

FUNDING AGREEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY TRANSPORT PROJECTS

1. ITEMS FOR DECISION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the funding agreements New Forest District Council (NFDC) has with Hampshire County Council (HCC) for Community Transport Provision. This will allow the existing Call and Go (previously called Dial a Ride, Wheels to Work (moped loan) scheme and Community Transport Services (includes mini bus brokerage and linked training for the voluntary sector) to continue until 31 March 2019 (31 July 2019 for Wheels to Work).

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. New Forest District Council currently has an agreement with Hampshire County Council (HCC) to fund the following three services until 31 March 2018 (31 July 2018 for Wheels to Work):

- Call and Go
- Wheels to Work
- Mini Bus Group Hire

- 2.2. All three of these services are under review as part of the HCC Transformation 2019 (T19) review at which point they are required to make significant savings across the County. HCC are currently exploring all options with regards to how Community Transport can be delivered, however, this study will not be completed before 31 March 2018 when the current agreement with the providers and this Council finishes.

- 2.3. The contracts for these services all include an option for a contract extension for a further year. HCC are looking for confirmation from this Council as to whether or not they wish to extend this contract whilst the full review of the provision is concluded.

3. PROJECTS

3.1. Call & Go

- 3.1.1. Call & Go is a Community Transport scheme and consists of a flexible bus service operating a fleet of wheelchair accessible minibuses that can collect people from their home, at pre-arranged times, taking them to the nearest major town/major supermarkets etc. It is operated by Community First New Forest.

- 3.1.2. HCC undertook a tender exercise in early 2017 for a one year contract from 1 April 2017 which was awarded to Community First New Forest. The contract value is £52,070 of which the District Council contributes 50% of the required funding and HCC contribute the remaining 50% (therefore £26,035 each).

3.2. **Wheels to Work**

- 3.2.1. This is a moped loan service which aims to help young people aged 16-25 who have difficulty accessing public transport to enable them to access employment opportunities or vocational training.
- 3.2.2. This is a competitively tendered scheme with an initial 2 year contract term from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2017; the tender was awarded to Community First New Forest. The contract allowed for a 2 year extension which was taken up by HCC until 31 July 2019, although this Council has only agreed funding until 31 July 2018.
- 3.2.3. The District Council contribute around (but no more than) 50% of the cost of delivering the service in the New Forest (£7,294.06 per annum). However, the overall contract covers 2 other authorities (East Hampshire District and Winchester City) and the total value of the contract is £67,666.73 per annum.

3.3. **Group Hire**

- 3.3.1. The Council contribute funding towards a Transport Worker post whose primary role is to run the Group Hire mini bus scheme. This scheme is for local voluntary or charitable organisations who can hire a minibus. The buses are available for regular repeat bookings or even as 'one offs,' for community travel purposes. The scheme aims to contract 500 bookings per annum. This service is run by Community First New Forest using the same mini buses that are used for the Call and Go service.
- 3.3.2. The District Council contribute around 50% of the cost of delivering the service in the New Forest with HCC also contributing 50% to give a total contract value of £24,832.09 (therefore £12,416.05 each).
- 3.3.3. However, the overall contract covers 10 other authorities and the total value of the contract is around £280k per annum. Of this, only 4 authorities provide a contribution in addition to HCC's funding and this Council is the only one to provide 50% funding (with the other 3 providing 9%, 26% and 34% and the remaining 6 £0). This contract expires on 31 March 2018.

3.4. **Community Transport Grants**

- 3.4.1. Separately to the HCC projects, this Council has an annual budget for providing small grants to help Care Groups with transport to medical/hospital appointments and young people with transport where if not available significant hardship would occur. These are managed by partner organisations and provide a safety net for those with particular transport difficulties. The policy for providing financial support to care groups can be seen at Appendix 1.

4. **FINANCE**

- 4.1. The current levels of funding per annum towards the three projects from NFDC to HCC are as follows:

- Call & GO - £26,035.09
- Wheels to Work - £7,294.06
- Group Hire - £12,416.05

TOTAL: £45,745.20

- 4.2. HCC provide the same equivalent funding for each of the 3 services to operate within the New Forest. The current contracts for Call and Go and Group Hire both expire in March 2018 but both contracts contain an option for the contracts to be renewed for a further year (until 31 March 2019). The Wheels to Work contract has another year to run before this contract expires (31 July 2019).
- 4.3. The current agreement with HCC allows for its termination by either party in writing at a date mutually agreed or by not less than six calendar months' written notice to the other such notice to expire on 31 March or 30 September in any year.
- 4.4. As part of the T19 process, HCC are currently negotiating with community transport operators to explore any potential savings within the existing contracts. These negotiations will also form part of the consideration as to whether or not to activate the extension clauses within the existing contracts.
- 4.5. In addition NFDC has a budget towards providing grants to voluntary care groups. Over the last 4 years the following grants have been made:
 - 2014/15 - £2,991.38
 - 2015/16 - £3,624.50
 - 2016/17 - £2,913.25
 - 2017/18 - £4,038.25
- 4.6. This budget is managed by the Council's Transportation team.

