

## CABINET MEETING – 14 SEPTEMBER 2021

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

**Title of Report:**

Extension of E-Scooter Trial

**Author(s):**

Executive Director of City Development

**Purpose of Report:**

The purpose of the report is to seek cabinet approval for the extension of the E-Scooter Trial from 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

**Description of Decision:**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i. approve the extension of the existing E-Scooter trial to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022; and
- ii. authorise the Executive Director of City Development, in consultation with the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Deputy Leader, to take all steps necessary to give effect to the trial extension.

**Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?** Yes

**If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework**

**Suggested reason(s) for Decision:**

Since the E-Scooter trial commenced in Sunderland, Government Ministers have approved an extension of the nationwide trials from 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The trial extension will allow extra time for trials to reach capacity and for the DfT to gather additional data.

The evidence gathered in the trial will guide final decisions about whether and, if so, how to fully legalise the use of e-scooters. It is important that Sunderland continues to take part in the trial, as data collected will contribute to deciding the long-term vision of sustainable and active travel in Sunderland and the UK.

E-scooters form a key part of the promotion of active and sustainable modes of transport and support the three core themes of the City Plan, as well as helping achieve the low carbon ambitions of the City, to become a carbon neutral city by 2040 and a Carbon neutral Council by 2030.

**Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:**

An alternative option is to not extend Sunderland's E-Scooter Trial, ending the trial on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021, removing the e-scooters from operation, terminating the contract with Neuron Mobility (United Kingdom) Limited and no longer participate in gathering data for DfT - This option is rejected on the basis that the absence of sustainable travel choices would not accord with the Council or City ambitions on becoming Carbon Neutral or the City Plan aims.

**Impacts analysed;**

Equality ☐ Privacy ☐ Sustainability ☒ Crime and Disorder ☐

**Is the Decision consistent with the Council's co-operative values? Yes**

**Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution? Yes**

**Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions? Yes**

## **CABINET – 14 SEPTEMBER 2021**

### **EXTENSION OF E-SCOOTER TRIAL**

#### **Report of Executive Director of City Development**

#### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek cabinet approval for the extension of E-Scooter Trial from 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

#### **2. Description of Decision (Recommendations)**

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
- i. approve the extension of the existing E-Scooter trial to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022; and
  - ii. authorise the Executive Director of City Development in consultation with the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Deputy Leader to take all steps necessary to give effect to the trial extension.

