

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

12TH MARCH 2024

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS AND WASTE: COUNCILLOR PHIL LARRATT

Report Title	Report of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Review of the VOI E-Scooter Trial
Report Author	Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager, tracy.tiff@westnorthants.gov.uk 01604 837408

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers		
Deputy MO	Sarah Hall	22/02/2024
S151	Martin Henry	04/03/2024
Communications Team	Beth Longhurst Communications Lead	22/02/2024

List of Appendices

Appendix A - Report of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee - VOI E-Scooter Trial

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present for consideration the responses to the scrutiny review undertaken by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 VOI E-Scooters are a high-profile issue within Northampton and nearby areas. Residents have voiced concerns regarding the operation of the scheme and the riding of the scooters. It was appropriate that the scheme be subjected to scrutiny prior to a decision being taken by Cabinet

on the future of the scheme and how it operates. I welcome the report from the scrutiny group undertaking the review, the outcome of which will assist Cabinet in determining the continuation of the E-Scooter trial for a further period on a well-informed basis.

- 2.2 I would like to thank Councillor Alison Eastwood for chairing the group undertaking the scrutiny review, as well as all Members and partners who participated in it.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet notes the report and considers the recommendations proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the VOI E-Scooter Trial scrutiny review and associated actions as set out within paragraph 5.1 of this report.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The recommendations are intended to provide proposals in respect of the continuation of the E- Scooter Trial for a further two years, which will be the subject of a future report to Cabinet in May 2024.

Alternative options considered

- 4.2 The report is for noting only.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The objective of this comprehensive Scrutiny Review was to consider the effectiveness of VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire.

Key lines of enquiry

- Ensuring the current trial meets the requirements introduced by the Department for Transport in April 2022 and any subsequent changes to those requirements.
 - An evaluation of the misuse of E-Scooters operating under the trial (including underage usage, issues of drink-driver usage, poor parking), the impact this has on the safety of all road users, the complaints procedure relating to the misuse of E-Scooters and enforcement where appropriate.
 - An evaluation of the suitability of Northampton’s infrastructure to accommodate E-scooters.
 - An evaluation of the benefits that E-Scooters bring to West Northamptonshire as part of the options for sustainable transport.
- 5.2 The required outcome of the Scrutiny Review was to enable the Committee to produce a report which makes informed recommendations to Cabinet regarding the evaluation of the VOI E-Scooter trial.

- 5.3 A motion was passed at the meeting of full Council held on 28 September 2023. By a majority vote, full Council agreed to refer the motion to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee considered the proposal at its meeting on 4 December 2023 and established a Task and Finish Group, composed of members of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee together with the proposer and seconder of the motion. A Task and Finish Group was established consisting of nine Councillors.
- 5.4 A significant amount of evidence was received, details of which are within the report. After gathering evidence, the Task and Finish Group established its key findings and conclusions which contained within the report (**Appendix A.**)
- 5.5 Recommendations of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee are detailed in the table set out in section 5.5.1 of this report, together with comments on the recommendations, actions and progress to date.
- 5.6 A report will be presented to Cabinet in May 2024 to determine whether the VOI E-Scooter trial should continue and the findings from the Overview and Scrutiny review will be included within that report.

Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 5.7 The accepted recommendations of this Overview and Scrutiny report will contribute to achieving the priorities of the West Northants Corporate Plan, in particular clean & green, improved life chances, connected communities, thriving villages and towns, economic development and robust resource management.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 Overview and Scrutiny recommendations:

Recommendation and Action	Agreed/ Partially agreed Not agreed	Actions / comments	Responsible Officer	Progress (add date)
That the trial of the VOI E-Scooter is continued to May 2026 but there is a need for improvements and a Road Map for development of the improvements should be a condition of any contract extension	Agreed	To be considered in May 2024 upon presentation of a future report to Cabinet.	Nick Henstock	May 2024

Recommendation and Action	Agreed/ Partially agreed Not agreed	Actions / comments	Responsible Officer	Progress (add date)
<p>offered.</p> <p>The Road Map should address:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Review the current scheme to seek improvements and changes in respect of Geo-fence areas where: <p>Speed controls and restricted zones to be reviewed and extended ;</p> <p>E-Scooters cannot be parked on an individual basis in specific key locations (i.e., Disabled access and emergency access points).</p> 2 That parking is reviewed to improve end location via use of improved technology (AI)and infrastructure (parking frames) are implemented where appropriate. 3 That new and emerging technology is assessed, and timescale set for the implementation in regard: 				

