

# Community Transport Funding - 2022/23

Report of the Recycling, Environmental Services and Parking Portfolio Holder

## Recommended:

**That the Community Transport contract be extended for one year (2022/23) and that funding of £20,064 is provided.**

### SUMMARY:

This report seeks the agreement to extend the Community Transport contract for 2022/23.

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report seeks agreement to extend the Community Transport contract with Unity for the year 2022/23 and provide funding of £20,064 from within existing budget.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 The Test Valley Community Transport Scheme has existed in Test Valley since 2001 and is an essential service for those without a car, with mobility issues or suffering from social isolation. It is operated by Unity and comprises two elements; dial a ride (Call'n'Go) and the community minibus hire scheme. Funding is shared between Hampshire County Council and TVBC.
- 2.2 HCC/TVBC last tendered the community transport contracts in the autumn of 2018 so that new contracts would be in place for 1 April 2019. These contracts were for an initial 2 year period (2019/20 and 2020/21) with the option to extend for up to a further 4 years (six year term in full). This, along with the Council's financial contribution of £37,505 for the 2 year period, was agreed by Cabinet on 10 October 2018. The existing contract is worded to allow funders the ability to not agree to trigger the full four year extension. There is the option of agreeing an extension to the current contract for part of the four year period.
- 2.3 The pandemic came during the last of the initial two year contract period where a decision needed to be made on triggering the extension to the current contract and for what period. Due to the uncertainty Cabinet (13 January 2021) agreed to fund a 1 year extension of the contract for 2021/22. The value of the 1 year contract was £19,458.

- 2.4 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that funded organisations have had to respond and adjust their services and the way that they are delivered. The Community Transport model in Test Valley has been affected severely, both in terms of patronage, hire and in maintaining volunteers however there are signs of improvement.
- 2.5 In September 2020, as part of considering whether to extend the current funding arrangement for organisations which receive funding through the Council's Revenue Grant programme, Cabinet agreed that the decision of extending the Community Transport funding after March 2021 would be considered separately in co-ordination with HCC as primary funder.

### **3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities**

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 'Growing Our Potential' was approved in 2019. Helping to fund community transport helps support the residents of the Borough to live well and support the most vulnerable access services.

### **4 Consultations/Communications**

- 4.1 No consultation is required. Communications between the Council, Hampshire County Council and Unity continue.

### **5 Options**

- 5.1 The option to consider is whether to extend the contract for an additional year and provide the necessary funding.

### **6 Option Appraisal**

- 6.1 The impact of the pandemic on service provision and the ongoing uncertainty results in a difficulty to forecast future demand. Under normal circumstances officers would be reviewing service provision, monitoring patronage and forecasting future demands and requirements. However, given the current situation there remains uncertainty about what the key needs of the service users might be in coming years. This makes an effective review to guide funding for the next three years of the contract particularly difficult. In that context agreeing to a one year contract extension for 2022/23 is a sensible approach. Hampshire County Council as co-funders of community transport are supportive of this approach.
- 6.2 To not fund and end the contract is not a realistic option because of the impact this would cause on those members of the community who rely on the service. Also, as community groups continue to rebuild their offer it is important that a functioning community transport model is maintained, although recognising that the level of demand may vary in the short term.

### **7 Resource Implications**

- 7.1 The proposed recommendation can be met from within existing budget. The Council's proportion of funding for 2022/23 would be £20,064. This would comprise £15,290 for Call n' Go and £4,774 for Group Hire. The funding has been increased from 2021/22 to reflect inflation.

## 8 Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications for the Council in the recommendations.

## 9 Equality Issues

9.1 An EQIA screening had been completed in accordance with the Council's EQIA methodology and no potential for unlawful discrimination or negative impact has been identified, therefore a full EQIA has not been carried out.

## 10 Other Issues

10.1 Community Safety – None.

10.2 Environmental Health Issues – None.

10.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate – the potential to reduce trips by private car.

10.4 Property Issues – None.

10.5 Wards/Communities Affected – All.

## 11 Conclusion

11.1 The pandemic continues to affect the community transport service within the Borough. Given the level of uncertainty it is proposed to extend the existing contract for a one year period covering 2022/23. This is to be funded from existing budgets.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
None			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	0	File Ref:	Pt7
(Portfolio: Recycling, Environmental Services and Parking) Councillor N Adams-King			
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	12 January 2022