

Delegated Decision

18 March 2020

**Grant Support for Wheels2Work County
Durham**

Ordinary Decision/Key Decision No.



Report of Corporate Director – Regeneration, Economy and Growth

Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To approve the award of one-off grant funding of £71,000 to support the County Durham Wheels to Work scheme.

Executive summary

- 2 County Durham Wheels to Work (W2W) provides scooters to help people access employment or training for a short period until a longer-term transport solution can be found.
- 3 The scheme has been funded through a variety of sources including different council services and some Area Action Partnerships (AAPs).
- 4 REG Management Team previously approved the recommendation to consolidate all council funding requests and award a one-off grant to support the scheme during 2020/21.
- 5 Since this approval, the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted on the delivery of the scheme. This includes reduced rental income, overall costs as well as grant support required in 2020/21.
- 6 This report seeks approval to award a one-off grant to County Durham Wheels to Work to sustain the scheme until a full review is carried out.

Recommendation

- 7 To approve the award of a one-off grant of £71,000 to support the County Durham Wheels to Work scheme.

Background

- 8 County Durham Wheels to Work (W2W) is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) that provides a cost-effective way of overcoming transport barriers by loaning scooters to people for a short period, until a longer-term transport solution can be found.
- 9 The scheme first started operating in 2016 and has since been able to expand across the whole county with funding from a variety of council sources including AAPs, Local Transport Plan and the Poverty Action Steering Group (PASG). External grant funding has also been secured to support the scheme including the Local Growth Fund and various charities.
- 10 The scheme is a valuable part of County Durham's integrated transport provision but is reliant on grant funding and income generation to continue operating, the majority of which has come from various council budgets including the PASG.
- 11 Following further requests for funding to the PASG and AAPs in 2020, it was proposed to stand down all council funding requests and consolidate with a one-off grant to enable the scheme to continue for a further 12 months and make it more financially sustainable.
- 12 A report was made to the Regeneration, Economy and Growth Management Team on 30 April 2020 (attached). This report provided an overview of the scheme and recommended that a one-off grant of £71,000 be provided for 2020/21.
- 13 The recommendations were approved with the grant funding agreed to be provided from the Transport & Contract Services budget. A review of the scheme would be completed and a subsequent report made to REG Management Team.
- 14 However, since this approval was given, the Covid-19 national pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery and overall costs of the scheme and grant support required in 2020/21. The revised operating conditions has also prevented a full review of the scheme.
- 15 Whilst the scheme has continued to operate during the Covid-19 restrictions, the number of clients has reduced due to furlough and job losses as well as not being able to take on new clients due to the DVSA suspension of Compulsory Basic Training.
- 16 Instead of an active fleet of 50 mopeds supporting a predicted 90 clients over a 12 month period, the scheme has operated 40 scooters and supported 46 clients into employment during 2020/21. A total of 28

clients are currently using the scheme to access employment or training.

- 17 The reduced number of scooters on the road has resulted in less rental income but has also reduced the overall cost of operating the scheme with lower servicing, repair, road tax and insurance. Further savings have also been made wherever possible, including accommodation, travel and staffing costs through furlough or reduced hours.
- 18 Given the significant changes in actual costs and income for 2020/21, compared to what was previously estimated, W2W were asked to provide a detailed breakdown on the level of grant support required for 2020/21 and predicted for 2021/22.
- 19 This assessment has identified that grant funding of £20,000 is required to support the scheme in 2020/21.
- 20 From 1 April 2021, delivery is expected to continue on the current reduced basis until the anticipated end of current Covid-19 restrictions in June 2021. The scheme is then expected to return to previous levels of operation for the remainder of 2021/22. Grant funding of £51,000 is considered to be required to support the scheme in 2021/22.
- 21 The award of this grant funding would enable the scheme to continue operating on a reduced basis during the current Covid-19 restrictions and be ready to resume full operation to help people access work or training as restrictions are lifted.
- 22 It would also sustain the scheme during the review period and provide time to develop a more cost-effective model during normal operating conditions. It would also enable grant funding to be secured from other external sources.
- 23 A Service Level Agreement would be developed setting out criteria for the grant funding award. This will include requirements for access to financial and performance data, participation in the review and that no further funding would be provided at this stage.

Finance

- 24 The grant of £71,000 will provide financial support to sustain the W2W scheme during the review period and provide time to develop a more cost-effective model during normal operating conditions. This grant would be funded from existing budgets within Transport & Contract Services.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

The recommendation seeks to pay a grant of £71,000 to be funded from existing budgets within Transport & Contract Services.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable.

Staffing

Not applicable.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

Not applicable.

Procurement

Not applicable.