

POLICY FOR THE
ALLOCATION OF
LOCAL SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT FUND
BUSINESS TRAVEL PLANNING GRANTS

October 2013

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Legal & Budgetary Framework

3.0 Application Process

- Who can apply – eligibility criteria
- How to apply
- What can be funded
- Assessment criteria
- What cannot be funded
- General Conditions

4.0 Decision-Making Process

5.0 Monitoring & Record Keeping

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Cheshire East Council has been successful in securing £3.5m from the Department for Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). In line with the original funding bid¹, the Council's LSTF programme focuses on transport measures which help to unlock the growth potential of Crewe in a low carbon way.
- 1.2 As part of the LSTF programme, the Council has a formal Partnership Agreement with the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCCI). The aim of the partnership is to encourage businesses and employers in Crewe to adopt travel initiatives which enable their staff to travel to and from work sustainably.
- 1.3 Increasing the levels of walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing at key employment sites has a range of positive benefits for the employer, employee and wider community, including:
 - Reduced car park problems on employment sites in Crewe
 - Reduced traffic congestion in and around the Crewe urban area
 - Improved health and wellbeing through increased physical activity
- 1.4 To help achieve these aims and objectives, Cheshire East Council, in partnership with the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI), operates an LSTF Business Travel Planning Grant Scheme for organisations located within the Crewe urban area.
- 1.5 The aim of the Grants Scheme is to support businesses and employers in Crewe to implement measures that will encourage their staff to travel more sustainably. This may include improved facilities, such as cycle parking, signage and lighting, as well as promotional campaigns and incentives.
- 1.6 The LSTF funding period and associated Partnership Agreement with SCCCI end on 31 March 2015. This policy and Grant Scheme will also end on the same date as the grants which are awarded under this policy are funded by the Department for Transport in line with the LSTF Grant Agreement with the Council.
- 1.7 When using the term "grants" in this policy, it refers to the giving of a fixed amount of funds to organisations through an application and assessment process. This policy sets out the criteria applicants must meet to be eligible to apply, as well as the criteria for assessing grant applications, the process for decision-making, governance arrangements and the monitoring requirements of the Grant Scheme.

¹ www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/transport_and_travel.aspx

2.0 LEGAL AND BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 This policy has been approved by Cheshire East Council's 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).
- 2.2 There will be three bidding windows during the term of the LSTF programme which ends on 31 March 2015 – one in the 2013/14 financial year and two in the 2014/15 financial year. The budget available for each bidding round is fixed prior to inviting applications so that there is clarity on the limited amount of capital and revenue funding available for each funding round.
- 2.3 Given the fixed budget and the Council's aim to benefit as many organisations as possible, the Council cannot guarantee to fund the maximum amount applied for; therefore organisations must ensure that they have procedures in place to cover the balance of funding required.
- 2.4 The decisions on award of grants will be based on the assessment criteria set out in section 3.4 of this policy, which provide a fair and equitable way to assess applications and award the grants.
- 2.5 As part of the launch of each funding round, a proportion of the LSTF budget will be set aside to advertise the Grant Scheme and ensure that potential / eligible applicants are aware of the scheme through appropriate communications.

3.0 APPLICATION PROCESS

3.1 Who can apply

To qualify to apply for a grant, organisations must meet the criteria listed below:

- Be a business or employer located within Crewe;
- Complete the application form in full, providing all required information;
- Have not already received an LSTF Business Travel Planning grant for the same purpose within the current financial year;
- Agree to engage with the SCCCI on the business travel planning project.

3.2 How to apply

- All applications must be made using the Council's "LSTF Business Travel Planning Grant Application Form", which is available at www.allchangeformcrewe.co.uk/smartertravel/ or as a paper version on request;

- The application form must be completed in full – incomplete application forms will be rejected;
- The closing dates for each funding round will be set out on the application form;
- All successful applicants will be required to complete a post grant monitoring in line with section 6 of this policy.

3.3 What can be funded

Under this policy, grants of up to **£4,999** can be awarded to support businesses and employers located within Crewe that are looking to address transport issues faced by their business and/or employees by implementing measures that will facilitate the uptake of more sustainable travel modes. Examples of possible measures and initiatives which may be supported through the Grant Scheme are listed below.

<u>Capital Funding – Examples</u>	<u>Revenue Funding – Examples</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of covered, secure cycle racks • Improved footpath access • Improved signage and/or lighting • Provision of personal protective equipment for cyclists • Installation of lockers/shower facilities for walkers/cyclists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing, publicity and promotional material for sustainable travel options • Establishing a car share scheme • Launch of sustainable travel initiatives • Incentives to encourage staff to travel sustainably (e.g. pedometers) • Subsidised bus tickets

3.4 **Assessment criteria** – the criteria for assessing applications are set out below:

Criteria	Description
Modal Shift	The measure / scheme / initiative must promote and encourage employees to walk, cycle, use public transport or car share for their journey to and from work, as well as business travel.
Evidence & Monitoring	Applications should include a process for monitoring the effectiveness of the initiative in addressing the transport issues and achieving the desired outcome.
Match Funding	Have funding contributions (financial or time resources) from the organisation's own funds and/or funding support from other bodies either in place or allocated.
Financial Sustainability	Applications should consider the sustainability of any measures (particularly revenue funded) beyond the grant funding and demonstrate the potential to sustain measures in the future.