Recommendation and Action	Agreed/ Partially agreed Not agreed	Actions / comments	Responsible Officer	Progress (add date)
<p>Eliminating twin riding. Preventing E-Scooters from riding pavements.</p> <p>4 That E-Scooter safety is reviewed improving visibility at night, ensuring registration numbers are more visible and that campaigns and messaging to existing riders are increased and more regular in regard to best practice and also to include the wearing of helmets.</p> <p>5 That a review of the complaints' procedure is undertaken with the aim of improving the process of tracking complaints via a reference number with timely action and communication.</p>				
<p>Recommendation 2: That a new governance and project</p>		<p>To be considered in May 2024 upon</p>		

Recommendation and Action	Agreed/ Partially agreed Not agreed	Actions / comments	Responsible Officer	Progress (add date)
management process in set up to include West Northants Council, VOI and Northamptonshire Police. That the terms of reference for this group include the management and monitoring of progress of items included in the Road Map.	Agreed	presentation of a future report to Cabinet.	Nick Henstock	May 2024
Recommendation 3: That Officers produce a suite of KPI's for Cabinet to review which will provide transparency in relation to the numbers of complaints, actions taken and enforcement	Agreed	To be considered in May 2024 upon presentation of a future report to Cabinet.	Nick Henstock	May 2024
Recommendation 4: That Cabinet considers setting up a regular all Member Quarterly forum that will provide context and challenge for improvement and improved communications		Six Monthly forum will be created	Nick Henstock	June/July 2024
Recommendation 5: That Cabinet reviews enforcement to ensure all resources available to the Council, Police and VOI are aligned and efficient and that any enforcement actions can be aligned and the results fully	Partially agreed	To be included in the terms of reference for the governance arrangements and reported to Cabinet in the annual report as described in Recommendation 7	Nick Henstock	May 2024 and June 2025

Recommendation and Action	Agreed/ Partially agreed Not agreed	Actions / comments	Responsible Officer	Progress (add date)
communicated and released.				
Recommendation 6: That Officers investigate best practice from other areas and where applicable implemented to a include a review of future policies and infrastructure identified as part of the local plan process once subject to government approval.	Partially Agreed	“as part of the local transport plan process once subject to government approval.”	Nick Henstock	Following govt legislation relating to E-Scooters.
Recommendation 7: That Cabinet has oversight and puts in place monitoring (period in review) of the Trial.	Agreed	Cabinet to receive annual report regarding the E-Scooter trial	Nick Henstock	June 2025
Recommendation 8: That Cabinet is requested to provide a report to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the conclusion of the E-Scooter Trial that identifies progress and issues for discussion.	Agreed	To be considered in May 2024 upon presentation of a future report to Cabinet.	Nick Henstock	TBC – subject to the date of the conclusion of the trial.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 The recommendations of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee may have financial implications in relation to the extension of the Trial and the proposed improvements, which will be considered in a future report to Cabinet in May 2024.

7.2 **Legal**

7.2.1 The role of Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to make recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet will need to consider those recommendations and then reach decisions based on the usual public decision-making criteria. The recommendations of a relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported by evidence can be the basis of a cabinet decision, but Cabinet's responsibility remains to ensure that it has sufficient information to make a decision including the financial and legal implications of the specific proposals presented.

7.3 **Risk**

7.3.1 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee had regard to any risks and mitigation factors associated with the extension of the VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire and has made recommendations accordingly.

7.4 **Consultation and communications**

7.4.1 The Task and Finish Group received evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in Section 3 of the report of the VOI E-Scooter Trial Task and Group.

7.4.2 2,663 responses were submitted as part of the survey which took place from 20 December 2023 to 11 January 2024, generating 7033 comments

7.4.3 The survey was publicised across multiple channels when the survey was launched, including social media channels: Facebook, X and Instagram Stories. As well as via a press release, a news article on the Council website, in the resident e-newsletter, and internal & stakeholder channels. The post generated over 100 comments on Facebook and was shared widely. Publicity was conducted throughout the remainder of the time that the survey was open.

7.4.4 The outcome of the consultation and scrutiny committee recommendations were published on the Council's corporate channels

7.4.5 The outcome and recommendations from cabinet will be shared on the Council's corporate channels, and this will be supported with a strategic communications plan.

7.5 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.5.1 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the report of the VOI E-Scooter Trial Task and Finish Group at its meeting on 31 January 2024.

7.6 **Climate Impact**

7.6.1 The proposals of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee have direct positive impact on the climate and sustainability as VOI E-Scooters complement public transport in the town and provide users with access to sustainable transport.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 VOI E-Scooters are available for all those over the age of 18 to hire within West Northamptonshire.

8. Background Papers

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Agendas and minutes - 4 December 2023 and 31 January 2024

O&S VOI E-Scooter Trial Task and Finish Group - Agendas and minutes – December 2023 to January 2024

Report of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee – VOI E-Scooter Trial 31 January 2024