

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Transport Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 30 January 2024

Subject: Portsmouth Micromobility Operations

Report by: Felicity Tidbury - Assistant Director for Economy, Planning and Transport

Report Author: Gareth James, Transport Strategy Team Lead

Cabinet Member: Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Cabinet Member for Transport

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of the report

1.1. This report provides an update on the operation of the existing rental e-scooter trial and recommendation for continued participation in the extended trials as announced by Department for Transport (DfT). It also recommends moving to a sole operator model for shared micromobility (rental e-scooters, bicycles and electric bicycles) in Portsmouth and sets out the process for achieving this.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Transport:

- 2.1.** Approves the renewal of the Vehicle Special Order (VSO) for Portsmouth’s rental e-scooter trial until 31 May 2026, in accordance with the DfT’s new end date for its national trials;
- 2.2.** Approves the extension of Voi’s contract to operate the rental e-scooter scheme by one month, from its current expiration date of 31 May 2024 to 30 June 2024, to align its end date with that of Beryl’s current operating contract for bike share;
- 2.3.** Approves Portsmouth City Council leading a Solent Transport procurement to select a sole micromobility operator for all existing Solent

schemes from summer 2024 onwards;

- 2.4. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director of Economy, Planning, and Transport to continue to implement the rental e-scooter trial within the parameters established by the VSO and DfT until 31 May 2026, and, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Procurement, for Portsmouth City Council to award and enter into an operating contract with the highest scoring tenderer identified through Solent Transport's procurement.**

3. Background

- 3.1. In March 2020, Solent Transport was awarded £28.8m of funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) Future Transport Zone (FTZ) programme to implement a programme of trials of innovative approaches to transport across the Solent area. The FTZ programme and its funding is due to conclude on 31 June 2025.
- 3.2. Rental e-scooter and bike share schemes, collectively defined as micromobility, are key outputs from the FTZ programme. Portsmouth has hosted a rental e-scooter trial since March 2021 and a bike share scheme since October 2022.
- 3.3. In Portsmouth, rental e-scooters are operated by Voi, and bike share by Beryl. Both operators were selected through open procurements. The current term of the Voi operating contract ends on 31 May 2024 in line with the end of the current national e-scooter trials, and the current term of the Beryl operating contract for bike share ends on 30 June 2024.
- 3.4. The Portsmouth micromobility schemes form part of the Solent FTZ micromobility operations, with Voi also operating rental e-scooters in Southampton, and Beryl operating bike share in Southampton and bike share and rental e-scooters on the Isle of Wight. The FTZ is also providing funding to Hampshire County Council to introduce bike share in Gosport and Totton.
- 3.5. Any enforcement of private e-scooters remains a matter for the police rather than for local authorities. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary have previously stopped private e-scooters during planned days of action and provided users with a leaflet and warning. The council has urged the police to increase enforcement action, and they are currently reviewing their approach.

Policy Context

- 3.6. Micromobility schemes support the Portsmouth Transport Strategy, delivering cleaner air, transforming public transport and prioritising walking and cycling. They do so by providing affordable, convenient and low emission transport options, which produce significantly fewer pollutants and carbon emissions than cars or vans. Micromobility also complements the public transport network in the

city, providing additional options for "last mile" journeys from bus stops and railway stations to workplaces or homes. To reduce congestion in the city, it is important to expand the range of alternatives to driving available to residents and to increase use of walking, cycling and public transport. The rental e-scooter and bike share schemes increase the range of sustainable transport options, providing accessible and convenient parking areas for multimodal transport.

- 3.7. Micromobility schemes benefit broader citywide objectives and corporate priorities. A climate emergency was declared by the council in March 2019, with the goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. Nationally, the UK is seeking to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The transport sector in Portsmouth contributed over 234,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2021, so providing more sustainable transport options supports efforts to significantly reduce the city's carbon emissions. It also clearly supports the city's efforts to improve air quality and complements the city's Air Quality Local Plan, which sets out actions required to achieve compliance with legal air quality standards.
- 3.8. Recent increases in the cost of living have led to the council taking action to support residents in reducing their outgoing costs. Creating additional low-cost transport options like micromobility can support residents looking to reduce their transport costs and save money where possible, especially those who can benefit from discounts available to those on lower incomes. With the assistance of battery-powered rental e-scooters and e-bikes, residents and visitors can travel longer distances at lower costs, without relying on larger motor vehicles. The trial will therefore facilitate longer journeys within Portsmouth, and the expansion of bike share to Gosport (delivered by HCC) will support ambitions to create an interconnected active travel network across the South East region.

