

Community Capital Grant Request (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

Members are asked to consider the awarding of a capital grant to South Somerset Community Accessible Transport (SSCAT) towards assistance in providing Community Transport. Members are also asked to consider the financial sustainability of the SSCAT scheme and officers recommendation to address this issue.

Public Interest

Awarding grants is a key way that SSDC supports and helps to deliver community projects sponsored by Parishes and voluntary community organisations in the towns and villages across Area East.

Recommendations

That Members agree:

- a. a contribution of up to £12,000 (31% of total project cost) from the Community Grants existing capital budget towards the provision of a new nine seat, fully accessible mini bus for community transport, subject to the standard conditions set out in Appendix A.
- b. that officers explore capacity building options for SSCAT to increase their financial sustainability and fund this from the Area East community revenue budget, with the exact amount to be agreed with the Chair of Area East Committee and Ward Members for Bruton, Castle Cary and Wincanton.

Report

9-Seat Mini Bus

South Somerset Community Accessible Transport has requested £12,000 towards a £38,729 purchase of a new SSCAT – Mini Bus

SSCAT provides demand responsive, accessible transport, which meets the needs of people in a catchment area covering most of Area East and has around 2,000 members.

SSCAT has identified the need for a smaller fully accessible 9-seat mini bus to cater to smaller groups of passengers that are requiring transport to, for example: medical and GP appointments.

The provision of the mini bus would help people to maintain or create new connections to prevent or reduce loneliness. This transport service helps passengers to participate in many different activities including, maintaining links with friends, family members, attend local activities, do their shopping, attend hairdressers or taking pets to the vet.

The minibus would be a Volkswagen Crafter that would be refitted to provide 7 single seats, two wheelchair fixing stations and be fully accessible.

Existing customers of the applicant's service include the elderly, socially, economically, physically or mentally disadvantaged, or people that may be geographically isolated due to lack of public transport.

Other existing or new customers that would have access to this new minibus include women's groups, local dementia groups, residents of local care homes, regular users of the Balsam Centre, Wincanton and residents of Castle Cary, Bruton and surrounding villages.

Council Plan 2019/20 – Priority Project 6 - “To assess options for improving community transport links”

The recommendation to support a capital grant towards the purchase of a new minibus is made with the understanding that there is a wider piece of work being undertaken regarding Community Transport as one of the council plan priority projects.

Supporting this grant request at this time will help underpin current provision in Area East and will help offset the costs of maintaining and keeping older vehicles on the road. Vehicle maintenance costs are one of the biggest drains on Community Transport providers' budgets and are a major challenge to ongoing sustainability.

Also, having a more flexible fleet of vehicles increases the commercial viability of providers by having a more attractive offer and being able to attract a more diverse customer base.

The project has been assessed against the agreed criteria and the following scores apply:

Category	Maximum score	Score
A Eligibility	Y/N	Y
B Equalities Impact	7	7
C Need for Project	5	4
D Capacity of Organisation	15	10
E Financial need	7	5
F Innovation	3	1
Total	37	27

Projects scoring above 22 points are eligible for SSDC support under the current policies.

Funding Sources	% funding	Amount of Funding	Status
Wincanton Town Council	6.46%	£2,500	Secured
Own Funds	12.40%	£4,802	Secured
Stonewater Housing	6.46%	£2,500	Secured
Penselwood PCC	5.16%	£2,000	Secured
Somerset Community Foundation. On condition of receiving SSDC funding	12.90%	£5,000	Secured with conditions
Sherborne Classic Cars	9.04%	£3,500	Secured
Battens Charitable Trust	0.26%	£100	Secured
Donations from local supporters	7.56%	£2,927	Secured
Sale of Old Bus	8.78%	£3,400	Secured
SSDC	30.98%	£12,000	Pending
Total		£38,729	

Agreeing support at this point will give other funders some confidence about the deliverability of this project.

Ongoing Sustainability of SSCAT

SSCAT generates income through contracts, membership and fares and also has a good track record of fundraising through grant applications. However, despite SSCAT best efforts they currently are only able to cover their day to day running costs and are not able to budget for the replacement of their vehicle fleet. The SSCAT accounts for 2019 show a £21,562 deficit in their Statement of Financial Activities. Therefore the ongoing sustainability of the SSCAT scheme is an area that needs further work and support.

To assist SSCAT and ensure this valuable service continues to be available, members are requested to consider allocating Area East Community Revenue funding towards capacity building/feasibility work that would aim to make SSCAT a sustainable community transport service. This additional funding would also complement any community grant award this committee decides to make and help protect the SSDC investment towards community transport. To allow this work to move forward in a timely manner, it is recommended that the award of any capacity building funding is delegated to officers, but subject to approval by the Chair of Area East Committee and Ward Members for Bruton, Castle Cary and Wincanton.

Financial Implications

There is currently **£56,831** uncommitted Capital in Area East Capital Reserve.

If Members choose to support the recommendations contained in this report, it will mean that there is **£34,831** budget unallocated.

Grants are awarded subject to all other funding being secured before the commencement of the project and are on a % basis of the full project costs. Payment of the grant cannot exceed the grant award and is proportionally reduced if full project costs are under budget.

Council Plan Implications

Supporting this grant application will contribute towards the following elements of the Council Plan:

Healthy, Self-Reliant Communities:

- Work with partners to reduce the impact of social isolation and create a feeling of community.
- Work with partners to support people in improving their own physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Enable quality cultural, leisure and sport activities.
- Support residents facing hardship.

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications

Providing local access to a range of activities and services reducing the need to travel which therefore reduces carbon emissions.

Equality and Diversity Implications

Projects help enhance accessibility for all.
