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Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Transport Decision meeting

Subject: Portsmouth Rental E-Scooter Trial

Date of meeting: 14 September 2023

Report by: Kerri Farnsworth - Interim Director of Regeneration

Report Author: Gareth James - Transport Strategy Team Leader

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the operation of the rental e-scooter trial that is currently scheduled to run until 31 May 2024.

2. Background

Background to the Solent Future Transport Zone and rental E-scooter trial

- 2.1 In March 2020, Solent Transport was awarded £28.8m of funding from the DfT's Future Transport Zones (FTZ) programme to implement a programme of trials of innovative approaches to transport across the Solent area, from 2020/21 to 2023/24. This programme did not include rental e-scooter trials.
- 2.2 During summer 2020, the DfT announced the possibility for FTZ Local Authorities to run e-scooter rental trial schemes to support a 'green' restart of local transport in response to the pandemic, on the basis that funding be reallocated from within the existing FTZ programme to facilitate such projects.
- 2.3 Following a review of the Solent FTZ programme in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, some schemes were delayed. Subsequently, Solent Transport undertook work with the DfT to enable reallocation of circa £900k from areas of the FTZ

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programme with reduced need to provide a subsidised set of e-scooter schemes across the four Local Transport Authority areas in the Solent region.

- 2.4 In July 2020, Solent Transport submitted a proposal to the DfT requesting permission to operate an e-scooter trial in the Solent area. The Isle of Wight scheme was the first part of the Solent project to launch in November 2020, with the operator Beryl. The Portsmouth and Southampton schemes, both operated by Voi, followed in March 2021. All three schemes have been extended in accordance with the DfT's extension of the trials at a national level and are thus scheduled to end on 31 May 2024.
- 2.5 The trials enable essential insights for the DfT and councils as to how rental e-scooters contribute to the transport mix in urban centres. In summer 2022, the DfT outlined plans to create a new low-speed zero-emission vehicle (LZEV) category incorporating e-scooters, but the timeline for this remains unconfirmed.
- 2.6 During the trials, e-scooters are classified as motor vehicles, and the relevant motor vehicle insurance has to be provided via the scheme operator. E-scooters must meet requirements for vehicle construction and approval set by the DfT.
- 2.7 The DfT is only permitting the trialling of rental e-scooters. The use of privately owned e-scooters on the public highway will remain illegal during the trial period.
- 2.8 While the VSOs issued by the DfT to participating authorities constitute the legal authorisation required to run e-scooter rental trials, a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is required to allow rental e-scooters to be ridden in cycle tracks, cycle lanes and bus lanes. A decision was taken at July 2022's Traffic and Transportation Member Decision Meeting to make the order ("ETRO 25 2021") permanent following the expiry of the associated experimental traffic order.

Trial aims

- 2.9 The main aim of the trial is to build robust evidence about the benefits, public perceptions, and wider impacts of e-scooters in order to inform legal changes that may be necessary beyond the e-scooter trial period.
- 2.10 Key areas that the council and DfT, working with Voi, have been gathering information on include:

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- Safety outcomes for rental e-scooter users and what influences this
- Interaction with, and effect on, other road users
- Public perceptions of the rental e-scooters, including impacts for people with disabilities
- Nature of modal shift and new journeys that have been enabled
- Characteristics of users and how uptake differs for different groups
- Local Authority perception of effects on their transport system and public environment.

2.11 Voi is continuing to collect quantitative and qualitative data regarding the effects of its Solent schemes and provides regular reports to the council and Solent Transport. Ongoing engagement with key stakeholder groups will continue to take place throughout the trial to understand perception and impacts, while the council has also undertaken its own perception and behavioural change surveys. More detail of these surveys is provided in section 5 of this report.

Policy Context

2.12 The trial supports the ambitions of Portsmouth's adopted Transport Strategy 2021-2038¹, in particular Policy C ("Make parking easier in residential areas through encouraging fewer vehicles and supporting shared transport modes"), which states that micromobility can provide an affordable, convenient, low- energy alternative to the private car and can, when used responsibly, perform a particularly useful role in the first or last mile of a journey, for example, making it easier to get to a train station or bus stop from home or, at the other end of a journey, a final destination.