Key Statistics

Rental e-scooters

- 3.9. In December 2023, there were 6,223 active users of the rental e-scooter scheme served by a fleet of 641 vehicles, with access to 126 parking bays.
- 3.10. A summary of key statistics for the Portsmouth rental e-scooter trial since launch (March 2021 to December 2023) is set out below:
- Unique users: 81,097
 - Total distance travelled: 2,388,304 km
 - Total rides: 959,682
 - Average ride time: 12.9 minutes
 - Average distance travelled: 2.5 km
 - Parking compliance: 96%
 - Car trips replaced*: 422,605
 - PM_{2.5} saved: 31 kg
 - CO₂ equivalent saved*: 211 tonnes

* The carbon savings stated in this section were calculated by the operators based on inputs such as trip data, mode shift percentages collected from user surveys, the government's emission factors for the modes their e-scooter trips are replacing, and e-scooter Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs). To further improve the robustness of the calculations and identify opportunities to deliver even greater carbon savings, Solent Transport has commissioned TRL to lead its participation in a pilot to apply [NUMO's environmental impact assessment](#) to the region's micromobility schemes. As one of only three participants selected in this global initiative, and the only UK participant, Solent Transport hopes that the outputs – to be published this year – will be beneficial to the wider sector by helping standardise carbon saving calculations and highlighting the key factors for micromobility operators and local authorities to focus their attention on.

3.11. In November 2022, the council published the results of its most recent e-scooter public perceptions survey, which received 3,508 responses. At the time of the survey rental e-scooters had been operating in Portsmouth for circa 18 months.

3.12. Key findings from the survey included:

- The most important reason respondents have decided to use the rental e-scooter scheme is for the environment / sustainability, with 42% of respondents feeling this was very important to them;
- Over a third of respondents also ranked avoiding traffic and congestion (36%), for leisure / fun (36%) and to save time (34%) as very important reasons why they have used the trial;
- Nearly a fifth of trial users use rental e-scooters a few times a week or more for commuting to work or education (18%);
- For non-trial users, 'safety concerns' are the most common reason preventing them from using the trial (62%);
- 54% of trial users said they would have used a car or taxi for their last journey if they had not used a rental e-scooter.

3.13. To better understand current public perceptions about the rental e-scooter schemes, Solent Transport has recently commissioned TRL to carry out a further survey, asking comparable questions to the previous surveys, but ensuring a more representative mix of respondents. Findings from this research will become available in early 2024.

Bike share

3.14. In December 2023, there were 1,031 active users of the bike share scheme served by a fleet of 419 vehicles (132 pedal bikes and 287 e-bikes), with access to 89 parking bays.

- 3.15. A summary of key statistics for the Portsmouth bike share scheme since launch (October 2022 to December 2023) is set out below:
- Unique users: 9,447
 - Total distance travelled: 119,451 km
 - Total rides: 49,738
 - Average ride time: 19 minutes
 - Average distance travelled: 2.43 km
 - Parking compliance: 96%
 - CO2 equivalent saved: 2.67 tonnes
- 3.16. Whilst bike share ridership has grown steadily during the first year of operation, revenue from rides is lower than that required to generate a commercially viable scheme. The situation is consistent across all Beryl schemes in the Solent area. The extent of the losses being incurred indicate that a 'do nothing' approach is likely to result in the operator exiting the scheme at the end of the initial contract term on 30 June 2024.
- 3.17. Competition with other forms of micromobility may be a contributing factor to bike share not realising its full potential. Since the bike share scheme launched in October 2022 there have been approximately 10 rental e-scooter trips for every one bike share trip in Portsmouth.

Enforcement

- 3.18. Voi employs a range of tools to tackle anti-social behaviour and misuse of e-scooters. In addition to the measures referenced above to mitigate risk, Voi has implemented a "three-strikes" policy, whereby a user reported for an offence is first banned for seven 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 a rental e-scooter, pavement riding, and twin riding. As of 31 December 2023: 1,275 temporary bans for inappropriate riding and 43 permanent bans have been issued to Portsmouth rental e-scooter trial users.

Safety

- 3.19. Voi uses the DfT categorisations for accidents, which are defined as follows:
- **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.

- **Serious injury:** An injury for which a person is detained in hospital as an “inpatient”, or any of the following injuries whether they are detained in hospital: fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushing, burns (excluding friction burns), severe cuts, severe general shock requiring medical treatment and injuries causing death 30 or more days after the accident.

