

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Portfolio Holder Highways and Infrastructure

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> February 2017
<b>Report of:</b>	Frank Jordan – Executive Director for Place
<b>Subject/Title:</b>	Allocation of Surplus Vehicles to Community & Voluntary Groups
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr David Brown – Deputy Leader of the Council; Highways and Infrastructure Portfolio Holder

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### 1. Report Summary

- 1.1 The Council recognises the valuable role of the community and voluntary sector in providing access to essential services for residents. Local schemes and initiatives have wider social benefits through increasing independence and reducing isolation, particularly in rural communities.
- 1.2 Transport Service Solutions (TSS) Limited has recently entered into a long term contract hire arrangement for the provision of a fleet of new minibuses. As a result, the Council has 8 vehicles which are surplus to requirements. Accordingly, these vehicles are available for gifting to local organisations in the community and voluntary sector.
- 1.3 The Council has a policy for allocating surplus vehicles to the community and voluntary sector to help support community-led transport initiatives, tailored to the needs of local residents (see Appendix 1). The aim is to support local communities by providing means to improve access, particularly for disadvantaged groups, to services including health care, shopping and leisure facilities.
- 1.4 In summer 2016, the Council launched a competition and invited organisations to complete an application form to be allocated a surplus vehicle. In total, 16 applications were received and all were assessed in line with criteria outlined in the policy. The policy supports the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan outcomes such as creating cohesive communities, accessing learning and skills and promoting healthy lifestyles, as well as delivering against the Council's Local Transport Plan objectives.

### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Infrastructure approves the allocation of surplus vehicles to the organisations listed below.

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1nclu5ive Sandbach	Award
Mobility & Access Group (MAG)	Award
Healthbox CIC	Award
Cheshire Fire Authority (Princes Trust)	Award
Wishing Well Project	Award
Church of the Resurrection	Award
Disability Information Bureau	Award
Space4Autism	Award

### 3. Other Options Considered

- 3.1 The option to sell the vehicles at auction with the income going back into Cheshire East capital receipts was considered. Appraisal of the market value of the vehicles was completed and this has informed the view that, taking account of the age of the fleet vehicles, any capital receipts would not be significant.
- 3.2 In conjunction with colleagues in Communities, it was considered that greater value could be achieved from an initiative to gift the vehicles to community groups in line with the Council's Policy for the Allocation of Surplus Council Vehicles to Community & Voluntary Groups (adopted in October 2013).

### 4. Reasons For Recommendation

- 4.1 All applications have been assessed and scored against the criteria contained in the policy, which provides a fair and equitable way to assess applications and allocate vehicles. The criteria are:

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
Access to Services	The vehicle must be used to improve access to key services and make it easier for residents to get to health care, shopping, leisure facilities and other essential services. Ideas which show innovation and creativity are encouraged.
Disadvantaged Groups	Projects which have a particular focus on disadvantaged groups or areas, such as disabled people, older people, young people and those without access to public or private transport, will be scored more highly.
Community Involvement	Applications must demonstrate a high level of community involvement, or the ability to increase community involvement and attract more participants/volunteers through the project.
Sustainability	The aim is for schemes to be sustainable beyond the initial grant funding period and continue to benefit the community into the future. Applications must demonstrate the potential for the project to be sustained in the future.
Other Funding Sources	Applications which have funding contributions from the organisations own funds and/or funding support from other bodies in place or promised will be scored more highly in the assessment.

## **5. Background / Chronology**

- 5.1 The Policy for the Allocation of Surplus Vehicles to Community & Voluntary Groups was approved by Cabinet in October 2013. In 2013/14, 9 vehicles were gifted to the community under the policy with the aim of supporting community-led activities which improve access to essential services such as healthcare, shopping, leisure and other destinations that are important to residents. There is considered added social value in adopting this approach in terms of increasing independence and reducing isolation, particularly in rural communities.

## **6. Wards affected and Local Ward Members**

- 6.1 All Wards and Ward Members.

