

POLICY FOR THE
ALLOCATION OF
SURPLUS COUNCIL VEHICLES TO
COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY GROUPS

October 2013

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Cheshire East Council's Transport Service has a number of fleet vehicles that are surplus to its requirements and wishes to release the vehicles for use by local community and voluntary groups across the borough.
- 1.2 The aim of allocating surplus vehicles to the community and voluntary sector is to help support community-led transport initiatives that will improve access to key services such as health care, shopping and leisure facilities. The types of schemes which may be supported by the gifting of a vehicle include community bus schemes operated "by the community, for the community".
- 1.3 Allocating vehicles to local communities 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'.
- 1.4 When using the term "allocation" or "gifting" of vehicles in this policy, it refers to the giving of a Council vehicle to community and voluntary organisations through an application and assessment process. This policy sets out the eligibility criteria to apply, as well as the criteria for assessing applications, the process for decision-making, governance arrangements, and the monitoring requirements of the scheme.

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, or establishing a Good Neighbour Scheme or Communicare Scheme. This can be particularly important in rural areas where access to mainstream services is more difficult.
- 2.3 The Council is seeking to work in partnership with communities to understand the range of transport needs at a local level and work together to support community-led solutions wherever possible. The gifting of a council vehicle to these groups will support the development of grass roots initiatives and empower local people to develop a range of community-led solutions.

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

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 for the allocation of a vehicle to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment (or subsequent Cabinet Member with responsibility for transport).
- 3.2 On each occasion that the Council has a pool of vehicles which are surplus to requirements and ready to be gifted to community groups, a bidding round will be launched inviting applications from community and voluntary groups. Please note that the Council will not purchase vehicles with the sole aim of gifting to community groups.
- 3.3 The Council aims to benefit as many organisations as possible; however, given the limited number of vehicles available and the potential number of community groups who may wish to be gifted a vehicle, a competitive application process has been developed. The Council therefore cannot guarantee that all applications for a surplus vehicle will be successful. All decisions will be based on the assessment criteria set out in section 4.3, which provides a fair and equitable way to assess applications and allocate vehicles.
- 3.4 As part of the launch of each bidding round, a proportion of the available budget will be set aside to advertise the opportunity and ensure that potential / eligible applicants are aware of the scheme through appropriate communications.

4.0 APPLICATION PROCESS

4.1 Who can apply

To qualify to apply for a vehicle, 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;
- 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.

4.2 How to apply

- All applications for a vehicle must be made using the “Application Form for the Gifting of a Surplus Council Vehicle”, 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.

4.3 Criteria for allocating vehicles

The criteria which all applications will be assessed and scored against are:

Criteria	Description
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.

4.4 General Conditions

- The gifting of a vehicle is classed as one-off;
- Before the vehicle is released to a successful applicant, the organisation must sign an agreement to confirm that they will become the owner and registered keeper of the vehicle in the condition as of the date of transfer. The agreement will confirm that the organisation will pay all the future running costs of the vehicle, including service, maintenance, Tax, MOT and appropriately license the vehicle for the purposes outlined in their application form;
- Organisations who are in receipt of other funding from the Council may apply for a vehicle 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 community transport 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;
- All conditions under which the vehicle is awarded, including any additional conditions stipulated at the time of the award, must be met;
- Vehicles are allocated specifically for the purpose stated in the application;
- A monitoring report describing the project (including photographs) and summarising the transport outputs and how the community has benefited from use of the vehicle must be submitted on completion, or within 12 months of the date of offer letter;
- 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;
- 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 what the vehicle was used for together with any relevant photographs supplied, in newsletters and on the Council's website.

5.0 DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- 5.1 Following the closure of each bidding window, a detailed assessment of each application will be undertaken in line with the criteria outlined above. The Transport Team will prepare a recommendations report to be considered by the Portfolio Holder.

- 5.2 A Portfolio Holder Decision Meeting will then be held to decide on the allocation of vehicles. 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.
- 5.3 There may be a need to add special conditions to the application to ensure that the purpose of the gifting 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.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 All decisions are final.
- 5.6 Complaints about any aspect of the Community Transport 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.

6.0 MONITORING AND RECORD KEEPING

- 6.1 The Council reserves the right to monitor the use of the vehicle and ask for evidence to support an application.
- 6.2 The organisation will allow reasonable access to premises/accounts upon request from the Council.
- 6.3 Organisations need to retain records relating to what they have used the vehicle for an appropriate period (to be advised).
- 6.4 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 vehicle 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 a surplus was made and how it was used;

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

- Plans for continuing the scheme in future; and
- What difference the project made to the organisation and/or local people.

**Policy & Accessibility Team
Cheshire East Transport
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