

# The Benefits of Holding Regular and Effective School Travel Plan Working Group Meetings – A Guidance Note

- Does your school have an active school travel plan working group?
- Does your school travel plan working group meet once a term to implement the projects and initiatives contained within your travel plan?
- Is your school travel plan effective in changing how your pupils, parents and staff travel on the school journey?
- Do you have school travel plan working group meetings that are outcome orientated?
- Does your school organise and chair its own school travel plan working group meetings independently of your school travel plan advisor?

If the answer to any of these questions is **no**, then read on for information about:

- the importance of holding regular school travel plan working group meetings
- for advice on how you can make these meetings more effective and productive
- to find out how your school travel plan working group are key to the delivery of the aims and objectives of your school travel plan.

## The Role of the School Travel Planning Working Group

Your school travel plan is a living document that will only be successful in achieving a shift from car usage to a more sustainable mode of travel if it is supported by an **active** school travel plan working group. Once your school travel plan has been completed then you have a responsibility to ensure that your school travel plan working group continues to exist and meets to implement the projects and initiatives detailed within your travel plan.

A school travel plan working group comprises of representatives from both the school and wider community (for further information on the composition of your working group see Appendix 1). The working group should meet to:

- oversee the implementation of the action plans
- ensure the collection of the monitoring criteria
- undertake the annual review of the travel plan and, following the review, to formulate new more challenging targets
- complete the full review of the school travel plan every three years
- recruit new members to the working group
- evaluate and respond to any new initiatives or projects in the field of travel planning that come from the Travel Planning Team or government bodies

## School Travel Planning Working Group Meetings

The Travel Planning Team at Durham County Council recommends that in order to keep your school travel plan active and effective, the working group should meet once a term. In addition to these regular meetings it may be necessary for the working group to convene to respond to any traffic and transport issues relating to travel planning that may be forthcoming at your school. The general focus for the working group meetings will be determined by the content of an up to date travel plan. This could either be the first edition

of the school travel plan or the subsequent review of the travel plan. Both feature action plans as well as monitoring and review tables which have an assigned person from the working group responsible for the completion of the action and monitoring activity. The action plans and monitoring and review tables provide the working group with a guide as to what actions and tasks need to be planned and completed each term.

## Reviewing Your School Travel Plan

For those schools with travel plans that are over three years old then it will be necessary for the working group to undertake a complete review of the school travel plan. The review is an important next step in keeping travel plan documentation up to date. The review:

- looks back at the achievements of the original school travel plan,
- at issues that have not been addressed
- identifies new issues that need addressing in the future.

This ensures that the working group are fully focussed on delivering projects and initiatives that are appropriate for your school.

The Travel Planning Team have a school travel plan review guidance note, see pages on [How to Review Your School Travel Plan](#) this provides working groups with further information and advice on how to undertake and complete the review process.

For those working groups who do not have an up to date document they could focus their efforts on devising and delivering active travel initiatives within school. The review of the school travel plan could be discussed and considered as a longer term objective.

It may be necessary as a result of your working group meetings to seek advice or responses to actions from other partners such as the County Council or the Police. If these representatives are absent from your working group then contact the Travel Planning Team for further guidance.

An active and effective travel plan - can be achieved as a result of the working group meeting **three times a year** if these meetings are purposeful, organised and lead to actions or investigations being taken as a result of the meetings. Below are four steps to assist you in achieving successful and productive working group meetings.

- 1. Prepare and Distribute a Meeting Agenda.** A well managed and realistic agenda is the key to a purposeful meeting. See Appendix 2 for more information on the importance of setting an agenda and Appendix 3 for two examples of template agendas that you could use for your working group meetings.
- 2. Chair the meeting.** It is the chair's role to ensure that the meeting achieves its aims and therefore the discussions need to be steered to this end. For useful hints and tips on chairing a meeting see Appendix 4.
- 3. Record the discussions.** A clear and concise record of the discussions that took place and the decisions made at the meeting need to be completed and distributed to the relevant parties. Therefore minutes will need to be taken by a member of the working group other than the chair. See Appendix 5 for useful hints and tips on recording the discussions and Appendix 6 for a template to assist with the reporting of the minutes.
- 4. Summarise the meeting.** Shortly before the meeting ends, it is important to summarise the discussions and review the action points. For useful hints and tips on summarising a meeting see Appendix 7

## **Appendix 1 – Composition of your School Travel Plan Working Group**

Ideally your school travel plan working group should comprise of a broad representation of members from both the school and the wider community. It may also be necessary to draw upon the expertise of other representatives from partner agencies such as the Police or Officers from Durham County Council. These representatives should be invited to working group meetings as specific issues need addressing.

