

Agenda Item	<b>26</b>
Report No	<b>EDI/86/18</b>

## **HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**Committee:** Environment, Development and Infrastructure

**Date:** 8 November 2018

**Report Title:** Community Transport Grants

**Report By:** Director of Community Services

### **1.**

#### **Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1. This report outlines current provision of Community Transport grants and recommends continuation of these arrangements, with some adjustments to individual amounts within the same overall budget, for 2019/20.

### **2.**

#### **Recommendations**

- 2.1. Members are invited to:
- I. approve a continuation of funding to Community Transport organisations for 2019/20 within the existing budget, and in line with discussions held with each individual group; and
  - II. note that a future report will be presented once criteria for longer-term awards of grant have been prepared, in line with the Council's Redesign recommendations.

### **3. Current arrangements**

- 3.1. At their meeting on 4 February 2016 the Community Services Committee agreed funding for 24 Community Transport groups for the financial years 2016/19. The Committee agreed funding for a 25<sup>th</sup> group on 18 August 2016, for the financial years 2017/19. Total funding available is £377k
- 3.2. Funding agreed by Committee also includes small provisions for volunteer training, assistance with emergency repairs to vehicles and development of new or growing projects.
- 3.3. The Department for Transport (DfT) is currently considering changes to Section 19 and Section 22 Minibus Permit legislation which would potentially affect a significant number of Community Transport operators (the Committee homologated the Council's response to the DfT's consultation on 17 May 2018); also, recruitment of a Senior Transport Officer (Network and Community) for the Council is ongoing. For these reasons, it was not practicable to set criteria for a new round of grant applications in time for grants to commence on 1 April 2019. The Chair therefore agreed with the Leader and Budget Leader that plans should be made to continue with current funding for community transport in 2019/20, with some adjustments for individual groups where appropriate.

### **4. Role of Community Transport**

- 4.1. Although all projects have their individual characteristics, Community Transport has an important role in meeting essential transport needs of people who have limited mobility, which may be for various reasons such as isolation, disability, poverty or unavailability of other forms of transport. The Council accepted the Redesign Board's recommendation that funding for community transport should continue.
- 4.2. The Redesign Board recognised during their study of both public and community transport that there is no single option which meets the needs for all of Highland: each area and route has its own circumstances and opportunities which dictate the best option for that area or route. In pursuing the Redesign Board's longer-term objectives, expansion of community transport and scope to develop new projects will be examined to assess where, and to what extent, community transport can enable more effective use of resources or provide an effective alternative to contracts with the commercial sector.

### **5. Discussions with community transport groups**

- 5.1. At the time of writing, discussions have been held with 24 of the 25 community transport groups currently funded by the Council to review their services and assess the needs for 2019/20. It is hoped that meetings will have been held with the remaining one before the Committee meeting.
- 5.2. All of the groups met so far continue to provide useful services. Discussions are being held to examine alternative methods of providing transport in the area. All other groups are able and willing to continue their operations next year if funded.

### **6. Longer term proposals**

- 6.1. During financial year 2019/20 it is intended to review criteria for awards of future Community Transport Grants in line with Redesign Board recommendations, and to

carry out a more comprehensive service review. Following this, it is anticipated that applications would be invited for grant awards commencing 1 April 2020. This will be the subject of a future report to the Committee.

## **7. Implications**

- 7.1. Resource: Recommended awards of grant can be accommodated within the budget.
- 7.2. Legal: Groups will be asked to confirm acceptance of grants, under the same conditions as applied in 2016-19.
- 7.3. Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Continued funding of community transport supports the Council's equality, poverty and rural objectives by enabling transport provision for people who have limited or no access to other transport.
- 7.4. Climate Change / Carbon Clever: There are no significant climate change / Carbon Clever implications.
- 7.5. Risk: There are no risk implications.
- 7.6. Gaelic: There are no Gaelic implications.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 19 October 2018

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