¹ [Local Transport Plan 4 \(LTP4\) - Portsmouth City Council](#)

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3. Operations, Parking, Education and Compliance

Operations and Parking

- 3.1 The rental e-scooter trial vehicle being used in Portsmouth offers a number of technological advances, including:
- A 60-mile range and 5-year lifespan
 - A maximum speed of 12.5 miles per hour, with ability to restrict speed in specified zones
 - Swappable battery technology to enable batteries to be changed 'in the field' by Voi operatives
 - Unique vehicle ID plate and easily identifiable colouring / branding
 - Lights and reflectors
 - 10-inch pneumatic tyres
 - Tamper-proof bell
 - Turning indicators
 - Available in Solent Transport's 'Mobility as a Service' app, Breeze
- 3.2 The geofencing technology that is fundamental to the operational model has enabled the council to work with the operator to determine where the rental e-scooters can go in the city. This has enabled the introduction of 'no-go' zones (e.g., Commercial Road pedestrianised precinct), and 'go-slow' zones (which can be set to 7.5mph or 5mph), typically used on shared use paths, in busier areas or areas that may be subject to conflicting movements. This limits the rental e-scooter speed in these areas to the equivalent of a fast walking pace.
- 3.3 The scheme in Portsmouth is a fully racked scheme with parking racks located in tightly-geofenced mandatory parking zones. Rental e-scooter users are required to leave the rental e-scooter in a parking rack at the end of their ride, with the geofencing technology ensuring that rides can only be finished within the defined zone. This has resulted in a very low number of complaints compared to more "free-floating" micromobility services, and the racked approach is becoming increasingly popular in other e-scooter trial areas in the UK.
- 3.4 Voi has indicated that Portsmouth and Southampton's "Parking Cop" scores, based on site parking assessments carried out to determine the proportion of scooters that are well-parked, are constantly among the best in Europe.

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- 3.5 Portsmouth was one of the first Local Authorities in the UK to integrate physical parking racks as part of the scheme. Voi worked collaboratively with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) to develop the design of its parking racks.
- 3.6 A rental e-scooter parking expansion strategy developed in September 2021 was successfully implemented to ensure the selection of sites put forwards to the FTZ Board and then to public consultation support the council's wider transport strategy.

Education and Compliance

- 3.7 The DfT requires third party insurance for rental e-scooter riders as part of the national trial; Voi's policy can be accessed here: <https://www.voi.com/insurance/>
- 3.8 Voi employs a number of measures in relation to Driver Education, Compliance and Health & Safety. Key examples include:
- The launch of the first rental e-scooter traffic school
 - A fully integrated driver licence screening process
 - Provision of free / heavily subsidised helmets, and incentives for helmet use
 - Awareness campaigns and ongoing community engagement
 - "Reaction test" on the app starting at 9pm to mitigate the risk of drink riding
 - Regular Safety Skills events, delivered by one of the UK's leading road safety organisations, at Lakeside North Harbour and Guildhall Square
- 3.9 Voi's Safety Skills events are well-received by attendees, with 97% of respondents feeling positive about their learning experience and stating that they subsequently felt more confident using a rental e-scooter. The six events held in Portsmouth in 2022 welcomed a total of 129 attendees.
- 3.10 Voi employs a range of approaches in addition to those referenced above to tackle misuse of rental e-scooters, most notably:
- Meetings have been regularly held between the council, Hampshire Police and Voi, ensuring any issues are identified and collaboratively addressed.
 - A team of Voi field operatives addresses problems with abandoned / incorrectly parked rental e-scooters and misuse of vehicles.

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- Voi's distinctive coral coloured rental e-scooters carry a unique registration plate so that anyone can report a wrongly parked rental e-scooter or bad driver behaviour. Voi encourages use of their e-form (<https://report.voi.com/>) where possible, but they can also be contacted by phone on 0808 501 5724 or by email at support@voiapp.io. If the unique registration plate number is not available, then incidences are still encouraged to be reported as Voi endeavours to determine the identity of the rider based on the time and location the rental e-scooter was being ridden or parked.
- Voi has implemented a "three-strikes" policy, whereby a user reported for an offence is first banned for 7 days and is required to complete its online traffic school. Following a second strike, the user is banned for 30 days. Finally, a further offence results in the user being permanently banned from using the rental e-scooters. A ban can be applied for a range of offences including, but not limited to, allowing an underage rider to use an e-scooter, pavement riding, and twin riding. To date, 1,256 temporary bans for inappropriate riding and 39 permanent bans have been issued to Portsmouth rental e-scooter users.