## **7. Implications of Recommendations**

### **7.1 Policy Implications**

- 7.1.1 An approach which seeks to gift surplus vehicles to appropriate community and voluntary organisations has clear links to the Council's Corporate Plan objectives / outcomes for;
- Strong & supportive local communities are encouraged by enabling community groups to play a greater role in meeting transport needs.
  - Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place through greater opportunities for group transport using local community buses.
  - People live well and for longer by enabling greater access to healthcare and life opportunities which help people engage in society, especially in rural areas.
  - A responsible, effective and efficient organisation by re-using surplus vehicles in a cost-effective way.

### **7.2 Legal Implications**

- 7.2.1 The Policy for the Allocation of Surplus Council Vehicles to Community & Voluntary Groups was approved by Cabinet who have delegated the authority for the assessment of applications and the decisions on award of grants to the relevant Portfolio Holder with responsibility for transport.
- 7.2.2 Each organisation offered a vehicle must sign an agreement to confirm that they will become the owner and registered keeper of the vehicle in its current condition as of the date of transfer. The agreement will confirm that they will pay all the future running costs

of the vehicle, including service, maintenance, Tax, MOT and appropriately insure and license the vehicle for the purposes outlined in their application form.

- 7.2.3 The Council has the power to gift vehicles which are surplus to requirement using its general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. 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.
- 7.2.4 As part of the process, organisations should be required to disclose any other sources of grant funding to assess and guard against any potential state aid issues. It is unlikely taking into account the current value of the vehicles that gifting the vehicle would mean that organisations have been or will be allocated aid 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 There are 8 Council-owned vehicles which are surplus to requirements and ready to be allocated to community and voluntary organisations. The vehicles vary in age ranging from 11 years old (2006) to 8 years old (2009).
- 7.3.2 The estimated value of these vehicles at sale by auction is approximately £25,750 to £29,750. In donating the vehicles to local organisations, these capital items will be written off to enable the development of community-led transport initiatives which are tailored to local needs.
- 7.3.3 The application and assessment process require initiatives to improve access to service, particularly for disadvantaged groups, which would be costly for the Council to provide as part of the supported bus network.

### **7.4 Equality Implications**

- 7.4.1 All decisions to award the vehicles will be based on the assessment criteria set out in the policy which provides a fair and equitable way to assess the applications and allocate the vehicles.
- 7.4.2 Applications which have a particular focus on disadvantaged groups or areas (i.e. disabled people, older people and young people) are scored more highly in the assessment process. This supports the Council's aim to be an area of equal opportunity where everyone has

a fair chance and can take part in community life in line with the Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy.

## **7.5 Rural Community Implications**

7.5.1 Many rural communities across the Borough have a history of self-help and developing innovative ways of serving the needs of local people. This can be particularly important in rural areas where access to mainstream services, including commercially-operated public transport, can be more difficult.

7.5.2 The gifting of surplus Council vehicles to these groups will support the development of grass-roots initiatives and empower local people to further develop these initiatives.

## **7.6 Human Resource Implications**

7.6.1 There are no human resource implications.

## **7.7 Public Health Implications**

7.7.1 The aim of allocating surplus Council vehicles to the community and voluntary sector is to help support community-led transport initiatives that will improve access to key services such as healthcare, shopping, leisure and other destinations that are important to local residents. The social aspect will also provide long term benefits to the community and improve health and wellbeing.

## **7.8 Implications for Children and Young People**

7.8.1 Initiatives which improve accessibility have wider benefits which include reducing isolation and social exclusion. Promoting and enabling passenger transport which is accessible to children and young people to enable them to take part in the wider community activities will be of great benefit, especially to those without access to a car or who already have difficulty in using the existing transport system through disability or disadvantage.

## **7.9 Other Implications**

7.9.1 There are no other implications.

## **8. Risk Management Implications**

- 8.1 Following the completion of an application process that was publicised to community and voluntary groups throughout the Borough, a decision not to proceed with the gifting the vehicles is likely to cause reputational risk to the Council.
- 8.2 Each organisation offered a vehicle must sign an agreement to confirm that they will become the owner and registered keeper of the vehicle in its current condition as of the date of transfer.

## **9. Access to Information / Bibliography**

- 9.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report author:

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