

Agenda Item	15
Report No	ECI/36/22

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Economy and Infrastructure

Date: 10 November 2022

Report Title: Community Transport Grants

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

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 2023/24.

2 Recommendations

Members are asked to:-

- 2.1
- i. **Approve** continuation of funding Community Transport organisations for 2023/24 within the existing budget, and in line with discussions held with each individual group; and
 - ii. **Note** that a future report will be presented during 2023 on longer term proposals for community transport.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – The recommendations can be accommodated within the existing budget.
- 3.2 **Legal** – There are no legal implications other than to confirm the extension of existing Service Level Agreements with community transport groups.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – 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.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – There are no significant climate change / Carbon Clever implications.

3.5 **Risk** – There are no risk implications.

3.6 **Gaelic** – There are no Gaelic implications.

4 Current arrangements

4.1 At their meeting on 7 November 2019 the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee agreed funding for 26 Community Transport groups for the financial years 2020/23, at a total cost of £359,000 per year, following detailed evaluation of grant applications received.

4.2 Funding agreed by Committee also includes small provisions for volunteer training, assistance with emergency repairs to vehicles and development of new or growing projects.

4.3 Regular contact has been maintained with the supported groups, who return periodic reports on their activities.

4.4 Due to pressures around the retendering of public and school transport contracts, it has not been feasible to conduct a new round of applications for community transport grants. It is therefore proposed that current funding arrangements should be continued for a further year, with some adjustments for individual groups where appropriate, within the existing budget.

5 Role of Community Transport

5.1 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.

5.2 During periods of lockdown caused by the covid-19 pandemic, community transport groups were extremely proactive in supporting the more vulnerable members of their communities by taking essential supplies to their homes. Thus, a service continued for many people who would normally have travelled in a community minibus or voluntary car scheme.

5.3 The Council has supported some community transport groups in expanding their activities to include home to school transport, where they have been able to provide more cost-effective services for small numbers of pupils than previous private sector contracts.
Two projects have also been developed to replace lightly used public bus services in Nairnshire and the north Black Isle, funded by savings in the bus contracts. A third such project is being developed in the Glenelg area.

6 Longer term proposals

- 6.1 It is anticipated that during 2023, applications would be invited for grant awards commencing 1 April 2024, with existing and new groups being eligible to apply. This would be the subject of a future report to the Committee.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 5 October 2022

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