5. OPTIONS

- 5.1. HCC have confirmed that their funding at the same level as 2017/18 will be available for 2018/19. The Council therefore have two options for 2018/19
 - i) Agree to the contract extension of Community First New Forest for 2018/19 with funding provided at the same (or less) value as 2017/18.
 - ii) Withdraw this Council's contribution towards the service. This option would likely cease the operation of community transport within the District unless Community First New Forest can find their own funding to operate.
- 5.2. If HCC were to withdraw their funding from Community Transport then the Council has four options:
 - i) Withdraw this Council's contribution towards the service. This option would likely cease the operation of community transport within the District unless Community First New Forest can find their own funding to operate.
 - ii) Continue with the same level of funding towards the schemes and work with Community First New Forest to secure the shortfall. Or, if practical, operate a reduced service on existing levels of NFDC only funding.
 - iii) Find the additional £45k to continue the services.

iv) Increase funding of one (or more) service(s) but not all. However, for the Group Hire services the mini buses used are those that operate the Call & Go service. Therefore, if the funding ceased for Call and Go then the Group Hire function could also not continue.

5.3. For 2018/19 and onwards, the Council will also need to consider whether or not to continue with its separate community transport grant funding to care groups.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1. No significant implications arising out of the recommendations. The proposed funding levels are in the current budget for 2018/19 and remain the same as those in 2016/17 and 2017/18.

6.2. If the recommendations are not approved then there will savings of the sums referred to above, however it would be likely that the Community Transport services would not continue within the District.

6.3. The Agreement to Contribute attached includes a termination clause which means the NFDC is in a position to end its funding should that be deemed necessary. NFDC will seek to ensure any new agreements include a similar clause.

7. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

8.1. None provided recommendations accepted. Given that CT benefits people with disabilities and those who suffer the effects of deprivation any reduction in CT services will have negative implications especially as there have been some reductions to local bus services.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. If funding is provided for 2018/19 then the current level of community transport services can be retained thus encouraging the use of community transport.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1. It is recommended that the existing contracts for Call and Go, Group Hire and Wheels to work are all extended for a further year pending the HCC review of the community transport function.

10.2. It is recommended that for 2018/19 the community transport grant scheme is continued pending a review of the whole community transport function provided by the District Council.

APPENDIX 1

ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALLOCATIONS OF FUNDS TO CARE GROUPS TO ASSIST THOSE WITH HIGH TRANSPORT COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH MULTIPLE MEDICAL RELATED JOURNEYS

DETAILS OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO CARE GROUPS IN THE NFDC AREA

1. NFDC will allocate funds at the beginning of the financial year (1 April) subject to the information set out in 2 below being received and any applications for payment being received by 30 September.
2. The funds given to the 5 larger CGs shall be used by CG to meet all or part of the costs of individual CG users who the CG is satisfied has high transport costs associated with multiple medical related journeys. These CGs shall use the allocated funds during the year on the basis that no further allocations will be made by NFDC although a small reserve fund will be available to deal with exceptional cases.
3. With one month of the end of the financial year the 5 larger CGs shall provide the following information relating to assistance with journeys using funds allocated by NFDC as set out in 2 above:
 - 3.1 Name of CG client
 - 3.2 Journey Destination
 - 3.3 Reason for Journey
 - 3.4 Cost met from funds allocated by NFDC
 - 3.5 Amount of funds allocated by NFDC spent on multiple medical related journeys during financial year
 - 3.6 Copy of your most recent financial accounts

The under spend for each CG shall be difference between the CG's allocation as set out in the table below and the sum referred to in 3.5 above (overspends will not be taken account of).

4. For the 5 larger CGs the sum allocated for the next financial year shall be the allocation set out in the table below less any under spend (as defined above) the CG has.
5. The smaller CG shall be allocated £200 a year on request to offset either their running costs or assist their clients at the CG's discretion. Although NFDC does not want to burden smaller CGs with additional administration it now wants a brief explanation (not more than 500 words will be fine) on how this money will be spent. CGs will be expected to include this contribution in their financial accounts.

CAR GROUPS (CG)	ALLOCATION	TOTAL
NEW MILTON CG	£1,500	£1,500

APPENDIX 1

4 OTHER LARGER CGs	£1,000 each	£4,000
10 SMALLER CGs	£200 each	£2,000
RESERVE FUND	UP TO £1,000	£1,000

6. Any overall under spend will be used to assist CGs who are having difficulty in meeting operating costs.
7. Representatives from CG, CFNF, HCC & NFDC should meet during the first part of the financial year to review the arrangements for the allocation of funds.
8. If for any reason NFDC no longer allocates funds then no further allocations will be made from the beginning of the financial year that the decision relates to. The unspent balance of any allocation to the New Milton, Fawley, Hythe, Milford and Lymington CGs shall either:
 - 8.1 Be retained by the individual CGs provided the CG gives a written undertaking that the unspent balance will only be used to meet all or part of the costs of individual CG users who the CG is satisfied has high transport costs associated with multiple medical related journeys or
 - 8.2 Be returned to NFDC if the CG does not proceed as set out in 8.1 above.