3.5 What cannot be funded

- Work which has already taken place before receipt of offer letter;
- Repair costs where deterioration is due to neglect;
- Loan against loss or debt;
- Vehicle purchase;
- Disabled facilities where there is no proven need for the work to be carried out or where upgrading is required for an existing facility to meet the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

3.6 General Conditions

- Grants are classed as one-off and should not be seen as repeat funding;
- Organisations will be required to sign a Grant Offer Acceptance Form confirming that the grant will be spent in line with the application and terms and conditions of funding;
- Grants are awarded specifically for the purpose stated in the application. Should it be spent in any other way, without written approval from the Council, the organisation may become liable to return the monies paid;
- Repeat applications from the same organisation for the same purpose in one financial year will not be considered;
- Grants will be paid in advance. Invoices or receipts must be forwarded to the LSTF Programme Manager within 6 months of the date of offer letter. Failure to provide this information within the timescale will result in the Council recovering the grant paid;
- Organisations who are in receipt of other funding from the Council may apply to this grant scheme if the grant is required for a one-off project which is considered additional to that already funded;
- If planning permission is required, this must be in place before the grant application is made. The Council may ask for confirmation that planning permission is not required, or that it is required and has been granted;
- Organisations must be committed to Equal Opportunities and the Equal Opportunities Policy should be provided;
- Organisations must be able to participate in a monitoring process and provide monitoring information to evidence the implementation and uptake of the sustainable travel measures and adherence to the conditions of the grant. This must include receipts or invoices and a written report of the project, activity or event, plus photographs if possible, on completion;
- Organisations must acknowledge the support of Cheshire East Council and SCCCI in press releases, publicity and advertising etc;
- The organisation will allow Cheshire East Council and SCCCI to use details of the grant award, together with any relevant photographs supplied, in newsletters and on their respective websites;

- Expenditure must not be incurred on the project, activity or event prior to the grant decision being given. In these circumstances the Council will withdraw the grant offer/rescind the grant decision;
- If the project, event or activity is cancelled or only partially achieved, or if the organisation is wound up, any unused grant money must be returned to the Council;
- All conditions under which the grant has been awarded, including any additional conditions stipulated at the time of the award, must be met. Failure to do so could result in the organisation being asked to repay the grant award to the Council;
- The Council cannot guarantee to fund the full amount requested. In the event that the LSTF Business Travel Planning grant fund is over-subscribed, grants may be awarded on a pro-rata basis. Procedures must be in place to cover the balance of funding required, as it is necessary to provide receipts for the full amount of your project. A financial contribution from your own organisation, or match funding from another organisation, will generally be considered to be evidence of commitment to the project and its longer term viability.

4.0 DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- 4.1 Following the closure of the bidding window for each funding round, a detailed assessment of each application will be undertaken in line with the assessment criteria outlined above. The Transport Team in partnership with SCCCI will prepare a recommendations report to be considered by the Portfolio Holder.
- 4.2 A Portfolio Holder Decision Meeting will then be held to decide on the grant awards. Following this meeting, a Portfolio Holders report is circulated to all elected members by Democratic Services, allowing for a 5 day call in period. Should any objections be made during the 5 day call in period a further Portfolio Holder meeting is held to discuss the objection(s) and adjust as is necessary.
- 4.3 There may be a need to add special conditions to the award of some applications to ensure that the purpose of the funding is achieved. For example, if a project is dependent on other sources of funding being secured then a conditional offer may be made. These special conditions may be recommended by officers, by the Portfolio Holder or following call-in of the decision.
- 4.4 If there are no objections (or after the follow up meeting), the applicants are notified to inform them of whether they have been successful or not as soon as possible after the call in period has ended and generally within 6 weeks after the closing date for applications.
- 4.5 All decisions are final.
- 4.6 Complaints about any aspect of the LSTF Business Travel Planning Grant Scheme process will be dealt with under the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. A

copy of the Council's Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Policy is available on the Council's website².

5.0 MONITORING AND RECORD KEEPING

- 5.1 Following a successful application and in order to ensure that monies are used in an appropriate manner, as set out in the conditions for funding, a monitoring process will take place throughout the duration of the project.
- 5.2 The Council reserves the right to monitor the use of the grant and ask for evidence to support an application.
- 5.3 Invoices or receipts must be forwarded to the LSTF Programme Manager within 6 months of the date of offer letter. Failure to provide this information within the timescale will result in the Council recovering the grant paid.
- 5.4 The organisation will allow reasonable access to premises/accounts upon request from the Council.
- 5.5 Organisations need to retain records relating to the grant for an appropriate period (to be advised depending on the grant).
- 5.6 A monitoring report will be required on completion of the project, or within 12 months of the date of offer letter, which shall include (but shall not be limited to):
 - A description of the project and how the grant money was used;
 - Modal shift as a result of the intervention;
 - How many people benefitted from the project;
 - Photographs of the project or initiative in action;
 - Plans for continuing the project or initiative in future; and
 - What difference the project made to employees, the employer and the wider community.
- 5.7 If organisations do not supply the required monitoring reports, in full and within the set time scale they will not be eligible to apply to the scheme again and may be asked to repay the grant funding to the Council.

**Policy & Accessibility Team
Cheshire East Transport
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² www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/customer_services/complaints_and_feedback.aspx