

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member - Environment
Date:	26 January 2011
Title:	Community Transport Grants – Support to Group Hire Schemes
Reference:	2544
Report From:	Director of Environment

Contact name: Kevin Ings

Tel: 01962 846986

Email: kevin.ings@hants.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to consider grants to two group hire community transport schemes in Hampshire.

1.2. This paper seeks to:

- set out the background and funding history for community transport schemes;
- set out the grant requests which have been received; and
- outline the options and recommend grant awards.

2. Contextual information

2.1. The arrangements for supporting district-wide community transport schemes were agreed by the Executive Member for Environment on 9 October 2007. The schemes currently covered by these arrangements include Basingstoke, Eastleigh, East Hampshire, Fareham, Hart, Havant, New Forest and Test Valley. With the exception of the Basingstoke scheme, which has been subject to a competitively tendered process, all the schemes above are supported through single tender contracts.

2.2. These community transport schemes provide a pool of wheelchair accessible mini-buses, available for hire by local voluntary and community groups. The contribution made by the County Council, and in some cases other funding partners, usually represents the cost of the staffing and associated administration costs necessary to oversee the operation of a fleet of mini-

buses, to ensure that mini-buses are properly maintained and enable the recruitment and training of mini-bus drivers. The running costs of these mini-buses are recovered through hire charges to user groups.

- 2.3. This support has always been seen as a way of building capacity in the voluntary and community sector so that affordable transport is available to local groups. Building capacity within a single organisation, which can make good use of its mini-buses by hiring to a range of groups, has also been seen as a more efficient and effective use of public money as opposed to providing individual grants to organisations to purchase their own mini-buses, many of which will be little used.
- 2.4. The County Council has since 1 October 2010 been supporting the staffing and administration costs of the district-wide community transport schemes in Gosport and Winchester through single tender contracts. During the last financial year support to these schemes was provided through grants. Grant applications have now been received from both schemes to cover the period from 1 April – 30 September 2010, prior to the award of the single tender contracts.

3. Grant Application from Winchester Area Community Action

- 3.1. A grant application form has been received from Winchester Area Community Action which organises and manages the Winchester Community Transport Scheme. This requests a grant of £8,000 to assist with the staffing and administration costs which the scheme has incurred for the period 1 April – 30 September 2010.
- 3.2. Winchester Area Community Action operates three wheelchair accessible mini-buses and two small wheelchair accessible vehicles. The mini-buses are available for groups to use across the Winchester District and the smaller vehicles available for individuals to use. The scheme predominately provides group transport to those organisations involved with older people and disabled people. The primary objective of the scheme is to provide the means by which community groups and individuals can access otherwise unreachable local services and amenities and improve people's independence and quality of life.
- 3.3. During the current operating year the scheme's vehicles are expected to provide transport for 70 different community groups and provide up to 650 mini-bus hires. Some 6,930 passenger trips were provided and 13,444 miles covered by the vehicles during the above grant period. Most of this transport is provided using volunteer drivers. For the grant period this would equate to a grant subsidy per passenger trip of £1.15. Based on outturn figures from schemes for 2009/10 this compares with other similar schemes as follows - East Hampshire (£2.87) and Test Valley (£1.10).

- 3.4. In the past the scheme has received a number of vehicle grants from the County Council, the more recent of these for a mini-bus and a smaller vehicle which have been based in the southern parishes of the district, where there is a well-documented need for transport.

4. Grant Application from Gosport Voluntary Action

- 4.1. A grant application form has been received from Gosport Voluntary Action which organises and manages the Gosport Community Transport Scheme. This requests a grant of £5,039 to assist with the staffing and administration costs which the scheme has incurred for the period 1 April – 30 September 2010.
- 4.2. Gosport Voluntary Action operates six wheelchair accessible mini-buses. The mini-buses are available to all community and voluntary groups in the borough, although currently the scheme predominately provides transport for groups working with the frail, elderly or disabled. The scheme is currently looking to develop its work in the more deprived areas of the town to provide access to facilities and activities for those living there.
- 4.3. The vehicles are used by 23 different community groups and 522 mini-bus hires took place during the above grant period. Some 9,856 passenger trips were also provided during this period with the scheme's vehicles covering 12,143 miles. The scheme makes use of volunteer drivers. This equates to a grant subsidy per passenger trip of £0.51 for the grant period. Based on outturn figures from schemes for 2009/10 this compares with other similar schemes as follows - Eastleigh (£0.58), and Havant (£0.73).
- 4.4. In the past the scheme has received a number of vehicle grants from the County Council to replace and extend its vehicle fleet.

5. Outline of Options

- 5.1. A decision needs to be made on which grants should be supported and the following options exist:
- 5.2. Option 1: Provide grants to both of the organisations which submitted applications.

Risk Assessment: This will provide financial support to these schemes for the period prior to the award of the new single tender contracts.

- 5.3. Option 2: Not to award the above grants to either of the organisations which submitted applications.

Risk Assessment: Not awarding grants to Winchester Area Community Action and Gosport Voluntary Action would leave these schemes with a shortfall in their finances for this financial year and this may affect the viability of these schemes in the longer term.

5.4. Option 3: Increase charges to vehicle hirers.

Risk Assessment: Whilst hire charges to mini-bus hirers could be raised to cover these costs, the impact of this could not be applied retrospectively to the current financial year. This may also make this transport unaffordable for some community groups.

6. Option Analysis/Comparison

6.1. Option 1 is seen as the preferred way forward. This will ensure the financial sustainability of these schemes. This is consistent with the County Council's approach of supporting similar schemes elsewhere in the county.

7. Finance

7.1. The grants can be funded from the Community Transport budget in the current financial year.

8. Recommendations

8.1. That a grant of £8,000 be awarded to Winchester Area Community Action to provide interim support to assist in the costs of managing and operating the Winchester Community Transport Scheme.

8.2. That a grant of £5,039 be awarded to Gosport Voluntary Action to provide interim support to assist in the costs of managing and operating the Gosport Community Transport Scheme.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1. The proposals in this report seek to improve accessibility and community involvement for hard to reach and disadvantaged members of the community.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. Most schemes offer transport for youth groups and support wider community involvement.

3. Climate Change:

- 3.1. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

Use of demand responsive and group transport reflects users needs and reduces needs for individual car journeys.

- 3.2. How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

Introduction of newer vehicles allows the latest emission standards to be met.