

Central Bedfordshire Council

09 November 2023

Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy for Central Bedfordshire

Report of:

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Purpose of this report

To present the draft Electric Vehicle Charge point Strategy to the committee for comment.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee is asked to:

1. Review and comment on the draft Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy.

Executive Summary

1. The decarbonisation of transport systems is one of the key drivers for delivering the Council's net-zero ambitions by 2030 and beyond, and for supporting the agenda set by Government in phasing out petrol and diesel vehicles.
2. On the 8th June 2021 the Council adopted its first Electric Vehicle (EV) Charge point Plan¹. This set out the approach that will be taken to the provision of electric vehicle charge point infrastructure in Central Bedfordshire. Considerable work has taken place to identify and assess sites, secure funding, and deploy EV Charge points, primarily focusing on residential areas.

¹ [Communications - Electric Vehicle Charge Point Plan.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

3. The experience to date, our growing understanding of the growth of EV take up in Central Bedfordshire, the rapid development of the EV sector and changes from government, specifically with respect to funding means that it is now appropriate to review the EV Charge point Plan and significantly update it. The new Strategy builds on the initial plan and seeks to:
 - a. Provide a blueprint for future projects that are delivering continued improvements to electric vehicle infrastructure in the Central Bedfordshire area.
 - b. Address the wider scope of electric vehicle infrastructure that the Council needs to consider and update the aims and objectives accordingly.
 - c. Reflect the Council's increased understanding of the subject area, the technology available, and the challenges that are faced.
 - d. Outline the progress made to date on the delivery of electric vehicle infrastructure.
 - e. Review the latest forecasting and infrastructure requirements.
4. The new Strategy also reflects what is being required by the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) with respect to the allocation and future award of both revenue and capital funding under the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure fund (LEVI).
5. To date the Council has been successful in securing £635,150 of funding through the On-Street Residential Charge point fund (ORCs) in two phases, with match funding provided by BP Pulse, the current contracted charge point provider. In addition to this BP Pulse will be investing circa £1.6M to install a combination of rapid and ultra rapid chargers on sites across Central Bedfordshire.

The case for supporting the move to Electric Vehicles

6. Central Bedfordshire is well-connected with major transport routes running through the area, such as the M1, A1, A6 and A5 road routes, and the Midland Main Line, East Coast Main Line, and West Midlands railway routes.
7. It is important to recognise the Council's wider focus on sustainable transport through improvements to active travel and public transport. We recognise the many benefits this brings to the individual, to places and to the environment more widely, and want to reduce car use across Central Bedfordshire in favour of more sustainable options.
8. However, the Council recognises that cars and vans remain an appropriate mode of transport, along with buses and trains, and so it is key to help facilitate the transition from petrol and diesel vehicles to ultra-low and zero emission vehicles. This helps to reduce the impact of those journeys and work towards meeting climate change and air quality ambitions.
9. The semi-rural nature of Central Bedfordshire also means that travel via car is often the easiest and most convenient option, and this is reflected through on-road emissions being responsible for nearly 40% of Central Bedfordshire's carbon footprint². This highlights the importance of the Council helping to support and facilitate the transition to electric vehicles for residents, businesses, and visitors.

² [UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions national statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics)

10. Recent government announcements have pushed back the ban on new petrol and diesel cars to 2035, however this does not impact on the Strategy's goals or important role that the Council has to play in supporting our residents and businesses to be able to access what will be increasingly important infrastructure.
11. Figure 1 shows the increase in licensed electric vehicles in Central Bedfordshire³, with an exponential rise in recent years. This is reflective of the direction set by government and the transition to electric vehicles by major car manufacturers. Growth like this emphasises the requirement for increased charge point infrastructure to be provided across the UK, with government setting a target of at least 300,000 public charge points by 203