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4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Key Statistics

4.1 A summary of key Portsmouth trial statistics to date (March 2021 - July 2023), is:

• Number of currently active users	73,007
• Number of active vehicles	638
• Average % of fleet available to hire	94%
• Number of parking rack locations*	107
• Total distance travelled	1,928,838 km
• Total rides	757,827
• Average ride time	15.9 minutes
• Average distance travelled	2.55 km
• Riders/rental e-scooter/day	1.95
• CO2 equivalent saved**	167 tonnes
• Car trips replaced***	344,747
• Parking compliance	96%

* The majority of rack locations have one rack, which can be single or double-sided depending on the site. Certain locations such as The Hard Interchange have more than one rack due to high demand. The locations of the racks can be viewed here:

<https://travel.portsmouth.gov.uk/schemes/rental-e-scooter-trial/>

** Voi's carbon savings stated above were calculated based on inputs such as trip data, mode shift percentages collected from user surveys, the government's emission factors for the modes their rental e-scooter trips are replacing, and rental e-scooter Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs). Emission savings are calculated in CO2 equivalent units, meaning they factor in all GHG. To validate the robustness of these calculations and identify opportunities to deliver even greater carbon savings, Solent Transport has commissioned TRL (a global centre for innovation in transport and mobility that was appointed by Solent Transport to augment its Monitoring and Evaluation for the e-scooter trial and other projects in the FTZ programme) to lead its participation in an autumn 2023 pilot to apply NUMO's environmental impact assessment to the region's micromobility schemes, including Portsmouth's e-scooter rental trial.

*** The car trips replaced figure is calculated by asking survey respondents how they would have made their last trip if not by rental e-scooter, which is considered a best practice approach in monitoring mode shift. The figure is based on Voi's user surveys, but as detailed in the next section, the council's own surveys indicate a slightly higher car trip replacement rate.

Survey Data

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- 4.2 Voi's most recent user survey findings published in February 2023 indicate that 43% of Portsmouth's rental e-scooter users would have used a car or taxi for their last journey if rental e-scooters had not been available. This is broadly consistent with Voi's previous surveys.
- 4.3 The council has carried out four online surveys. As reported to the October 2022 Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation Decision meeting, a noteworthy finding of the most recent survey (Wave 4)² was that 54% of respondents said they would have used a car or taxi for their last journey if they had not used a rental e-scooter. This is broadly consistent with the council's previous survey findings, and a far higher figure than in most cities abroad, showing that Portsmouth's rental e-scooter scheme is providing a genuine alternative to the private car.
- 4.4 For the Wave 3 survey, additional statistical analysis was carried out to determine how attitudes might have shifted if survey respondents' ages were representative of the Portsmouth population, as there was a lower survey response rate from younger age groups. The overall trend with the reweighting process was that negative perceptions decreased, and positive perceptions increased, by between 8% and 15%. To better understand public perceptions about the e-scooter rental schemes, Solent Transport has commissioned TRL to carry out a region-wide survey this October, asking comparable questions to previous surveys, but ensuring a more representative mix of respondents. These findings will be reported to the Cabinet Member for Transport when available.

Safety

- 4.5 Voi uses the DfT categorisations for accidents, which are defined as follows:

Damage only: An accident in which only the vehicle, other vehicles or surrounding infrastructure are damaged.

Slight injury: An injury of a minor character such as a sprain (including neck whiplash injury), bruise or cut which are not judged to be severe, or slight shock requiring roadside attention. This definition includes injuries not requiring medical treatment.

² [E-scooter Rental Trial Opinion Survey - Wave 4 Findings 2022 - Your City, Your Say survey research \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/e-scooter-rental-trial-opinion-survey-wave-4-findings-2022-your-city-your-say-survey-research)

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Serious injury: An injury for which a person is detained in hospital as an “in-patient”, or any of the following injuries whether or not they are detained in hospital: fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushings, burns (excluding friction burns), severe cuts, severe general shock requiring medical treatment and injuries causing death 30 or more days after the accident.

During the trial to date, from March 2021 until July 2023, 168 slight and 37 serious injuries have been reported to Voi. All reported serious accidents involved injuries only to the user and not to other road users such as pedestrians. Independent analysis conducted in early 2022 suggests the number of serious injuries may in fact be slightly lower, as Voi included incidents that were unverifiable or lacked an accompanying accident log.