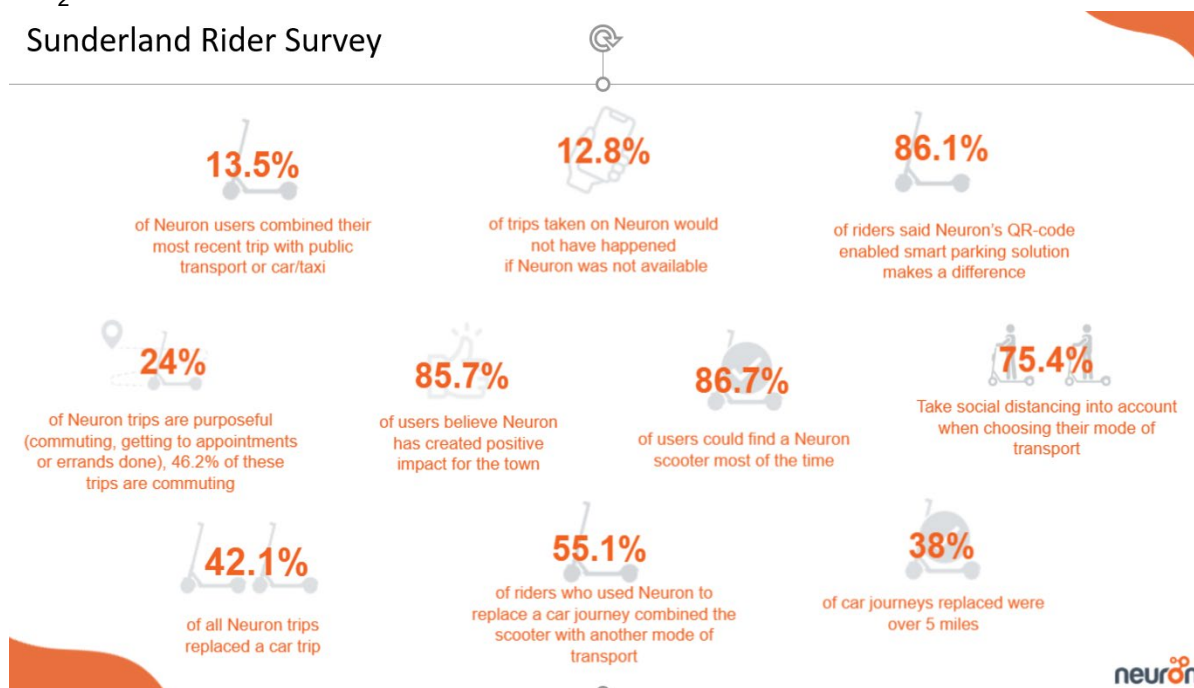
#### **3. Introduction/Background**

- 3.1 Cabinet approval was granted on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021, for Sunderland City Council to take part in the Department for Transport ('DfT') E-Scooter Trial. The Sunderland trial was launched on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, with the operator Neuron Mobility (United Kingdom) Limited ('Neuron') and was intended to be in place for 8 months until 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021.
- 3.2 Since the trial commenced, Government Ministers have approved an extension of nationwide trials from 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The guiding principle for this change is trial continuation rather than expansion or market development. The trials were designed to start slowly and scale up with demand. The recent lockdowns have meant that the trials have grown at a slower rate than initially intended. The trial extension will allow extra time for trials to reach capacity and for the DfT to gather additional data. The evidence gathered in the trials will guide final decisions about whether and, if so, how to fully legalise the use of e-scooters
- 3.3 Approval is sought to vary the existing contract to extend the Sunderland trial in line with Government guidance and also extend the required ETRO (Experimental Traffic Regulation Order) and VSO (Vehicle Special Order) for the Sunderland Trial until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- 3.4 No changes to the operation of the trial will take place. The trial will continue with its current arrangements with Neuron – with the existing geofenced area, speed restrictions, no ride zones and parking areas in place.

- 3.5 Data collected by the Council throughout the period of the trial will contribute to deciding the long-term vision of Active Travel in Sunderland in conjunction with other NECA initiatives. It is important that Sunderland continues to take part in the trial to help our economy recover from the Covid 19 pandemic by helping residents return to work in a safe manner.
- 3.6 E-scooters form a key part of the promotion of active and sustainable modes of transport and support the three core themes of the City Plan, as well as helping achieve the low carbon ambitions of the City to become a carbon neutral city by 2040 and a Carbon neutral Council by 2030.

#### 4. Usage Statistics as of 4 August 2021

- 4.1 Since the start of the trial on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 - 42,626 rides have been made covering 66,500 miles (107,000km) ridden with only 45 complaints received to date, representing less than 0.11% of rides. This includes all complaints received by Neuron including those received via the council, police, public and Neuron staff.
- 4.2 Rider Survey (May 2021) found that 42% of e-scooter trips directly displaced car trips in Sunderland. This equates to over 12,600 car trips displaced and over 5,700kg CO<sub>2</sub> saved (CO<sub>2</sub> savings based on 160g CO<sub>2</sub> / km travelled)



- 4.3 Neuron investigates all complaints and has a progressively punitive system of issuing warnings, suspensions and outright bans to address poor riding behaviour.
- 4.3 Neuron's e-scooter includes safety features such as extra large wheels and footboard for added stability, a helmet locked onto every vehicle and allows the e-scooter to provide audible safety alerts before, during and after the ride.

- 4.4 Neuron also provide iterative safety information to riders and work closely with three disability groups in the North-East to ensure that their views are fully represented and dealt with rapidly. Engagement takes place with The Pocklington Trust, RNIB and Newcastle Vision Support. In May 2021, the Disability Forum attended Neuron's Newcastle depot for an afternoon to test the e-scooters, provide feedback on the design and a wish-list. The information has been fed into the specification for the next generation of the e-scooter which is expected later this year.
- 4.5 Neuron actively promote safe riding rules and regularly post updates, posters, videos and safety campaigns via their social media channels. Stakeholders, Police and Councillors' briefing sessions are arranged on a quarterly basis to keep various parties informed of any changes, the rider statistics and provide a chance to air any comments.

## **5. Reasons for the Decision**

- 5.1 Since the E-Scooter trial commenced in Sunderland, Government Ministers have approved an extension of the nationwide trials from 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The trial extension will allow extra time for trials to reach capacity and for the DfT to gather additional data.
- 5.2 The evidence gathered in the Trial will guide final decisions about whether and, if so, how to fully legalise the use of e-scooters. It is important that Sunderland continues to take part in the trial, as data collected will contribute to deciding the long-term vision of sustainable and active travel in Sunderland and the UK.
- 5.3 E-scooters form a key part of the promotion of active and sustainable modes of transport and support the three core themes of the City Plan, as well as helping achieve the low carbon ambitions of the City, to become a carbon neutral city by 2040 and a Carbon neutral Council by 2030.

## **6. Alternative Options**

- 6.1 An alternative option is to not extend Sunderland's E-Scooter Trial, ending the trial on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021, removing the e-scooters from operation, terminating the contract with Neuron Mobility (United Kingdom) Limited and no longer participate in gathering data for DfT - This option is rejected on the basis that the absence of sustainable travel choices would not accord with the Council or City ambitions on becoming Carbon Neutral or the City Plan aims.

