

APPENDIX 1

POLICY FOR THE ALLOCATION OF TRANSPORT & ACCESSIBILITY GRANTS

October 2013

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of the Transport & Accessibility Grant Scheme is to support local people to develop community-led initiatives which improve access to essential services, such as healthcare, shopping, leisure and other destinations that are important to local residents.
- 1.2 The types of initiatives which may be supported include transport schemes, as well as measures which improve the availability of services locally within the community thereby reducing the need to travel. This reflects that the term “accessibility” is not just about transport, but also how services (e.g. shops) are planned and delivered.
- 1.3 In order to reflect the broad nature of the transport and accessibility agenda, the Grant Scheme is framed around four themes and priorities which indicate the types of activities the Council are seeking to support. These are:
- Theme 1: Vibrant Rural Communities
 - Theme 2: Community Transport Initiatives
 - Theme 3: Encouraging Active Travel
 - Theme 4: Publicity & Information
- 1.4 The Grant Scheme aims to help deliver the priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy¹ (Ambition for All) and the associated Local Transport Plan² (LTP), particularly the policies within the LTP relating to ‘Nurturing Strong Communities’, which include:
- **Policy C1 Community:** Work in partnership with local communities to support community-led solutions that improve accessibility to key services (employment, education, health, shopping and leisure).
 - **Policy C2 Accessibility of Services:** Work with partner organisations and local communities to make key services easier to access with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups and areas, including people living in rural areas, older people, young people and those without access to a car.
 - **Policy C3 Access for all:** Consider the diverse range of needs concerning disabled people and other groups who experience difficulties using the transport system.
- 1.5 When using the term “grants” in this policy, it refers to the giving of a fixed amount of Council funds to organisations through an application and assessment process. This policy sets out the eligibility criteria 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/community_and_living/pace_strategic_partnerships/sustainable_community_strategy.aspx

² www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/transport_and_travel/local_transport_plan.aspx

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Cohesive, empowered and active communities in which people can influence the decisions that affect their locality is at the heart of the Sustainable Community Strategy for Cheshire East. It is recognised that local communities are often best placed to identify their own transport and accessibility needs and in some cases have the capacity to develop local solutions.
- 2.2 Many communities across the borough have a history of self help and coming up with innovative ways of serving local people, whether it is giving someone a lift to a doctor's appointment, establishing a Good Neighbour Scheme or saving a post office by relocating it to the local pub. This can be particularly important in rural areas where access to mainstream services is more difficult.
- 2.3 The Council are seeking to work in partnership with local community groups and voluntary organisations to understand the range of transport and accessibility needs at a local level and work together to support community-led solutions wherever possible. There are clear opportunities through the Grant Scheme to support the development of grass roots initiatives and empower local people to develop a range of community-led solutions.

3.0 LEGAL AND BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 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).
- 3.2 The decisions on award of grants will be based on the Assessment Criteria set out in section 6 of this policy, which provides a fair and equitable way to assess applications and award grants.
- 3.3 The budget for each funding round is fixed prior to inviting applications, so that there is clarity on the limited amount of money available in each bidding window. 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 any balance of funding required, or else funding may not be awarded.
- 3.4 As part of the launch of each funding round, a proportion of the available budget will be set aside to advertise the Grant Scheme and ensure that potential / eligible applicants are aware of the scheme through appropriate communications.

4.0 TYPES OF FUNDING

4.1 The Transport & Accessibility Grant Scheme operates two tiers of funding based on the value:

- **Small Grants** of up to £9,999 to pump-prime small scale projects, or to co-fund a larger initiative. Applications which include match funding from other sources will be considered more favourably in the assessment process, however the Council will consider applications for 100% funding. In any case, the Council cannot guarantee to fund the maximum amount applied for.
- **Larger Grants** over £10,000 to pump-prime new larger scale projects or extend an existing initiative. The Council will expect applicants to provide evidence of match funding from their own organisation or another organisation to support the scheme. Applicants seeking a larger grant will be required to submit the application form as an expression of interest, which will then be assessed and, if shortlisted, a more detailed business case setting out the costs, benefits and plans for future sustainability will be required. Successful applicants must also sign a Grant Agreement with the Council.