- 4.6 The validation of accident data forms part of Solent Transport's ongoing evaluation of the trial alongside Local Authorities and partner organisations including TRL. It is hoped it will be possible to obtain richer e-scooter accident data from the police in due course (currently, there is not a clear distinction between incidents involving rental e-scooters and privately-owned scooters, but it is well-understood that the incident rate for the latter is significantly higher).
- 4.7 TRL analysis commissioned by Solent Transport has indicated a general downward trend in e-scooter rental accident rates in Portsmouth since the trial began, with the accident rate in every month from April 2022 to March 2023 being lower than in the corresponding month the previous year. This type of comparison is especially useful in the transport sector, as it takes account of seasonal variations in road traffic and weather conditions.
- 4.8 This declining accident rate is consistent with data from elsewhere, such as that published in June 2023 by Micro-Mobility for Europe (MMfE), an association of shared micro-mobility providers, which indicated that shared e-scooter injury rates decreased by 19.2% across 29 European countries between 2021 and 2022.

Stakeholder Engagement

- 4.9 Prior to the launch of the trial, the council and Voi held virtual meetings with representatives from the following organisations to discuss the details of the scheme and understand any specific concerns:

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- Hampshire Constabulary
- Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust
- Solent Hospitals NHS Trust
- Gosport Ferry
- FirstGroup
- Stagecoach South
- University of Portsmouth
- Portsmouth Cycle Forum
- Portsmouth Friends of the Earth
- Cycling UK
- Sustrans
- Portsmouth International Port
- Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Taxi Trade Representatives
- Visually Impaired Action Group (VIAG)
- Wightlink
- South Western Railway

4.10 Dialogue has continued with a number of these organisations as the trial has progressed, particularly Hampshire Constabulary, University of Portsmouth, and VIAG. Other groups representing those with disabilities have engaged with Solent Transport's quarterly Micromobility Equalities Forum meetings.

5. Private e-scooters

5.1 As mentioned in Section 2 of this report, the DfT has outlined plans to create a new low-speed zero-emission vehicle (LZEV) category incorporating e-scooters, but the timeline for this remains unconfirmed and privately-owned e-scooters remain illegal for use on public roads. They have nonetheless become increasingly common, which has raised concerns, as they are not subject to the same design standards and controls (e.g., a minimum age of 18, driving licence facial recognition checks, mandatory training, mandatory insurance, vehicle registration number, citywide 12.5mph speed limit, No Ride Zones, and mandatory parking racks) as the Voi e-scooter rental scheme.

5.2 Given that their use on public roads remains illegal, any enforcement of private e-scooters is a matter for the police rather than for local authorities. However, pending guidance from the government on private e-scooter use and the need for insurance,

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Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary is not treating this as a force priority. As private e-scooters cannot be legally insured, they state that they have no power to seize them under Section 165A of the Road Traffic Act 1988, but that they stop private e-scooters during planned days of action and provide users with a leaflet and a warning.

- 5.3 As in previous years, the council is working with the police on a joint campaign to discourage e-scooters being bought as Christmas presents by reminding residents that they are illegal for use except on private land with the landowner's permission.

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Signed by (Director)

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Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Government guidance on e- scooter trials	E-scooter trials: guidance for users - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Portsmouth City Council e- scooter webpage	Rental e-scooter trial - Travel Portsmouth
Electric Scooter Trials & Traffic Signs (Coronavirus) Regulations & General Directions 2020	The Electric Scooter Trials and Traffic Signs (Coronavirus) Regulations and General Directions 2020 (legislation.gov.uk)
Portsmouth E-Scooter Rental Trial Scheme Traffic & Transportation Committee Report (September 2020)	Agenda for Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation on Friday, 18th September, 2020, 4.00 pm Portsmouth City Council
Portsmouth E-Scooter Rental Trial Scheme Traffic & Transportation Committee Report (February 2021)	Agenda for Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation on Thursday, 25th February, 2021, 4.00 pm Portsmouth City Council
Portsmouth E-Scooter Rental Trial Scheme Traffic & Transportation Committee Report (November 2021)	Agenda for Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation on Thursday, 4th November, 2021, 4.00 pm Portsmouth City Council
Portsmouth E-Scooter Rental Trial Scheme Traffic & Transportation Committee Report (March 2022)	Agenda for Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation on Friday, 18th March, 2022, 4.00 pm Portsmouth City Council
Portsmouth Rental E-Scooter Trial Traffic Regulation Order (July 2022)	Agenda for Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation on Thursday, 28th July, 2022, 4.00 pm Portsmouth City Council
Portsmouth E-Scooter Rental Trial Scheme Traffic & Transportation Committee Report (October 2022)	Agenda for Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation on Thursday, 20th October, 2022 5.00 pm Portsmouth City Council