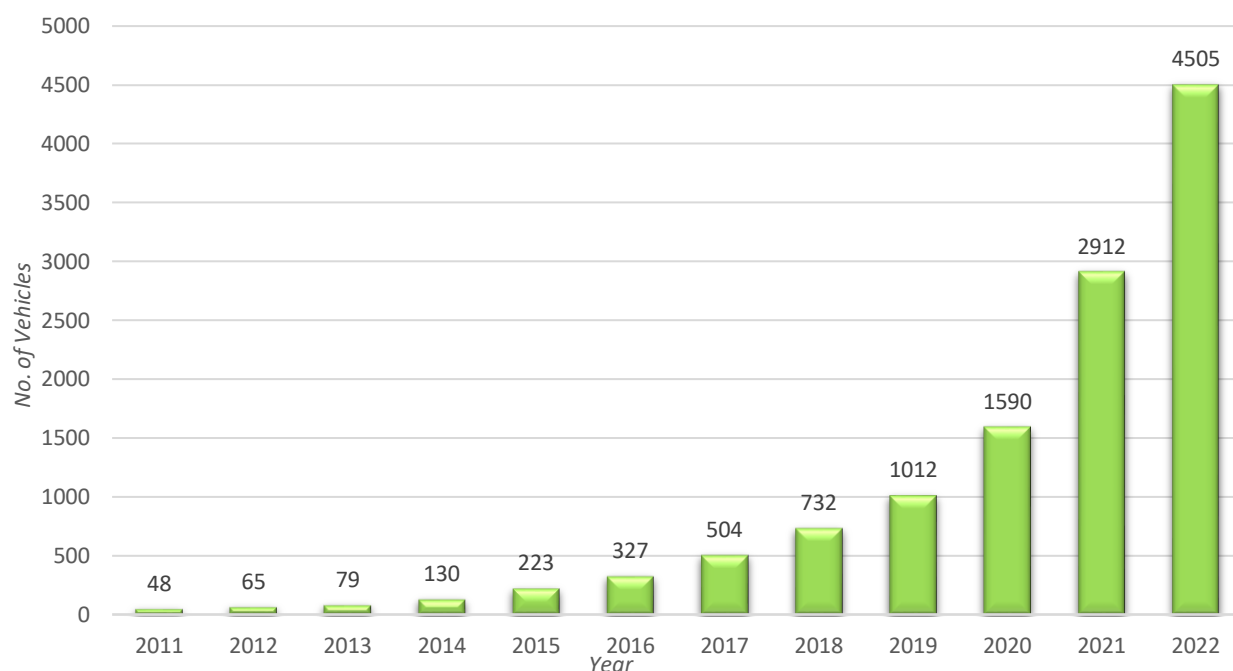


Figure 1: Number of licensed electric vehicles in Central Bedfordshire (2011-2022)

³ [DfT Vehicle Licensing Statistics \(VEH0132\)](#) (data as at Q4 for each annual period)

Progress since June 2021

12. As of July 2023, there are 128 publicly available electric vehicle charging devices in Central Bedfordshire, of which 17 units are classed as rapid and above, representing 43.3 units per 100,000 population in comparison to a UK average of 65.7 units.
13. These have been delivered through private sector investment and through grant funded projects taken forward by the Council. To date, the Council has secured a total of £635,150 of grant funding through the government's On-Street Residential Charge Point Scheme to deliver charge points for residential use, providing vital infrastructure for both current electric vehicle drivers, and those considering the switch.
14. The Council has followed the model of utilising local car parking assets and highway parking bays to deliver banks of charge points in residential areas. These are to serve clusters of properties without access to dedicated off-street parking and provide local access to standard charge points within a 5–10-minute walk.
15. This rollout has been a public and private sector partnership with BP Pulse, who the Council has worked with to identify and assess sites, produce detailed costings for viable sites, apply for funding, and ultimately deliver charge points and expand the network across Central Bedfordshire. The Council's application for grant funding in 2021/22 secured the maximum amount of £360,000 for the provision of 96 charge points over 12 sites, and the majority of these were delivered at the start of 2023.
16. In July 2023, the Council secured another £275,150 of grant funding to take forward a second phase of residential charge point rollout, working to widen coverage and fill gaps across Central Bedfordshire settlements. Subject to requested updates to grid connection costings, the Council is hopeful to bring forward charge point provision at the sites listed below before the end of the 2023/24 financial year.
17. Details of the locations of all current and planned EV Charge point locations that the council has been successful in receiving funding are included in the draft Strategy.