It is also important to remember that the composition of your working group will change and evolve over time as pupils join and leave your school. The working group will need to look at recruiting new members to ensure its continued existence. Below are some suggestions to who you should consider inviting to become a member of your working group.

- Pupil Representatives – either from the School Council or Sam’s School Travel Awareness Raisers (STARS) if your school has them or class or year group representatives
- Parent Representatives
- Staff Representatives - either a member of the Senior Management Team or a Teacher with responsibility for Healthy Schools, Eco Schools etc.
- A representative from your Governing Body
- Your Road Safety Officer
- School Crossing Patrol – if your school has one
- A Police Representative either your local Police Community Support Officers (PCSO’s) or Local Beat Officer
- Your Walking Bus Organiser or Walking Initiative Lead – if your school has one
- A Local Resident
- If your school is located near to another school either a nursery, primary or secondary school or a Surestart Children’s Centre then you should consider inviting either their school travel plan co-ordinator or a representative along to your working group meetings.
- Your local Parish Councillors
- Your local County Councillors

There must be at least one representative from the Senior Management Team or teaching staff present at the working group meetings who have relevant responsibility or authority.

## **Appendix 2 – The Importance of an Agenda**

A list of topics for discussion should be prepared in advance and distributed to all members of the working group. Along with details of when and where the meeting will take place and who else will be in attendance. This enables those attending to make any necessary preparations and to make notes of anything they wish to discuss in relation to the items on the agenda.

It can be useful to provide estimates of timescales for each item on the agenda and the most urgent items should be placed at the top of the agenda.

An agenda distributed in advance of the meeting should also invite members to submit any other topics they would like to propose for discussion. In this way items can be included in the final agenda. See Appendix 3 for two examples of an agenda template.

### Appendix 3 – Template for a Meeting Agenda (Without Timings)

| Meeting Agenda  |  |                       |  |
|---|--|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Name of School:</b>                                  |  |                       |  |
| <b>Meeting Title:</b>                                   | School Travel Plan Working Group Meeting                       |                       |  |
| <b>Expected Attendees<br/>(Including their titles):</b> |  | <b>Date and Time:</b> |  |
|   |  | <b>Place:</b>         |  |
| Agenda Topic  |  | Person Responsible    | Objective<br>(discussion, information or decision) |
| 1.  | Welcome, introductions and apologies                           | Chair                 | Discussion   |
| 2.  | Minutes from previous meetings                                 | Chair                 | Discussion   |
| 3.  | Members to feedback on actions completed from previous meeting | All                   | Discussions  |
| 4.  | Actions that need to be implemented this term                  | All                   | Decision   |
| 5.  | AOB  | All                   | Discussion   |
| 6.  | Date and time for next meeting                                 | All                   | Decision   |

## Template for a Meeting Agenda (With Timings)

| <b>Meeting Agenda</b>                               |  |                           |  |             |
|---|--|---------------------------|--|-------------|
| <b>Name of School:</b>                              |  |                           |  |             |
| <b>Meeting Title:</b>                               | School Travel Planning Working Group Meeting                   |                           |  |             |
| <b>Expected Attendees (Including their titles):</b> | <b>Date and Time:</b>  |                           |  |             |
|   | <b>Place:</b>  |                           |  |             |
|   | <b>Agenda Topic</b>  | <b>Person Responsible</b> | <b>Objective (discussion, information or decision)</b> | <b>Time</b> |
| <b>1.</b>   | Welcome, introductions and apologies                           | Chair                     | Discussion   | 5min        |
| <b>2.</b>   | Minutes from previous meeting                                  | Chair                     | Discussion   | 5min        |
| <b>3.</b>   | Members to feedback on actions completed from previous meeting | All                       | Discussions  | 5min        |
| <b>4.</b>   | Actions that need to be implemented this term                  | All                       | Decision   | 10min       |
| <b>5.</b>   | AOB  | All                       | Discussion   | 5min        |
| <b>6.</b>   | Date and time for next meeting                                 | All                       | Decision   | 5min        |

These timings are only suggestions and can be amended to suit each agenda item.

## **Appendix 4 – Chairing the Meeting – Hints and Tips**

Ideally the meeting should always start on time to ensure that the chair is in control of proceedings from the outset. It is however acceptable to put back the start of the meeting in the event of a key member being unavoidably delayed.