## **7. Impact Analysis**

The following issues were considered as part of the previous approval of the trial: -

- (a) **Equalities** – The following vulnerable groups have been consulted regarding the Trial: -

- The Blind Society (RNIB)
- The Deaf Society
- Age UK
- Pocklington Trust
- Newcastle Vision Support

The E-Scooters are accessible by people aged 16 years and over and can be used by the elderly and residents with mobility issues to get from A to B quicker than walking.

- (b) **Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA)** – All information requested in the Neuron's user App is GDPR compliant. Terms and conditions are explained in the "User App".
- (c) **Sustainability** - The trial adheres to sustainable development principles, which improves social, economic and environmental conditions in Sunderland, and more widely as a regional project, along with supporting national Government trials.

- Reduces carbon emissions compared to average vehicle emissions
- Improves sustainable transport and communications
- Reduces noise pollution
- Improves health & wellbeing
- Reduces congestion on the roads
- Cheaper & quicker alternative than the car
- Support economy in recovering from COVID-19
- Socially distanced way to travel
- New fun alternative to travel sustainably

E-Scooters offer low cost, energy efficient, and emission-free transportation which also have positive physical, mental and all-round health benefits.

E-Scooters benefit families on low income as the cheaper alternative to car transportation and a greener cleaner way to travel around the City.

Participation of the E-Scooter trial promotes the use of sustainable modes of travel within the City, in line with the Council's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030.

- (d) **Reduction of Crime and Disorder – Community Cohesion / Social Inclusion** - The local Police have been consulted and are aware of the scheme and are in support of the Trial and the extension (?).

Neuron has the following procedures in place to tackle anti-social behaviour and vandalism: -

- Voice activated scooter with alarm sounding and motor cut off if taken into no-ride zones or outside geofenced area
- GPS tracked, exact location of each E-Scooter can be identified
- Unique scooter registration number so riders and scooters can be identified

- Curfews can be set, at weekends or throughout the full trial if required
- Scooters can be removed overnight during events, bad weather or completely removed from problem hotspots
- The operator has full liability and responsibility of the scheme and e-scooters, so it is in their best interests to protect their property
- Reputational Risk is managed and primarily the risk lies with the Government and the operator. We are also reliant on users of the E-Scooters to be respectful of their surroundings and other road users.

## 8. Other Relevant Considerations / Consultations

- (i) **Financial Implications** – There are no capital costs to the Council arising from the trial extension. The revenue costs are in relation to officer time, advertising and associated costs for the making and displaying of the requisite notice for the making of the ETRO and VSO, which can be met from existing budgets. The set-up, operating and maintenance costs of the e-scooters throughout the trial extension would remain the responsibility of Neuron Mobility (United Kingdom) Limited.
- (ii) **Employee Implications** – E-scooters will provide employees with more sustainable travel choices, for first and last mile journeys or leisure journeys.
- (iii) **Legal Implications** – The Assistant Director of Law and Governance has been consulted and has considered the proposal for an extension of the existing e-scooter trial in line with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement Procedure Rules.
- (iv) **Procurement** – Corporate Procurement have been consulted and the Council's procurement procedure will be followed to extend the existing contract with Neuron Mobility Ltd for the extension of the e-scooter trial.
- (v) **Risk Analysis** – For this trial the majority of operational risks are borne by the operator. There is a small reputational risk arising from the potential for the trial to fail but this is outweighed by the prestige of taking part in this national trial. Normal maintenance regimes are in place with regard to highway surface repairs.
- (vi) **Health & Safety Considerations** – Kevin Henderson & Richard Cantle Senior Health & Safety Advisors have been consulted and have provided advice in relation to the operation of E-Scooters for use across the City, via the Government's DfT. It was explained that;
  - The Council will procure the service from an E-scooter provider, approved by DfT.
  - The provider will be responsible for the supply, rental and maintenance of the E-Scooters.
  - Rental will be via an App, which will provide users with a simple safety demo on safe use and people will only be able to obtain an E-scooter after completing the booking process.
  - The user will also have to return the E-scooter to an agreed destination at the agreed time. This will all be under the control and management of the provider.

- E-scooters can be used by someone with a provisional license, with or without a safety helmet (but the requirement to wear a helmet can be specified).
- Under the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 the duty is with the E Scooter provider to ensure the health and safety of users and any legal liability would rest with the provider

**(vii) The Public / External Bodies** –Stakeholders who have been consulted regarding the Trial: -

- Elected Sunderland Members
- Sunderland University
- Hospital NHS
- Nexus
- Police
- Northern Rail
- Museum & Winter Gardens
- The Beam
- National Glass Centre
- The Blind Society
- Age UK
- The Deaf Society
- Pocklington Trust
- Newcastle Vision Support
- Sunderland BID
- The Bridges Shopping Centre
- Sunderland College
- Gentoo Housing Group
- SAFC
- Go NORTH EAST
- Stagecoach

The Police have been consulted with regard to the extension of the Trial until March 2022 and are happy to give their consent and approval. (Steve Prested and Phil Baker)

## 9. Glossary

<u>Abbreviation or term</u>	<u>Description</u>
DfT	Department for Transport