4.2 The purpose of operating two tiers of funding is to support a variety of schemes and initiatives. Where there is capacity within the community to start a new large scale project which brings significant community benefits by improving access to services, the Council would like to work in partnership with these organisations to nurture, grow and develop community-led initiatives.

5.0 FUNDING THEMES

5.1 The Grant Scheme is framed around four themes which reflect the broad nature of the transport and accessibility agenda, as well as indicating the types of projects and activities which may be supported through the scheme.

- **Vibrant Rural Communities** – Connecting people in rural communities with key services is an activity which faces both challenges and opportunities. The challenges include greater distances to travel, less concentrated levels of demand for public transport and the loss of some local services. There are also clear opportunities to work in partnership with communities to develop local solutions to meet local needs. Through the Grant Scheme, the Council is seeking to support initiatives which improve access to services – whether it is a transport solution (e.g. voluntary car scheme) or improving access to services locally which avoids the need to travel longer distances to towns. This could include multi-use premises (e.g. establishing a shop in the village hall). It is recognised community facilities can become a focal point and hub of a village with significant social benefit, which avoid people becoming isolated and socially excluded in their community.

- **Community Transport Initiatives** – Local communities are often best placed to identify their own transport needs and in some cases have the capacity to develop local solutions, particularly for those who do not have access to public or private transport. Through the Grant Scheme, the Council is seeking to support innovative community transport solutions which are operated “by the community, for the community” and are tailored to local needs. This could include a developing a community bus scheme or shopmobility service to meet an identified need and enable people to access local services.
- **Encouraging Active Travel** – The aim is to encourage increased levels of active travel for local everyday journeys. The Council view walking and cycling as key modes of transport which are a fundamental part of the integrated transport network in Cheshire East. Through the Grant Scheme, the Council is seeking to support activities which promote and facilitate active travel, which may include cycle confidence training, network maps or a local campaign to encourage more people to walk and cycle more regularly.
- **Publicity & Information** – It is recognised that lack of information and awareness of travel options can be a barrier to accessibility in local communities. There is significant scope to increase the publicity and promotion of the range of travel choices including bus, rail, cycling, walking, as well as the range of community transport initiatives. Through the Grant Scheme, the Council is seeking to support local communities in developing information specific to their residents or user groups in a style and format which meets the local needs of the community.

5.2 Please state on the application form which theme(s) you are applying for in your small grant application or expression of interest for a large grant.

6.0 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

6.1 The criteria for assessing applications are set out below.

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.

7.0 APPLICATION PROCESS

7.1 Who can apply

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

- Operate within the Cheshire East Borough Council area;
- Be a voluntary or community organisation, registered charity or other not for profit organisation;
- Be a Town or Parish Council that can match fund at least 50% of the projected scheme costs;
- Have a set of audited accounts, or as a minimum an organisation bank statement, and be able to provide such information as reasonably required in order to satisfy the Council as to the organisations financial position and its need for the assistance requested;
- Have a constituted management committee with a signed constitution. Informal organisations who do not yet have a signed constitution may still be eligible to apply, but must commit to establishing a management committee and submitting a signed constitution prior to any award of grant;
- Have appropriate safeguarding policies relevant to their organisation where children, young people or vulnerable adults are involved, which must include a requirement that staff / volunteers must be cleared with the Disclosure and Barring Service; and
- Have their own bank or building society account with two signatories.

7.2 How to apply

- All applications for a grant must be made using the “Transport & Accessibility Grant Scheme Application Form”, which is available on the Council’s website or as a paper version on request;
- The application form must be completed in full – incomplete forms will be rejected;
- Applicants will need to include a copy of their signed constitution, or a written commitment to submit a signed constitution prior to any grant payment, as well as the supporting documentation listed in section 8 of the application

form. If these documents are not provided then the application will be treated as incomplete;

- Applicants will be notified of the closing date for submission of applications;
- All successful applicants will be required to complete a post grant monitoring report as per section 6 of this policy.

