

Cheshire East Council

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	6 th December 2016
Report of:	Frank Jordan, Executive Director Place
Subject/Title:	Sustainable Travel Transition Year Grant Funding
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr David Brown, Deputy Leader of the Council and Highways and Infrastructure Portfolio Holder

1. Report Summary

1.1 In June 2016, the Council was successful in securing £350,000 from the Department of Transport from the Sustainable Travel Transition Year Fund (STTY).

1.2 The focus of this award is to ensure that there is a transition between previous funding rounds and potential future funding grants through the forthcoming Access Fund Programme. The focus of the bid was to support businesses within the Northern Gateway Development Zone.

1.3 There were only 23 Local Authorities that were successful in securing funding from this programme.

1.4 As part of the agreement for funding, the Council will be expected to achieve certain targets and outcomes to demonstrate the effective use of the funding, and that our expenditure is in accordance with the submitted bid.

1.5 The programme builds on the previous Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) which focused on three key areas:

- Access to skills and employment
- Enabling active travel
- Targeted active travel promotion

1.6 As part of LSTF programme, Cheshire East Council successfully worked in partnership with the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce. Through this partnership, local businesses were offered the opportunity to apply for business travel planning grants. This was a highly successful programme with £120,000 awarded to businesses for measures to address barriers to jobs, including funding the provision of 329 cycle parking spaces at businesses. This investment was matched by £40,000 of private sector funding, demonstrating the value employers placed on these interventions as a contribution to individual organisations' growth and sustainability.

1.7 The Council's bid document for STTY outlined the requirement to replicate the successful approach to business grants. To continue this approach across a greater number of local firms, there is a need to update the existing policy as adopted for LSTF, entitled "*Policy for the Allocation of Local Sustainable Transport Fund Business Travel Planning Grants*"; so that this policy will be suitable for the current STTY programme and potentially for similar grant-funded programmes in the future. Only minor changes to the previous policy are necessary, comprising;

- Change of dates in the existing policy, and
- Change of name to the Policy for the Allocation of Business Travel Planning Grants.

These changes will enable the Councils policy to be suitable for STTY and any similar grant-funding programmes in the future.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the "*Policy for the Allocation of Business Travel Planning Grants*" be approved, noting that this extends the effective period for this policy to make provision for future funding bids
- 2.2 In accordance with the Constitution and paragraph 1.20 of the Scheme of Delegation that the decision for awarding the grants is delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Highways & Infrastructure.
- 2.3 That the information relating to the Sustainable Travel Transition Year fund be noted.

3 Other Options Considered

- 3.1 This programme is externally funded by Department of Transport and was allocated via a competitive bidding process. A copy of the bid document is available at:

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/transport_strategies.aspx

It contains full details of the funding bid, the targets we have agreed to achieve, and the costs and benefits arising from the programme. All projects are outlined within the bidding document and are defined to be in line with the stated objectives.

- 3.2 The Northern Development Gateway Zone was targeted for delivery because the area has the greatest potential for growth and the highest levels of economic inactivity; which arises due to barriers to growth and employment, in part, caused by transport issues. Other areas in Cheshire East would not meet the DfT's expectations for a successful STTY bid because of the requirement for transition from previous LSTF work.

3.3 The option of not offering grants to local businesses was considered but to do so would have weakened the funding application. As the earlier LSTF programme had been successful there are strong prospects that local businesses would, once again, welcome the opportunity of being able to apply for this funding and match-fund from their own resources.

4 Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 Cheshire East Council has a successful track record in securing grants from the Department of Transport (DfT) to support economic growth through promoting and supporting sustainable travel. In March 2012, the Council received a £3.5 million grant through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, (LSTF) for a three year programme of works based in Crewe.

4.2 The LSTF was successfully delivered and was influential in meeting residents' needs for sustainable travel options. Cheshire East Council's delivery of the programme was cited by the Department of Transport in their Best Practice Review of LSTF.

4.3 Cabinet's attention is drawn to the main elements of the STTY programme (see table below). All procurement processes followed are in accordance with Cheshire East Council's procurement policies.

Package	Project
Access to skills and employment	Working in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, Smarter Travel Partnership and businesses/colleges to implement measures to improve access by sustainable modes, including destination-based travel advice
	Match funded grants for businesses, colleges and organisations to improve sustainable travel options e.g. cycle parking and other facilities
	Workplace/college cycle challenge, timed to coincide with the Tour of Britain 2016 stage in Crewe
Enabling active travel	Improving and enhancing walking and cycling wayfinding to/from transport interchanges
	Improving access to cycles, training, maintenance and led rides
Targeted active travel promotion	Targeted marketing of active travel
	Improving travel information, including evolution of the LSTF travel information portal and updating of resources

4.4 Cabinet's attention is drawn to the need to deliver the agreed objectives and projects listed within the bid document. Deployment of the funding will have no financial legacy for the council; with all projects completed to timescale with no requirement for further funding upon completion. Hence, all revenue-funded projects will be complete by the end of March 2017.

