

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 53

Subject: E-scooter trial proposal

Date of meeting: 16 October 2025

Report of: Cabinet Member for Transport & City Infrastructure

Lead Officer: Name: Corporate Director- City Operations

Contact Officer: Name: Matthew Thompson

Email: matthew.thompson@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 To secure Cabinet approval for the Council to apply to the Department for Transport for a trial of 300 e-scooters to add to the existing Beryl BTN Bike hire scheme.
- 1.2 The existing scheme was procured in 2022 and aims to encourage modal shift from motor vehicles to pedal bikes and e-bikes. It supports three key council plan objectives – investing in our city; an accessible, clean, and sustainable city; and living well.
- 1.3 If the application to the Department for Transport is successful, the bikeshare scheme operator (Beryl) will be required to provide the E-scooter trial as part of the bikeshare scheme.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees to the Council applying to the Department for Transport for permission to begin a new e-scooter trial in 2026 as an add-on to the current bikeshare scheme.
- 2.2 Cabinet agrees for an e-scooter consultation to take place alongside the application and for the results of the consultation to be reported back with full financial analysis for approval on the way forward.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 The current Bikeshare Framework Agreement allows for the introduction of up to 300 e-scooters to the current scheme if the relevant legislation is passed and with member approval.

- 3.2 The Department for Transport made regulations allowing trials of rental E-Scooters in July 2020. These trials are subject to their approval, and the requirements they have set out.
- 3.3 The Framework Agreement call off contract is due to expire on 30 September 2027 after four years. A further contract extension will be put in place to maximise profit from the council owned assets (bikes and docking stations) which have a minimum street life of five years. The latest generation of e-scooters have a minimum street life of 2 years and (if introduced by April 26) would be 2 years and 5 months old by 30 September 2028.
- 3.4 The Department for Transport wants new trials to test e-scooter scheme design innovations and measures such as go-slow zones, the promotion of helmets, unique areas and more. There are opportunities for the Council and Beryl to support existing research projects on predictive casualty data.
- 3.5 The Government's English Devolution Bill guidance issued in July 25 makes it clear that a Sussex Strategic Mayoral authority will have licensing powers for 'Micromobility' (hire fleets of scooters, e-bikes, and bikes) and can issue licences to new and existing schemes in their lower tier unitary authorities. A trial in the city now will provide relevant local learning and can set a precedent for the highest practical safety and governance standards to base those strategic authority decisions on.
- 3.6 Government has committed to wider micromobility legislation when parliamentary time allows. The Department for Transport awaits a confirmed legislative slot to table the proposed bill and therefore cannot offer a timeline at this stage. If a slot in 2026 is secured, new rules may come into force before our trial would close at the end of September 2028 but any delay in tabling the bill makes this less likely.

Local viability

- 3.7 Academic research has long evidenced the positive, reinforcing relationship between micromobility schemes and public transport. When co-located, these schemes contribute to an integrated transport system that reduces reliance on private vehicles, and thereby car ownership and use. This increases local demand for active travel infrastructure, improving public support for active travel schemes.
- 3.8 A trial now would establish a share of any future e-scooter market during the existing Bikeshare contract. It would create a scheme which is accountable and regulated, run by an experienced operator. It would reduce demand for private e-scooters by providing a safer alternative which would be legal on the local public highway.
- 3.9 The current Bikeshare Framework Agreement includes a provision allowing the Council to require the Operator to provide e-scooters and deliver an e-scooter scheme. This express provision within the Framework Agreement

means a separate procurement process does not need to be undertaken because when the scheme was procured, it was envisaged that e-scooters would be added during the life of the contract. This means that one operator (Beryl) can co-ordinate scooters, e-bikes, and pedal bikes to best advantage. Recent experiences in other similar UK cities suggests the local market may be too small to accommodate multiple operators. There is a risk that licensing multiple operators in the city could provoke a race to cut costs, compromising safety standards.

- 3.10 Beryl have successfully added e-scooters to their existing bike hire schemes in similar sized cities such as Norwich and Bournemouth Christchurch Poole. In both cases, bike hire usage has not suffered but the user base has increased as shown in figures from Norwich at Appendix 1. For this proposed e-scooter trial, Beryl will purchase and own the e-scooters.

The trial opportunity

- 3.11 E-scooter trials have been running in various towns and cities across England since autumn 2020, generating data which provides good evidence of many potential benefits to residents and visitors.
- 3.12 The Department for Transport invited applications for new trials in July 2025. The application deadline for local authorities is 21 October 2025.
- 3.13 The Department will assess applications and make decisions in January 2026. A 3-month mobilisation period for the trial will follow.
- 3.14 Private e-scooters will remain illegal on the public highway during new trials, so the introduction of hire e-scooters presents a safer and managed legal option for visitors and residents.
- 3.15 The Trial proposals would reflect the broader policy context (See Appendix 2) and include the following:
- Add 400 Beryl e-scooters to the current bikeshare scheme with 100 on standby so 300 are always available.
 - Gradual introduction from April 2026 of up to 75 scooters per week.
 - The Scooter Hire tariff will be higher than the 'pay as you ride' e-bike cost per minute and will include an unlock fee.
 - Scooters will have a smaller hire zone than the hire bikes, excluding the Undercliff or any privately owned land where the owner does not consent to scooter use.
 - Mandatory scooter parking bays will be installed at 30 sites. This includes dedicated racks at footway locations to minimise street clutter and obstructions and at least one further location on carriageway using a corral alongside new stands for bikes.
 - We will prioritise locations on the seafront and seek to maximise convenience for commuters with central sites near car parks, stations & bus stops.

