

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	12 February 2014	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2617
TITLE:	Voluntary sector funding applications for community transport 2014/15	
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 2014/15		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 Funding applications have been received from voluntary sector bodies for the provision of community transport services in 2014/15. This Report gives details of those applications with recommendations on the allocation of funding.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That funding proposals in Appendix 2 be approved, subject to decision of the Council on the budget for 2014/15.

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 The Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for Keynsham Dial-a-Ride and Midsomer Norton & Radstock Dial-a-Ride expire on 31 March 2014. Officers have held initial discussions with these schemes on new SLAs. It is proposed to extend the current SLAs, by agreement with the schemes, until 30 September 2014 to give more time to negotiate new SLAs in the light of the Council's decision on its budget for 2014/15. Also, it is proposed to make an inflation-related adjustment of +1.8%, based on changes to transport industry costs, from 1 April 2014 to enable the schemes to maintain their current level of service. Therefore, the funding for the schemes in the first half of 2014/15 will be equivalent to annual values of £75,593

for Keynsham Dial-a-Ride and £102,459 for Midsomer Norton & Radstock Dial-a-Ride. Funding for the schemes under their new SLAs from 1 October 2014 will be limited to the amount available within the budget.

- 3.2 The Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Bath Dial-a-Ride expires on 31 March 2014. This service is provided by the in-house fleet and it is proposed to award a new three-year SLA from 1 April 2014 at a funding level of £18,180 per annum, subject to an inflation-related adjustment each year.
- 3.3 Eight other community transport providers applied for funding of £96,533 in total for 2014/15. The applications have been evaluated against the criteria in Appendix 1 and assessed for value for money. Three schemes applied for funding in excess of their current level but it is recommended that funding be capped at the current level with an inflation-related adjustment. Awards totalling £89,587 are recommended.
- 3.4 If the recommendations are accepted, total spending on community transport support in 2014/15 will be £285,819. Provision has been made for this amount in the draft budget.
- 3.5 All schemes have been encouraged to contain their costs and operate more efficiently. The number of individual passenger journeys on community transport grew by 9% to 86,745 in 2012/13. Growth continued at 7% in the first half of 2013/14. The average subsidy per passenger journey has fallen from £3.49 in 2011/12 to £3.21 in 2012/13 and £3.08 in the first half of 2013/14, reflecting a more efficient use of resources.
- 3.6 In addition to support for community transport services, the Council provides funding for safeguarding checks for paid staff and training for trustees in their roles and responsibilities.

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 the value of such facilities 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 has a role in encouraging, facilitating and supporting such local initiatives.

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 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 Three schemes applied for funding in excess of their current level but it is recommended that the funding they receive be maintained at the current level with a small increase to allow for inflation. The schemes concerned have been advised of the recommendation and confirm that the recommended awards would not give rise to a substantial curtailment of the services they 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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