC if Bikeability training is not provided. Active Travel England's grant empowers WNC to procure its own contract, offering greater control and simplified procurement processes.
- 2.5 Financially, Bikeability is entirely grant-funded, managed by Kier on behalf of WNC. Legal considerations involve complying with grant conditions and adhering to Public Contract Regulations for the proposed contract's value. The contract term is suggested to be seven months initially from September 2024 to the end of the current financial year, with an option for extensions based on future funding when this is known.
- 2.6 The positive climate impact of Bikeability is evident in its contribution to encouraging active travel, reducing single-occupancy vehicle journeys in West Northants.
- 2.7 In conclusion, the proposal for a new Bikeability contract aligns with broader government initiatives, emphasizing the importance of continuing this essential programme to ensure the safety, confidence, and informed travel choices of the region's young cyclists.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet agrees to procure a new Bikeability cycle training contract with delegated authority given to the Executive Director for Place and Economy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste, to award the new contract.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- The recommended course of action is the most cost-effective
- The future Council (or customers) will receive the maximum benefit from the option proposed
- To accord with legislation or the policy of the Council
- Consistency with previous decisions on Bikeability

5. Report Background

- 5.1 Bikeability is ‘cycling proficiency’ for the 21st century, designed to give the next generation the skills and confidence to ride their bikes on today’s roads. It is a national scheme, funded by the Department for Transport through their executive body Active Travel England and delivered to national standards.
- 5.2 There are three Bikeability levels, with each level designed to help improve children’s cycling skills, no matter what they know already. The three Levels take trainees on a journey from the basics of balance and control, all the way through to planning and making a journey by themselves on busier roads.
- 5.3 Children will typically start Bikeability lessons once they have learnt to ride a bike:
- Level 1 will help new riders to control their bikes.
 - Level 2 will help develop on-road skills and is usually tackled by children in Years 5 or 6, before leaving primary school,
 - Level 3 teaches trainees how to ride in different and more challenging traffic situations and is usually completed by children of secondary school age.
- 5.4 Bikeability Plus complements and supports Bikeability at Levels 1, 2 and 3. Bikeability Plus modules aim to increase the take up and impact of Bikeability on children’s cycling. Bikeability and Bikeability Plus are underpinned by the National Standard.
- 5.5 The modules address some of the barriers to getting more children cycling, more safely, more often. For instance, they help to get non-riders riding, parents involved and supportive, those without access to a working cycle included, and provide knowledge about local cycling routes/opportunities to enable cycling after Bikeability training.
- 5.6 Bikeability Grant Funding allows the training to be delivered to all areas of West Northamptonshire. Funding is only announced on an annual basis however there is no suggestion/reason that funding will not continue at the present time.
- 5.7 The cost of the training is met in full by the Department for Transport and is primarily delivered through schools. The DfT launched Active Travel England as the executive agency that is responsible for promoting active travel, which includes Bikeability
- 5.8 The table below shows the number of people trained in the county at each level in recent years, and the grant WNC was allocated to fund this:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Grant allocation		198,972 WNC/NNC	216,977 WNC/NNC	235,746 WNC/NNC	231,719 WNC only
Level 1	437	814	1618	1652	845
Level 2	1181	3929	4021	4434	4291
Level 3	9	55	89	119	59

Balance		344	461	280	157
Fix					
Promotion					
Learn to Ride	23	80	110	41	22
Total	1650	5220	6299	7480	5374

RE : The grant allocation for 2024/25 Places booked between April & July 2024 for the period of the extension to contract award the value will £108,057: -

5.9 Bikeability receives record £20 million government investment to improve access to cycle training - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) the government announced that it wants more parents and pupils to choose cycling for the school run and other everyday journeys, as they look to decarbonise our transport network and build back greener from COVID-19. The ambition is for half of all journeys in towns and cities to be walked or cycled by 2030 and DfT is allocating an unprecedented £2 billion over 5 years to deliver that ambition. Bikeability funding has been in place since 2007 and it is, therefore, unlikely that this will not continue in the forthcoming years.

6. Issues and Choices

6.1 The risk of not providing Bikeability training denies young people the opportunity to cycle safely and confidently in West Northants and make informed choices about the way they travel in the future. If WNC do not provide training, there is a risk to increasing KSIs across the authority area.

6.2 Active Travel England provide grant to West Northants Council. Now the old contract has come to an end, WNC will procure its own contract which will provide benefits such as greater control over the service provided, and less complex procurement, decision making and contract management processes.

7. Implications

7.1 Resources and Financial

Bikeability is entirely grant funded by the Department for Transport, with information set out in the body of this report. Kier manages the contract for Bikeability on behalf of WNC and that post is funded from the revenue base budget and is part of the Road Safety Education Officer's remit. If WNC do not apply for the grant and deliver the training they will be unable to apply for the funding in future years so an opportunity will be lost

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 The contract proposed will be funded by grant funding from Active Travel England the executive agency that is responsible for promoting active travel, part of DfT. There are grant conditions associated with this funding which will need to be complied with and reflected in the contract documentation.

7.2.2 The value of the contract is over the current threshold under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 for public services contracts therefore the procurement should be undertaken in accordance with these regulations.

7.2.3 Since funding is only confirmed for 2024/25, the contract term should be 7 months only initially from 1st September 2024, with option for WNC to extend should further funding be received a further 1+1+1. A total of 3 years and 7 months if all extensions were taken.

7.2.4 The report will also need Monitoring Officer or equivalent sign off. The Monitoring Officer will review the report and the extent to which it meets the public law requirements for a lawful decision.

7.2.5 If the report is to note only or is primarily an information report the report should say:

'There are no specific legal implications arising from the proposals'.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 If WNC do not procure a new contract to deliver Bikeability training all current grant funding will have to be returned to DfT and the council will not receive any further funding in the future. Young people will not receive approved cycle training free of charge and WNC will fall behind in terms of aims for numbers of children trained in Bikeability

7.3.2 Risks, including funding uncertainties post-2024/25, are mitigated through contract extensions as outlined in 7.2.3 and the right to terminate the contract after one year if no further funding were to be received.

7.4 Consultation and Communications

There are no direct implications arising from this report, however the Council will continue to communicate the objectives and outcomes of Bikeability to encourage wider awareness and participation.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 Training children to cycle safely and with confidence increases the likelihood of their choosing active travel methods for shorter journeys in the future and therefore has a positive impact on the environment by reducing single occupancy vehicle journeys in West Northants.

7.7 Community Impact

None

8. Background Papers

8.1 None