What the Strategy aims to achieve

18. The Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy builds on the initial EV Chargepoint Plan and sets out the Council's vision for Central Bedfordshire to be an area that offers a suite of charging options for residents, businesses, visitors, and those travelling through the area, with the Council acting as a facilitator and enabler to support the decarbonisation of transport and improvements to local air quality.
19. The primary aim will be to provide local solutions for those who cannot easily charge at home through a range of technologies, whilst enabling the growth of rapid charging hubs in strategic locations to serve the major road network and town centres. The focus will be on ensuring a fair, geographic coverage that caters for identified demand and need, and providing options that are reliable, accessible, equitable, inclusively designed and powered by renewable energy sources.
20. The draft Strategy has been reviewed by the Energy Savings Trust, who are fulfilling the support function role for OZEV with respect to LEVI. The Strategy itself will be a key document necessary for stating ambition, demonstrating the approach, and ultimately securing LEVI funding (an overview of what the funding involves is provided below).

21. The Strategy sets out the following objectives for how the council takes forward work in this area. These being:

- **Objective 1:** Maximise private investment to widen the charging network across Central Bedfordshire and meet the needs of residents, businesses, visitors, and those travelling through the area.
- **Objective 2:** Utilise a range of technologies to provide charging solutions for those residents who do not have the ability to charge at home easily and safely.
- **Objective 3:** Ensure the network is made up of charging options that are reliable, accessible, equitable, inclusively designed and financially sustainable, and are fairly spread across Central Bedfordshire, with options in as many settlements as possible, to meet identified need and demand.
- **Objective 4:** Play our part in transport decarbonisation, facilitating the reduction of emissions from road vehicles, the resulting improvements to air quality, and an overall reduction in car use. Underpinning this by ensuring the use of renewable energy in powering the public charge point network alongside its role in linking with local renewable energy generation and storage in emerging projects.
- **Objective 5:** Support local economic growth through job creation, reduced transportation costs and increased disposable income for residents
- **Objective 6:** Utilise our land assets in the best way to enable the sustainable development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. As part of this improve charge point provision at our offices, public buildings, depots, and housing stock as well as supporting the transition of the Council's vehicle fleet, contractor vehicles and private taxis.

22. There are also key principles set out which underpin how charge point infrastructure and other solutions should be delivered. These include:

- a. Charge point infrastructure should meet the needs of disabled drivers, with the aim of following best practice as set out in PAS 1899:2022 and provide accessible-sized bays.
- b. All infrastructure provided should allow any driver to connect, with clear pricing and, where possible, contactless payment systems.
- c. All infrastructure should be reliable and well maintained to give users confidence in the network, with data available to show availability and utilisation.
- d. Charging should be affordable, especially for those reliant on the public charge point network.
- e. Renewable electricity sources should be used to power infrastructure, with suppliers and operators demonstrating truly sustainable values, green credentials, and supply chains
- f. Future procurement for the delivery of charge point infrastructure will maximise private sector investment and be underpinned by the most beneficial commercial agreement available.