7.3 What cannot be funded?

- Organisations which hold substantial free reserves, including local branches of national or regional organisations which hold free reserves that could be utilised;
- Work which has already taken place before receipt of offer letter;
- Individuals;
- General appeals, sponsorship or fundraising for national or local charities (including local branches) or other local organisations;
- Activities of a mainly political nature;
- Refreshments and/or accommodation;
- Projects or activities organised for the sole benefit of students of a school or college;
- Projects or activities for the sole benefit of organisations that derive the majority of funding from other Council sources or Council funded clients (e.g. day centres);
- Events which do not involve members of the local community participating;
- Repair costs where deterioration is due to neglect;
- Loan against loss or debt;
- Land purchase;
- Disabled facilities where the upgrading is required for an existing facility to meet the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010;
- Organisations which are not based in Cheshire East, unless they can demonstrate significant community benefits within Cheshire East.

7.4 General Conditions

Financial Management & Monitoring

- Grants are classed as one-off and applicants should not assume any further Council funding beyond the initial grant;
- Organisations successful in applying for a small grant (up to £9,999) 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. Organisations that are successful in applying for a large grant (over £10,000) will be required to sign a Grant Agreement with the Council;
- Expenditure must not be incurred on the project, activity or initiative prior to the grant decision being given. In these circumstances the Council will withdraw the grant offer/rescind the grant decision;

- Organisations who are in receipt of other funding from the Council may apply to this grant scheme if the project is considered to provide an additional service to that already funded;
- All other sources of funding must be clearly stated in the application form;
- Any surplus from the project must be used to further develop the organisation or for any future transport and accessibility projects and not used to support other organisations;
- Organisations must notify the Council of any changes in circumstances which affect their financial position throughout the period in which the grant monies are being used;
- If the project 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.

Implementation - Monitoring & Compliance

- 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;
- Any vehicles, whether leased, hired or purchased, must be insured against loss, theft, accidental damage (etc) for the period of the grant and a reasonable period thereafter;
- If the project involves work on land or a building, the applicant must own the freehold of the land or the building, or hold a lease that can not be brought to an end by the landlord for at least 5 years;
- Invoices or receipts must be forwarded to the Council's Transport Team after 6 months and again after 12 months (if applicable) of the date of offer letter. Failure to provide this information within the timescale may result in the Council recovering the grant paid;
- A monitoring report describing the project (including photographs) and summarising the transport outputs and how the community has benefited must be submitted on completion, or within 12 months of the date of offer letter.

Equality Opportunities

- Organisations must be committed to and have policies on Equal Opportunities and provide a copy of its equalities policy. Organisations must not discriminate on the grounds of age, gender, race, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin, disability, religious belief or non belief, marital status or sexual orientation, but can direct some or all of its activities at specific groups where the intention is address discrimination or disadvantage.

Communication & Promotions

- Organisations must acknowledge the support of Cheshire East Council in press releases, publicity and advertising (etc);
- The organisation will allow Cheshire East Council to use details of the grant award, together with any relevant photographs supplied, in newsletters and on the Council's website.

8.0 DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- 8.1 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 will prepare a recommendations report to be considered by the Portfolio Holder.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.
- 8.4 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.
- 8.5 All decisions are final.
- 8.6 Complaints about any aspect of the Transport & Accessibility 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 website³.

9.0 MONITORING AND RECORD KEEPING

- 9.1 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.

³ www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/customer_services/complaints_and_feedback.aspx

- 9.2 The Council reserves the right to monitor the use of the grant and ask for evidence to support the delivery of a project / initiative in line with the original application. Invoices or receipts must be forwarded to the Council's Transport Team after 6 months and again after 12 months (if applicable) of the date of offer letter. Failure to provide this information within the timescale may result in the Council recovering the grant paid.
- 9.3 The organisation will allow reasonable access to premises/accounts upon request from the Council.
- 9.4 Organisations need to retain records relating to the grant for an appropriate period (to be advised depending on the grant).
- 9.5 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;
 - How many people benefitted from the project;
 - The characteristics of the people who benefitted;
 - Photographs of the project or initiative in action;
 - If any surplus was made and how it was used;
 - Plans for continuing the scheme in future; and
 - What difference the project made to the organisation and/or local people.
- 9.6 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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