The meeting should be opened with introductions for new or unfamiliar members and apologies should be made for those who have been unable to attend. The purpose of the meeting should be reiterated to ensure that everyone is focused on what is to be achieved.

The role of the chair is not only to ensure that the meeting runs to schedule but also to encourage all members to make a valuable contribution. It is the responsibility of the chair to spot signs which indicate that more reluctant members are nervous and encourage them to participate in the meeting by making a contribution to the discussions. The chair must also give everyone a chance to participate which may mean limiting more confident members. Healthy debate on each agenda item can be stimulated by the chair and it can often be useful to invite questions from members to ensure that everyone fully understands what has been discussed before moving on to the next item on the agenda.

It is possible that confrontations may take place in meetings and it falls under the chair's remit to ensure that these are handled and are not allowed to have too great an impact upon the agenda. If necessary try to move on to the next agenda item and agree that investigations be carried out on contentious issues once the meeting has been concluded.

Once each item on the agenda has been discussed the conclusions to the discussions should be summarised and points that need to be followed up should be clarified. The chair is responsible for ensuring that notes are taken throughout the meeting and priority actions or issues are allocated appropriately to other working group members.

The chair should ensure that all of the actions are completed in accordance with the deadlines agreed upon.

The success of subsequent meetings is likely to be dictated by the level of activity that followed the first meeting. If actions proposed in the meeting are rigorously followed up and completed then members are likely to perceive future meetings as useful, meaningful events which positively contribute towards the travel plan.

## Appendix 5 – Taking Meeting Minutes – Hints and Tips

Using the template for minute taking (See Appendix 6) will ensure that all of the essential elements are noted. When it comes to recording the minutes the hints and tips below will assist further:

- Prepare an outline based on the agenda ahead of time remembering to leave plenty of space for notes.
- Prepare a list of expected attendees on the agenda (See Appendix 3) then tick the attendees off as they enter the room or are introduced, or if you prefer you could pass around an attendance sheet.
- To be sure of who said what, make a map of the seating arrangement and make sure to ask for the introductions of unfamiliar people.
- Think in terms of issues discussed, major points raised and decisions taken when completing minutes. It's not necessary to record every single comment made.
- Remember that meeting minutes are for future and outside readers as well as for the members present. Therefore it is important to ensure that the minutes are clear and concise for others to read and understand.
- Use bullet points to make the minutes easier to read, each bullet point should represent a different finding, discussion or decision.
- Make a note of any issues tabled for future meetings this will serve as an important reminder for the preparation of the next agenda.
- Complete minutes as soon as possible following the meeting while your memory is still fresh.
- Before you forward on your meeting minutes proof-read for typos and omissions then forward to the chair for approval before circulating.
- Ensure you have contact details for all members of the working group to enable you to forward on the minutes from each meeting.
- Importantly, remember to forward a copy of the minutes to your school travel plan advisor as well as those members who attended, those who were not able to make it to the meeting and all other relevant parties.
- Priority issues should be listed and all actions that were agreed upon should be emphasised with the person responsible for dealing with each one clearly named in the minutes.
- Any discussions around issues that are not being taken forward and the reasons for this should be recorded in your working group minutes
- When recording issues remember to include specific named locations for ease of understanding.

**Concise and coherent minutes are the mark of a good minute taker. The very process of recording minutes can give you a deeper understanding of the issues faced by your school along with an ability to focus on what's important which will be of benefit to the effectiveness of your school travel plan!**



## Appendix 6 – Template for Minute Taking

Name of School  
Title of Meeting  
Date and Time

Attendees:

Apologies:

| Topic | Discussion | Action | Person Responsible for undertaking action |
|-------|------------|--------|---|
| 1.    |            |        |   |
| 2.    |            |        |   |
| 3.    |            |        |   |
| 4.    |            |        |   |

## **Appendix 7 – Summarising the Meeting**

A useful way to close a meeting is to reinforce the discussions that took place by summarising the results. This will involve reviewing the action points, assignments and deadline dates agreed to during the meeting. There is no more effective way to discourage future members from attending a meeting than to allow members to leave the meeting without a clear vision of what has been accomplished.

When summarising the meeting ask members if there are any uncertainties about the action points. Inquire about new items for consideration at the next meeting and most importantly arrange a date and time for the next working group meeting. Lastly, thank everyone for their attendance and bring the meeting to a close.