

Date of Meeting: 8th July 2021

Cheshire East – Highways and Transport Pilot

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the pilot scheme and how the Town Council may wish to taken part in the scheme.

2. Background

The Town Clerk attended a virtual meeting hosting by ChALC with Cheshire East Council in May along with other Town and Parish Councils. The meeting was led by officers of Cheshire East who presented proposals future investment on Highway's maintenance and Local Bus Services.

Members will already be aware of the Cheshire East Local Ward Member Highways allowance of £4,200. This pilot is to be used in conjunction with the Ward member allowances.

3. Considerations

3.1 Local Bus Services – Around 80% of Cheshire East bus services are provided commercially with no funding from Cheshire East. Where there is an identified need Cheshire East provides financial support for routes such as:

- Extra trips - early mornings, late evening and weekends
- Short route extensions to serve communities that would not otherwise have a bus service.
- Routes where there are no alternative bus services.

Cheshire East's budget is limited, and the pilot scheme is giving town and parish councils the opportunity to enter funding agreements with Cheshire East to support non commercial bus routes. There are three different opportunities that could be considered by a town or parish council including:

Opportunity 1 – Minor Contract Changes

Opportunity 2 – Contract Re-tendering

Opportunity 3 – New Services

Members will be aware of a non-commercial bus route that has been removed in the last 12 months from Nantwich which took users to Leighton Hospital (bus service no. 78). The removal of the service means that users would have to get a bus to Crewe Bus Station then back out to Leighton hospital or find another method of transport. The Clerk has received a few enquiries from residents relating to this service removal.

3.2 Highways Maintenance – As well as the Local Ward member allowance, town and parish councils are being given the opportunity to fund top up highways

maintenance and highways minor improvement works. These projects would be above and beyond the approved Cheshire East Highway maintenance plan for the year.

Where a town or parish council make an application for highway works it will need to be individually assessed, designed and priced. There is a risk that any proposed scheme or project could be abandoned due to objections received through public consultation etc. In such cases, any costs incurred would not be refunded. All approved works would be delivered by Cheshire East Highways using contract rates.

Further details on both pilots are available on the presentation sent to member previously.

In considering taking advantage of the pilot schemes the Town Council would be meeting actions contained with the Corporate Plan:

- Play an active role in identifying and influencing improvements to public transport.
- Work with others to improve the provision of transport services for the elderly or disabled.

4. Recommendations

4.1 That Council considers its view on taking part in the pilots.

5. Financial Implications

There would be financial implications should the Town Council take part in either of the pilots. The financial commitment to a local bus service would be determined based on the type of opportunity taken and could be a commitment of up to 5 years for re-tenders or new services. Details of typical financial costs associated with highways works is provided within the presentation previously shared with members.

Should the Town Council wish to express an interest in either of the pilots' members would need to consider that no budget provision has been made for 2021/22, but consideration could be given to budgeting for 2022/23.

6. Equalities Impact

There would be no direct equality impact as a result of this report but taking part in the local bus routes scheme could provide additional equality for the protected characteristics of age and disability.

7. Personnel Implications

There would be no personnel implications.

8. Environmental implications

There would be no direct environmental implications as a result of this report but taking part in the local bus routes scheme could help increase the use of public transport and reduce the carbon footprint of the town.

9. Consultation

Members could choose to consult with residents on funding provision for either scheme for 2022/23 during the budget setting process.