Maximising external funding opportunities

23. There are various grant and capital funds available to local authorities, landlords, businesses, residents, and drivers, these are summarised in the Strategy. The key mechanism for delivering the EV Infrastructure Strategy will be maximising these. The main ones that will be focused on are:

- a. **The Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund⁴:** This is £450m booster fund launched to help local authorities leverage private sector investment into sustainable, long-term electric vehicle infrastructure. This fund comprises of capital funding to support charge point delivery and capability funding to ensure that local authorities have the staff and capacity to plan and deliver charge point infrastructure. Capital and revenue funding has been allocated to all transport authorities including the Council. For capital we have been allocated up to £1.413m. The capital funding can be spent on all costs associated with the installation of charge points, including hardware, electrical connection costs, civil engineering costs, and other installation costs. Rapid charging is eligible for funding as part of projects, but the expectation is that most of the funding supports the delivery of lower power charge points. This focus of the funding helps to address the gaps in provision and the provide access to charging for those residents who do not have dedicated on-plot off-street parking and the facility to charge a vehicle at home.
- b. **On-Street Resident Charge Point Scheme (ORCS) ⁵ :** This scheme provides partial grant funding for local authorities to install residential charge points with £15 million allocated into the 2023/24 fund. The ORCS fund has been utilised twice by the Council to secure £635,150 of funding to bring forward two phases of roll out. For electric vehicles, charging at home usually occurs off-street in garages or driveways. However, in many areas off-street parking is not available to residents. This fund assists installations on-street or in public car parks to provide access close to home, ensuring that on-street parking is not a barrier to realising the benefits of electric vehicles. The available funding through the scheme has decreased in recent years, largely driven by improved commerciality of charge points and other emerging funding streams, such as the LEVI fund. Whilst this is available however the aim is to continue to submit bids to utilise this.

Challenges and opportunities

24. Finding locations that meet funding requirements, that are affordable – primarily due to grid connection costs, are in areas with sufficient grid capacity or can be hosted on non-CBC land, has been extremely challenging. As part of the site identification process over 200 individual sites were assessed and all of those that could be brought forward have been. This has meant that the geographic spread needed hasn't yet been achieved and also some towns aren't yet served by EV charge point Infrastructure.
25. Advances in charge point technology, new approaches and flexibility with respect to how LEVI funding can be used will mean that some of those sites previously assessed, along with new ones, should become viable for EV Charge point infrastructure in one form or another. A key objective of the EV Infrastructure Strategy is to ensure that there is a drastically improved and more equitable geographic spread of charge points, particularly for those areas where residents do not have access to off street parking, so charging from a home connection is difficult.

⁴ [Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure \(LEVI\) Fund Guidance](#)

⁵ [On-Street Resident Charge Point Scheme Guidance](#)

26. The EV Charge point market is buoyant and extremely competitive. As is always the case, considerable importance and emphasis will be placed on the procurement process relating to the range of charge point approaches that are taken forward. This is also likely to be impacted by all transport authorities in England being allocated a share of LEVI funding which may impact on the number of potential providers willing to work with the council or the commercial offer/level of private sector investment proposed. In some cases there may be a position where the council needs to consider a longer contract for more preferable commercial terms or may need to reconsider sites or technology deployed.

Next steps

Council priorities

27. The EV Infrastructure Strategy Plan will support the delivery of key aspects of the Council's Sustainability Plan and net zero commitments, particularly in relation to the decarbonisation of transport and will also support the following Council's priorities:

- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire: through provision of a network of EV chargepoints.
- Enabling people to live their best lives: through providing them with the infrastructure they need to travel using electric vehicles.
- Making the best use of resources: by delivering a network of EV chargepoints in a way that minimises risk, negates the need for upfront capital investment, whilst at the same time meets growing demand.
- Creating opportunities for rewarding work: through providing a EV charging network with good geographic spread that enables and supports businesses and their employees to maximise the benefits electrification of transport, such as lower running cost and social value.

Implications

Legal Implications

28. The approach to providing EV chargepoint infrastructure outlined in the Strategy will involve procurement and a contract being put in place with several different companies. The procurement team are part of the project team and dedicated procurement, and contract legal support will be sought from Pathfinder Legal Services Ltd during the business case\procurement planning process. In addition to this considerable work has been done to support local authorities with respect to the procurement of EV charge point providers by CENEX. This is detailed in the Strategy.