4.5 The proposed changes to the existing policy for the 'Allocation of Business Travel Planning Grant' are minor; and are intended to enable this successful programme to continue during 2016/17. The proposed policy will also be future-proof for any future funding rounds from the DfT

5 Background/Chronology

5.1 Cheshire East Council have been successful in 2 of the DfT funding rounds for grants to support economic growth through sustainable travel and transport, these comprise

- Local Sustainable Transport fund, and
- Sustainable Travel and Transition Fund

5.2 Cheshire East Council has made a bid for a further funding round of Access Funding from the Department of Transport. This bid has been jointly produced along with Cheshire West and Chester Council and Warrington Borough Council and if successful will deliver a £1m grant for the Council for a three year period.

6 Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

6.1 Crewe North, Crewe East, Crewe South, and Willaston and Rope

7 Implications of Recommendation

7.1 Policy Implications

7.1.1 The Policy for the Allocation of Business Travel Planning Grants is shown in Appendix 1.

7.2 Legal Implications

7.2.1 The STTY grant is awarded from the DfT on the understanding that the authority will deliver the objectives as set out in the original bid.

7.2.2 The Council has the power to award grants to organisations using its general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. In exercising the power the Council must satisfy its public law duties. In essence this means that in making any decision the Council must have taken into account only relevant considerations, followed procedural requirements, acted for proper motives and not acted unreasonably. A grant policy is a clear statement of the criteria that the Council is applying and is essential if the Council is to defend any challenge to its decision making process.

7.2.3 In accordance with the Constitution and paragraph 1.20 of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers the making of grants to voluntary and community

organisations is not delegated to Officers. Grants up to £50,000 shall be for the decision of the relevant Portfolio Holder and grants over £50,000 shall be approved by Cabinet.

7.2.4 The assessment criteria outlined in the policy provide a fair and equitable way to assess applications and award grants. The value of the grants to be issued under this policy (up to £4,999) does not necessarily require a formal Grant Agreement. However, the policy sets out a monitoring process to ensure that grants are used appropriately in line with the application and conditions for funding.

7.2.5 As part of the application form, organisations are required to disclose any other sources of funding to assess and guard against any potential state aid issues. It is unlikely that organisations have been or will be allocated grant funding in excess of the current de minimis levels applicable to state aid but it is prudent to monitor any potential state aid.

7.3 **Financial Implications**

7.3.1 The STTY programme is fully funded by a grant from the Department of Transport (DfT). The policy seeks to award grants of up to £4,999 on a match fund basis to businesses located in Crewe and Nantwich. All funds which are awarded will be claimed in full from the DfT, in line with the Grant Agreement between the Council and the DfT. For the STTY programme, £30,000 has been allocated for this funding period.

7.3.2 Any future business transport grants will be fully funded by external organisations and will not impact on a financial legacy of the Council.

7.4 **Equality Implications**

7.4.1 An equality impact assessment has been written for the STTY bid and has been posted on the Cheshire East Council Website

7.5 **Rural Community Implications**

7.5.1 Grants are available to the businesses located within Crewe and Nantwich

7.6 **Human Resources Implications**

7.6.1 There are no human resource implications

7.7 **Public Health Implications**

7.1.1 There are health benefits from promoting walking and cycling and an increase in the uptake of active travel

7.8 **Implications for Children and Young People**

7.8.1 The STTY programme is focusing on access to skills and will be working with educational establishments in the Crewe area

7.9 **Other Implications (Please specify)**

7.9.1 There are no other implications

8 **Risk Management**

8.1.1 The policy makes clear that grants are awarded specifically for the purpose stated in the application and that should it be spent in any other way, without written approval from the Council, the organisation may become liable to return the monies paid.

8.1.2 To ensure expenditure in line with the approved grant application and compliance with funding conditions, the policy sets out a monitoring process providing suitable safeguards to ensure that grants are spent appropriately and deliver value for money (etc). Failure to provide monitoring information within the timescale may result in the Council recovering the grant paid.

8.1.3 By launching and implementing the policies identified above, there is an opportunity to support grassroots initiatives and empowering local people to community-led initiatives, as well as supporting sustainable travel to help unlock the growth potential of Crewe. Failure to adopt the policy will delay such initiatives.

9 **Access to Information/Bibliography**

9.1 A copy of the Sustainable A copy of the Sustainable Travel Transition Year bid can be found at:
http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/transport_strategies.aspx

10 **Contact information**

Contact details for this report are as follows:

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