

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Date of Meeting: Thursday 20 March 2014
Report of: Stephanie Cordon – Head of Communities
Subject/Title: Transport Grant Scheme – Large Grant Business Plans
Portfolio Holder: Cllr David Topping

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The Transport & Accessibility Grant Scheme is a positive way of supporting residents to develop community-led transport initiatives which improve access to services. A total of £90,407 small grant allocations and a £22,799 large grant allocation were awarded in January and March 2014, which will lead to positive outcomes for the residents of Cheshire East. The large grant business plan process is now complete with some creative ideas tailored to local needs.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to consider two large grant business plans which were previously deferred due to the requirement for further information. The proposals include a minibus service for the residents of the Poynton Local Area Partnership (LAP) and a shopmobility scheme in Poynton. This report summarises the evaluation in line with the policy and assessment criteria – making recommendations on the decision to award or decline.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree the recommendations listed below regarding the outcome of two large grant business plans (TAG 13, 25) following a detailed evaluation.

Ref No	Organisation	Recommendation
TAG 13	Poynton Town Council – Minibus Service	Award - £45,000
TAG 25	Poynton Town Council – Shopmobility	Award - £17,500

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 In December, Poynton Town Council submitted expressions of interest for large grants (over £10,000) through the Transport & Accessibility Grant Scheme. Both applications were shortlisted to prepare a more detailed business plan setting out the costs, benefits and plans for future sustainability beyond the funding period.
- 3.2 At the Portfolio Holder decision meeting on 10 March, a decision was made to defer the business plans subject to further information. A detailed assessment of the revised business plans has now been undertaken in line with the policy and assessment criteria (see table below), which provide a fair and equitable way to assess applications and award grants.

Criteria	Description
Access to Services	The project must 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.
Financial 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.

- 3.3 Poynton Town Council is proposing to use two surplus Council vehicles allocated under the Vehicle Allocation Scheme to operate a minibus service in the Poynton LAP area. The business plan proposes to administer, promote and market pre-bookable services to residents that will improve access to services. The minibuses will be available for a varied and diverse group of local organisations and charities, and the business plan provides strong evidence of community support.
- 3.4 The project will be run from Poynton Civic Hall with dedicated staff being responsible for taking bookings, allocating minibuses and marketing the service. It is important for Poynton Town Council to build capacity in this area to maximise the use of the vehicles and meet their mileage targets. Volunteer drivers will be trained to use the minibus.
- 3.5 A detailed business plan has been developed with financial projections which identify income and expenditure over the first three years and demonstrate how the project will be sustained beyond the funding period. The further information provided since the deferral has resulted in a more robust proposal – it is therefore recommended to **award £45,000**.
- 3.6 Poynton Town Council also proposes to establish a Shopmobility scheme in the town which will be located in the Co-operative Independent Living store. The business plan is applying for start up costs to allow residents and visitors with mobility problems access to amenities in the town. Since the decision to defer, a more detailed business plan has been developed identifying expenditure and revenue streams (e.g. membership and equipment hire fees) to demonstrate how the project will be sustained beyond the funding period – it is therefore recommended to **award £17,500**.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Poynton, Disley and the surrounding areas.

5.1 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Poynton, Disley and the surrounding areas.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 The policies support the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Ageing Well in Cheshire East Programme. Initiatives which improve accessibility have wider benefits including reduced isolation / social exclusion and improved health and wellbeing.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 In October, Cabinet agreed the allocation of £250,000 for the Grant Scheme from the approved 2013/14 base budget. The Portfolio Holder decision meetings on 13 January and 10 March awarded £90,407 in small grants and £22,799 in one large grant – with a cumulative total of £113,206.
- 7.2 The two business plans now recommended for award have a combined value of £62,500. The Portfolio Holder decision meeting on 20 March would commit the funding in 2013/14 allowing the grant values to be accrued for this financial year. If the above recommendations are approved, the value of all grant awards in 2013/14 is £175,706, which is well within the approved budget.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The “Policy for the Allocation of Transport & Accessibility Grants” has been approved by Cabinet, who have delegated authority for the assessment of applications and the decisions on award of grants to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment (or subsequent Cabinet Member with responsibility for transport).
- 8.2 Organisations awarded a large grant are required to sign a Grant Agreement setting out the terms and conditions of funding, and confirming that the grant will be spent in line with the business plan and the agreed financial profile. In all cases there is a condition requiring each organisation to report back to the Council on the expenditure of the grant. The agreement also ensures that the grant can be recovered should it not be spent in accordance with the terms and conditions of funding.
- 8.3 As part of the application form, organisations have been 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 of around £150,000 (200,000 Euros) over 3 years but it is prudent for the Council to monitor any potential state aid.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 The policy and Grant Agreement make 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.
- 9.2 To ensure expenditure in line with the approved business plan and compliance with funding conditions, the Grant Agreements will set out a monitoring process to provide 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 all or part of the grant paid.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 The Policy for the Allocation of Transport & Accessibility Grants is available at – www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/flexible_transport_services.aspx .

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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