- 3.20. From launch until 31 December 2023, 203 slight and 42 serious injuries in Portsmouth have been reported to Voi. The rate of accidents based on operator data was 84 slight injuries per 1 million kms travelled, and 18 serious injuries per 1 million kms travelled.
- 3.21. 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).
- 3.22. TRL analysis commissioned by Solent Transport has indicated a general downward trend in rental e-scooter 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. **Rental e-scooter trial extension**

- 4.1. Department for Transport (DfT) has announced a further extension of its national rental e-scooter trials from 1 June 2024 to 31 May 2026. As a key contributor to the existing wider Solent Transport trial, Portsmouth City Council can continue to participate in the extended trials. The trials were originally scheduled to end on 30 November 2021, but they have since been extended on three occasions:
- first to March 2022 to allow time for gathering evidence following a slower than expected start to trials during the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - secondly to November 2022 after DfT issued updated guidance in February 2022 designed to enhance existing safety measures;
 - thirdly to 31 May 2024, to allow the DfT to reflect on the further analysis or evidence that may be needed and would be beneficial.
- 4.2. The DfT rationale for a further trial extension is to continue to build robust evidence about the benefits, public perceptions, and wider impacts of rental e-scooters to inform legislation that may be necessary beyond the rental e-scooter trial period. Information collected to date includes:
- 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.

4.3. Solent Transport is continuing to collect and collate quantitative and qualitative data regarding the impact of the schemes. 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 surveys.

4.4. The extended trial does not address the need for legislation to provide clarity on rental and private e-scooter provision in the medium term. DfT has previously outlined plans to create a new low-speed zero-emission vehicle (LZEV) category incorporating e-scooters, but this will not be brought forward in the current government cycle, meaning that any such legislation will be determined after the next general election.

4.5. The parameters of the two-year extension set out by the DfT largely mirror the current arrangements and there are no implications for the Portsmouth scheme.

5. Proposed sole micromobility operator

5.1. Following an open procurement in 2022, four micromobility suppliers were appointed to a Portsmouth City Council (PCC) Bike Share and Micromobility Services Framework on behalf of Solent Transport. As the highest scoring tenderer, Beryl was called off the Framework to deliver bike share schemes in Southampton, Portsmouth, and the Isle of Wight. Subsequently after a period of mobilisation, bike share schemes launched in these areas in October 2022.

5.2. To achieve commercial viability in the medium term, it is proposed to move to a sole operator model for the provision of rental e-scooters and bike share from summer 2024 onwards.

5.3. Portsmouth is one of only two known locations outside London which host more than one micromobility operator. Analysis of other comparable UK markets suggests a sole operator model is the preferred approach. Locations such as West Midlands, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Norwich, York, Oxford, and Cambridge all have a single operator for rental e-scooters and bike share.

5.4. A sole operator model is considered to present the following benefits for the operator and contracting authority:

- provides flexibility for the operator to deploy a fleet size which meets demand and reflects seasonality;

- allows the operator to generate economies of scale;
- creates an operational environment most likely to sustain commercially viable schemes in the medium term, which is especially important for bike share, where the lower ridership level could not currently support this;
- procuring a sole operator allows for market testing;
- likely to generate the maximum income for contracting local authorities (e.g., from revenue share arrangements), which would be expected to at least cover associated costs such as staff time after the FTZ funding period ends.

5.5. The Portsmouth bike share scheme receives no ongoing operational subsidy. As with Solent Transport's other FTZ projects including the rental e-scooter trial, Portsmouth's bike share scheme has received capital funding to support the mobilisation of the scheme, including parking infrastructure and the first 200 bikes. Should the incumbent bike share operator not become the sole operator, there is provision in the existing contract for Beryl to return part of the capital investment received to date.

5.6. The Bike Share and Associated Micromobility Services Framework Agreement makes provision for running a mini competition amongst existing framework suppliers. This will operate as a closed tender and will be managed by Portsmouth City Council's procurement team, as the lead procurement authority for Solent Transport.

5.7. The intention is to launch the mini competition early in 2024. Following a period of mobilisation, it is expected that the selected sole operator will be able to launch in summer 2024.

5.8. Due consideration will be given to providing a smooth transition to the sole operator, including making necessary arrangements to transfer eligibility to use micromobility parking locations, integration with the Breeze MaaS (Mobility as a Service) platform, and communications with users.

5.9. The indicative timetable for bid submission, evaluation, and governance, is as follows:

Issue tender documents	5 February 2024
Tender return deadline	15 March 2024 (6 weeks)
Evaluation completed	5 April 2024 (3 weeks)
Approvals & governance sign off	21 April 2024 (2 weeks)
Standstill period	22 April - 4 May 2024
Contract execution	6 May 2024

6. Reasons for recommendations

6.1. The schemes enabled rental bikes and e-scooters to be introduced to Portsmouth in a controlled and safe manner, with ongoing continual

improvements delivered by both operators, and they are evidencing their suitability as a popular addition to travel options for shorter journeys.