29. LGSS Law will advise on the appropriate contractual documents depending on the option preferred. This advice will be provided to Officers including the Director of Place & Communities, the Executive Member for Sustainability & Transformation, the Director of Resources, and the Executive Member for Corporate Resources to enable them to make an informed decision during the business case/planning process, leading to the procurement of the EV chargepoint project and award of Contract.

30. The Local Government Act 2000, supplemented by the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Sustainable Communities Act 2007, provide the principal statutory powers by means of which local authorities are engaged directly in helping to tackle climate change.
31. The Council has a wide general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that individuals generally may do. The existence of the general power is not limited by the existence of any other power of the Council which (to any extent) overlaps the general power. The Council can therefore rely on this power, where appropriate, to undertake the proposals contained in the EV Charge Point Infrastructure Strategy.
32. Section 1 of the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 confers power on the local authority to enter into a contract for the provision of making available assets or services for the purposes of, or in connection with, the discharge of the function by the local authority.
33. Under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 ("the regulations") where a local authority is to enter into a contract for the supply of goods & services, and the value of those goods and services equals or exceeds a financial limit of £213,477 (which is the current Procurement Threshold at the time of writing this report) any procurement exercise to contract for those goods and services must be conducted in accordance with the Regulations and any failure to do so may be declared as anti-competitive and in breach of the Regulations.
34. If the chosen contractual arrangement falls under the definition of a 'concession' the Concession Contract Regulations 2016 will apply and would need to be adhered to.

Financial and Risk Implications

35. The approach to providing EV chargepoint infrastructure outlined in the strategy will enable the rollout of EV charging infrastructure at little or no capital cost to the council and, depending on the approach taken, even generate an income through the leasing of parking spaces or a profit share agreement.
36. This approach allows risks to be mitigated as it allows the EV chargepoint companies, who are specialists and have considerable expertise with respect to the deployment and running of EV chargepoint networks to provide this infrastructure in a way that reflects current and future demand, ensures the application of the best available technology in the most appropriate locations, and proactively manage and maintain the chargepoint network.
37. The resource needed to manage this arrangement will be covered through existing or planned roles in the Sustainable Transport & Active Travel team, which are funded through the revenue allocation made to the council through the LEVI capability fund.

Equalities and Fairness Implications

38. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

39. The varied needs of the users of the EV chargepoint infrastructure will be a key consideration when locations are being chosen to ensure that they are accessible, can be easily used and are in safe, well-lit locations. This will also be embedded into the planning guidance/policy and design guide to minimise the impact, if any, of those with protected characteristics.
40. Charge point infrastructure installed should meet the needs of disabled drivers, with the aim of following best practice as set out in PAS 1899:2022 and provide accessible-sized bays being included in tender specifications.

Sustainability Implications

41. The increased uptake of Electric Vehicles is a key part of the government's roadmap to zero carbon by 2050 and will see the phase-out date for the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans being 2035.
42. In Central Bedfordshire GHG emissions from transport represent the largest contributing source of emissions. This in part reflects the major transport routes running through the area as well as the semi-rural nature of Central Bedfordshire, the latter often making travel by car the easiest and most convenient option for travelling across the area.
43. The EV Infrastructure Strategy sets out the progress made to date, the key objectives and principles, the anticipated level of future demand and potential impact

Conclusion and Next Steps

44. Final amendments will be made to the EV Infrastructure Strategy after which it will be presented to the Council's Executive for adoption.
45. The Council will also submit its response to OZEV with respect to how the £1.4m LEVI fund allocation is proposed to be used. Following this there will be a period for clarification and amendments with funding to be in place for delivery from 2024/25 onwards. The length of the programme is likely to be up to three years maximum, but this will be dependent on the discussions with the EST in the clarification period.
46. In parallel to this the second phase ORCs schemes and BP Pulse Network Schemes (as detailed in the Strategy) will continue to be delivered over the coming 12 months.

Appendices

Appendix A: Draft Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

Background Papers

None

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