Road safety implications.

- 3.16 Across 16 million e-scooter trips in the UK, serious collisions occurred at a rate of one in every 500 journeys, with the majority linked to illegal private scooter use accounting for 82% of incidents since trials began. While hire e-scooter casualties are comparable to those involving e-bikes, private scooters remain illegal on public roads during trials, and legislation will not change until May 2028 at the earliest.
- 3.17 Collision rates and severity are declining, with 53 million journeys logged across hire schemes by the end of 2024. Studies suggest e-scooters may improve cyclist safety by increasing driver caution, and international evidence shows targeted restrictions can reduce injuries. Head injuries make up 22% of e-scooter-related injuries, but helmet use remains low despite campaigns and previous distribution efforts. (See Appendix 3 for further Road Safety Considerations).

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1. Although the alternative option of not proceeding is still available, there is a strong sense that moving forward with the application and the associated consultation is the most constructive course of action at this stage. By initiating the process, we can gather valuable feedback, assess public and stakeholder responses, and develop a clearer understanding of the implications.
- 4.2 Once this information is compiled, a comprehensive report will be presented to Cabinet, allowing them to make an informed decision on the best way forward, including financial implications. Importantly, even after the application has been approved, there remains flexibility to withdraw it at any point should circumstances change or new concerns arise. This approach ensures that progress is made without committing irreversibly, maintaining room for adjustment as needed.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 As part of the engagement work officers will be sharing the proposals and invite feedback from key stakeholders including Sussex Police, NHS trusts, and the stakeholders on the Travel and Transport Partnership group. Their input will help shape the development and implementation of the scheme.
- 5.2 Consultation will also extend to relevant private landowners where scooters may be used, such as Brighton Marina, both Universities, and the owners of Preston Barracks, U&I developers. In addition, there will be engagement with other large employers across the city to ensure broad representation and consideration of local needs.
- 5.3 For any new footway sites, footway licensing processes will be required. To ensure accessibility, officers will commission independent Access Audits for all proposed footway locations considered marginal, with a particular focus on the impact for individuals with disabilities who rely on walking and wheeling. Around 26 existing bike hire sites located on pavements will be

upgraded with racks, and these changes will also be subject to consultation and Access Audits.

- 5.4 New carriageway sites will require amendments to existing Traffic Regulation Orders. These changes will follow the standard local consultation process and will include independent Road Safety and Access Audits to ensure safety and inclusivity.
- 5.5 Once the application for a trial has been submitted, a full public consultation will be launched prior to implementation. This will focus on the specific features of the proposed hire scheme and invite residents, businesses, and visitors to share their views on its benefits and potential impacts, as well as offer suggestions for improvement.
- 5.6 To support informed public engagement, we will create a dedicated web page on the Council's website. This page will include links to relevant research, UK statistics, and news stories to help inform the debate and provide context for the consultation.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The additional unsupported borrowing pressure associated with the implementation of this scheme will be met by a quarterly advance on the final surplus share payments from Q1 2026-7 for the remainder of the Framework agreement. Therefore, there will be no negative impact to the council's budgets through the implementation of this scheme. For this proposed e-scooter trial, Beryl will purchase and own the e-scooters.
- 6.2 Surplus generated from the scheme will be applied against the existing pressures of the bikeshare borrowing, which currently sit at £295k per annum up until 2030, when the repayments will cease.

Name of finance officer: David Wilder. Date consulted (01/10/2025)

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Bikeshare Framework Agreement is an overarching agreement which allows the Council and Participating Authorities to enter into a Call-Off Contract with Beryl for their own specific Bikeshare Scheme. The Council entered into their Bikeshare Scheme Call-Off Contract with Beryl on 30 September 2023 for a period of 4 years which means the Call-Off Contract expires on 30 September 2027. The Service are currently exploring the possibility of extending the Call-Off Contract by a further period, to maximize the life span of the Bikeshare Scheme assets and also maximize the profits of the Scheme.
- 7.2 The current UK legislative framework for E-Scooters is largely governed by the Electric Scooter Trials and Traffic Signs (Coronavirus) Regulations and General Directions 2020 (SI 2020/663), which brought significant temporary changes to facilitate government approved rental e-scooter trials across England. These trials are subject to Department for Transport approval, and

the requirements set out by the Department for Transport includes areas such as insurance, unique identification numbers, driving license capture and validation and encouraging helmet use. The Department for Transport requirements must be complied with fully at all times if the Council decides to proceed with a trial.

Name of lawyer: James Corr. Date consulted (02/10/2025):

8. Risk implications

8.1 A full risk assessment of the trial has been undertaken.

8.2 The top three risks from the trial and the measures proposed to manage them are:

- Injuries to riders – vehicle designs are in line with the safety features in Beryl's 2025 e-scooter specification (See Appendix 3); all riders must have a provisional or full drivers' license; sign up and randomized checks, Helmet reminders and incentives; Lower speeds Sun to Thurs Midnight to 5am; Friday and Sat Midnight to 5am curfew; speed restrictions in busy areas.
- Injuries to other vulnerable road users – design features include number plates and lights on vehicles; obstruction targets for the operator; pavement bans; no go zones; training offers.
- Misinformation – police liaison, press releases; dedicated web page with data and study links; comms strategy clarifying differences between privately owned e-scooters and hire fleets

9. Equalities implications

9.1 The existing Bikeshare Equalities Impact Assessment has been reviewed in the light of a potential e-scooter add-on. See section 5.3 above regarding Access audits and mandatory parking.

9.2 The 2024 COMO UK Annual Shared Micromobility report (See Appendix 4) notes e-scooter trials across 22 regions covering 3.5M users found e-scooters delivered some equalities gains over bikeshare. These include:

- 20% of e-scooter users are aged 44-64.
- 42 % of e-scooter users are low or below average earners < £30K per annum.
- 25% of e-scooter users are from non-white ethnic groups.
- 22% of e-scooter users report some form of disability.

9.3 Council housing tenants have recently been asked not to store private e-scooters on housing premises. The trial will offer a viable and legal alternative, and the Council will ask Beryl to offer free 100-minute bundles to our tenants who wish to try out the scheme.

10. Sustainability implications

10.1 The 2024 COMO UK report (Appendix 4) found:

- 21% of e-scooter users say they have replaced car trips this way.
- 21% say they replaced a bus journey with a scooter journey; however, 44% of e-scooter users combine another form of shared or public transport on regular trips.
- 26% say they replaced a walking journey; however, 25% of active users of shared bikes and/or e-scooters walk more often or much more often since starting to use shared micromobility.
- 27% of e-scooter users say they now also cycle more.
- 30% use both bikes and e-scooters at different times.

10.2 E-scooters have a greater lifecycle carbon footprint than e-bikes due to their shorter lifespan, but the carbon savings from the private and hire vehicle trips they prevent still outweigh these carbon costs.

10.3 COMO UK's report suggests the shift from walking to scooters in current UK trials averages 26%. On the Isle of Wight, where the shift away from walking was reported as high as 50%, the carbon saving from a shift away from cars, taxis and vans to scooters still outweighed the carbon costs of the scheme itself.

10.4 The batteries on the new model of Beryl scooter proposed for our trial have increased charging capacity, making them good for up to 20 rides. This means less battery recharging, longer battery life, and less service vehicle trips to swap batteries.

11. Health and Wellbeing Implications

11.1 In addition to the sustainability points above, the COMO UK report (Appendix 4) found:

- 16% of active e-scooter users said that e-scooters provide them with exercise.
- 26% of shared e-scooter users say that shared e-scooter usage provides them with mental health benefits. This increased to 49% where the user declared some form of disability.
- 25% of active users of shared bikes and/or e-scooters walk more often or much more often since starting to use shared micromobility

12. Procurement implications

12.1 There are no procurement implications. There is an existing Bikeshare framework which anticipated the potential for an e-scooter add-on and was signed in December 2022. Social Value is already reported annually as a KPI for the scheme, but this will be a key part of the Comms strategy. We will provide incentives for council tenants opting in to try the scooters.

13 Conclusion

- 13.1 Data from existing UK e-scooter trials shows potential benefits for the city in line with many local and national policy goals. The decision to run a trial will sit with the strategic authority after devolution. This is an opportunity to influence Sussex policy by creating useful local learning now based on high standards.
- 13.2 The scheme will be accountable and well managed by an existing operator with a track record in similar cities. It will not require further procurement and can be activated under an existing contract. Clutter and obstruction will be minimized by racks and corrals for parking. Collision data shows hire e-scooters present a low and declining casualty risk. There are safety innovation opportunities such as new models, speed reductions, curfews, and helmet promotion which reduce injury risks.
- 13.3 The submission of the application, along with the accompanying consultation process, will play a crucial role in shaping the future direction of the proposed scheme. By engaging stakeholders and the public, the consultation will provide valuable insights into the potential benefits, concerns, and areas for improvement. These findings will be carefully reviewed and incorporated into a comprehensive Cabinet report, which will outline the recommended next steps.
- 13.4 This report will include a full financial assessment to ensure that any decisions made are grounded in a clear understanding of the costs, funding sources, and long-term value of the initiative. Cabinet can then use this information to assess the viability of the scheme and determine the most appropriate course of action.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

- 1. Norwich e-scooter impact on e-bike hire data
- 2. Policy context of E-scooter trials
- 3. Road safety considerations of E-scooter trials
- 4. COMO UK Shared Micromobility Report 2024-v02