- 6.2. The e-scooter rental trial supports the ambitions of Portsmouth's adopted Transport Strategy 2021-2038, particularly Policy C. The council's most recent survey indicated 54% of Voi rental e-scooter trips would otherwise have been made by car or taxi. After 34 months it is estimated that the trial has removed more than 400,000 car trips from Portsmouth's roads, which has consequently removed 211 tonnes of CO2 equivalent and 31kg of PM2.5 from the atmosphere.
- 6.3. Extending the rental e-scooter trial will support the wider FTZ programme by providing an additional transport choice for consumers using the Breeze MaaS platform and participants in the Mobility Credits trial due to launch in 2024.
- 6.4. Extending the rental e-scooter trial will enable Portsmouth's experience to continue to inform the DfT's evaluation process as it considers whether to legalise rental e-scooters for the longer-term following the trials, and it will also facilitate the ongoing independent data validation commissioned by Solent Transport, which would improve the evidence base and help inform subsequent decisions to be taken about rental e-scooters at the local and national level.
- 6.5. Not extending the rental e-scooter trial would mean the council and its residents would no longer experience the positive outcomes outlined in this report, while some negative outcomes would also be anticipated, notably an increase in car trips due to a reversal of the mode shift that has taken place from cars to rental e-scooters. The illegal use of private e-scooters, which are not subject to the same design standards and controls as the rental scheme, would continue if the scheme were to end and could potentially increase if some of those who have come to rely on the rental scheme were to use a private e-scooter instead. Any future decision to launch a new rental e-scooter scheme would likely result in increased costs to the council, due to the high capital costs incurred during a mobilisation period that were covered by FTZ funding for the current scheme.
- 6.6. Bike share ridership in Portsmouth is below the levels required to sustain a commercially viable operation. Moving to a sole micromobility operator model will provide flexibility and economies of scale for the supplier and will improve opportunities for commercial viability in the medium term.

7. Integrated Impact Assessment

- 7.1. An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) was carried out before each scheme's commencement. They have been updated as required and the latest versions are appended to this report, incorporating the Equalities Impact Assessments.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. As indicated in the body of the report, the VSO for rental e-scooters will need to be renewed to allow for their continued lawful use beyond 31 May 2024.
- 8.2. The licences granted under Section 115E of the Highways Act 1980 in relation to the docking stations for rental e-scooters and cycles will also need to be extended to authorise their continued use by the appointed sole operator.
- 8.3. The proposal to procure a sole operator via the existing Portsmouth City Council / Solent Transport Bike Share and Micromobility Framework Agreement is outlined in the body of the report.
- 8.4. Legal Services will support Solent Transport and the PCC Procurement Service in implementing a compliant procurement (Framework call-off) process to identify and appoint the preferred sole operator.

9. Director of Finance's comments

- 9.1. To date, the cost to the Council of running both the rental e-scooter and bike share trials has been funded by the Future Transport Zone grant from the Department for Transport, supplemented by a small profit share arrangement with Voi.
- 9.2. By the end of the current trial period in June 2024 our allocation of grant funding will have been spent, with no further grant funding likely.
- 9.3. The Council intends to fund costs associated with continuing the trial through a revised revenue share arrangement with the successful tenderer.
- 9.4. A full financial appraisal will be carried out in parallel to the procurement process to ensure that the costs of continuing the trial are understood and that any financial risks remain with the operator.

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Signed by:

Appendices:

Appendix A: Bike share Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix B: Rental e-scooter Integrated Impact Assessment

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 rental e-scooter trials	E-scooter trials: guidance for users - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Portsmouth City Council rental 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
Portsmouth E-Scooter Rental Trial Update Traffic & Transportation Committee Report (September 2023)	Agenda for Cabinet Member for Transport on Thursday, 14th September, 2023, 10.00 am Portsmouth City Council
E-Scooter Rental Trial Opinion Survey Results (2022)	E-scooter Rental Trial Opinion Survey - Wave 4 Findings 2022 - Your City, Your Say survey research (portsmouth.gov.uk)
Portsmouth Transport Strategy 2021-2038 (Local Transport Plan 4)	Portsmouth Transport Strategy 2021-2038 (Local Transport Plan 4)

Portsmouth Bike Share Scheme Update Cabinet Member for Transport (August 2023)	Agenda and minutes Cabinet Member for Transport - Thursday, 10th August, 2023 4.00 pm
Proposed Portsmouth Bike Share Rental Scheme Traffic and Transportation Committee Report (July 2022)	Proposed Portsmouth Bike Share Rental Scheme

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/
 rejected by on

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 Signed by: