

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	11 February 2015	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2744
TITLE:	Voluntary sector funding applications for community transport for 2015-16	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 – Criteria for funding community transport schemes Appendix 2 – Funding applications for community transport 2015-16		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 Funding applications have been received from voluntary sector bodies for the provision of community transport services in 2015-16. This Report gives details of those applications with recommendations on the allocation of funding.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That funding proposals in Appendix 2 be approved, subject to decision of the Council on the budget for 2015-16.

2.2 That the Divisional Director for Environmental Services be given delegated powers to reallocate funds, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, from approved projects that become unviable owing to the level of funding allocated or to a change in circumstances of the applicant group, should such situations arise during the year.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

3.1 New Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for Keynsham Dial-a-Ride and Midsomer Norton & Radstock Dial-a-Ride came into effect on 1 October 2014 and will continue until 30 September 2016. Funding of these schemes is subject to an inflation-related adjustment, based on changes in transport industry costs, in April each year. The funding for 2015-16 will be £75,956 for Keynsham Dial-a-Ride and £102,951 for Midsomer Norton & Radstock Dial-a-Ride.

- 3.2 A new Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Bath Dial-a-Ride came into effect on 1 April 2014 and will continue until 31 March 2017. This service is provided by the in-house fleet and the annual funding level is generally adjusted in April each year to reflect changes in transport industry costs. The funding level for 2015-16 will be £18,267.
- 3.3 Eight other community transport providers applied for funding of £97,812 in total for 2015-16. The applications have been evaluated against the criteria in Appendix 1 and assessed for value for money. All schemes bar one applied for funding at or around the current level. One scheme applied for a significant increase in funding above the 2014-15 level. It is recommended that funding be capped at the current level with an inflation-related adjustment. Awards totalling £91,798 are recommended.
- 3.4 If the recommendations are accepted, total spending on community transport support in 2015-16 will be £288,972. Provision has been made for this amount in the draft budget which will be considered by Council in February 2015.
- 3.5 In addition to support for community transport services, the Council provides funding for safeguarding checks for paid staff, training for trustees in their roles and responsibilities, and basic first-aid training for volunteer drivers. This is estimated to cost in the region of £1k and will be funded from the Public Transport budget.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 There is no statutory duty on the Council to fund the provision of community transport as such, but there is general recognition of its value in meeting the transport needs of those who are unable to use mainstream public transport, enabling them to live independently, to access essential services and to participate in community activities. Most users are elderly or disabled and value the service highly.
- 4.2 The funding of community transport helps the Council meet its duty to ensure equal access to transport services.
- 4.3 Community transport relies heavily on volunteers to drive vehicles, provide escorts and carry out administrative tasks. In that way, it provides opportunities for those who wish to help their communities.
- 4.4 Community transport is firmly rooted in local communities, who have identified transport needs in their areas and sought to meet them. The Council is committed to encouraging, facilitating and supporting such local initiatives.
- 4.5 There are no adverse implications on any of the protected groups defined in equalities legislation.

5 THE REPORT

5.1 The Joint Local Transport Plan for the West of England Partnership Area 2011 – 2026 aims to maintain, diversify, expand and integrate community transport provision by:

- Linking with other forms of public transport
- Optimising community transport operations
- Encouraging social enterprises
- Helping with marketing, publicity and information

5.2 Community transport improves access to work, education, training, shopping, leisure and health facilities for people living in rural areas and those who are elderly or disabled.

5.3 All schemes have made efforts to contain their costs and operate more efficiently. The number of individual passenger journeys on community transport grew by 9% to 94,829 in 2013-14, continuing the trend of the previous year. The overall average subsidy per passenger journey has fallen from £3.49 in 2011-12 to £3.21 in 2012-13 and £2.96 in 2013-14, reflecting a more efficient use of resources. This trend has continued in the first half of 2014-15 with passenger journeys growing by 12% and the average subsidy per passenger journey falling to £2.80.

5.4 Recommended awards have been arrived at following assessment of grant applications against the criteria in Appendix 1 and a comparison of value for money, within the constraints of the budget available.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 The recommended awards will ensure the continuation of existing community transport services and will help the Council meet its objectives.

6.2 The Council's Public Transport Team has considered the applications against set criteria (see Appendix 1) and assessed value for money by comparing the cost per trip of comparable schemes, based on the information that applicants provide.

6.3 One scheme applied for funding in excess of the current level (allowing for inflation) but it is recommended that the funding they receive be maintained at the current level with a small increase to allow for inflation. The scheme concerned has been advised of the recommendation and confirm that the recommended award would not give rise to a substantial curtailment of the services they currently provide.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 None

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 Consultation has been carried out with the Section 151 Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer. As in previous years, it was not deemed appropriate to consult more widely.

8.2 Consultation has been carried out electronically.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

Contact person	Andy Strong, Public Transport Manager - 01225 394201
Background papers	None
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