

CABINET

Shop Mobility Individual Cabinet Member Decision (Councillor Stuart Langhorn)

Report of Head of Property Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To consider the grant of a Service Level Agreement to a new provider of the Shop Mobility scheme following the termination of the existing agreement by the previous provider.			
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			Referral from Cabinet Member
Date Included in Forward Plan	N/A		
This report is public			

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That a new Service Level Agreement be entered into with One Voice to continue the provision of shop mobility services within the district up to 31 March 2011.
- (2) That the operation of the shop mobility service by One Voice during this period be monitored to enable a review of the SLA to be undertaken alongside other city council SLAs later in the year.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The shop mobility scheme provides mobility equipment for customers visiting Lancaster and Morecambe centres. The equipment provided is mainly mobility scooters or wheelchairs.
- 1.2 The initial provider of the service was Preston Community Transport who delivered the mobility equipment to Morecambe (Festival Market) each Thursday and Lancaster (Dalton Square) each Friday. The equipment was initially provided by a lottery grant whilst the annual costs of the service are assisted by an annual grant from the City Council for which a service level agreement (SLA) is entered into. The budgeted grant allocation for 2010/11 is £12,300.
- 1.3 Unfortunately, Preston Community Transport is no longer able to provide the service due to problems that have arisen with the Transport Commissioners regarding the delivery of vehicles to the district. No notice was provided to the council as stipulated in the SLA. Preston Community Transport has been operating the scheme at a loss

in recent years. No payment has been made to Preston Community Transport during the current year.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 In order to continue with the shop mobility service, discussions have been undertaken with the local organisation, One Voice, who operate from premises on Sulyard Street, Lancaster. They have put forward proposals to take over and consider expansion of the existing service levels. Preston Community Transport has already made the equipment available to One Voice.
- 2.2 A copy of the current proposals from One Voice is attached as an appendix to the report. This indicates that the scheme could initially expand to two days each week with a long term objective of a five-day week operation. The provision of training for users of the equipment would be a good opportunity as the current lack of training has resulted in some minor incidents.
- 2.3 By providing links to charities already working with disabled people, the shop mobility service will become part of a more inclusive service provision.
- 2.4 Opportunities also exist to consider the future funding arrangements of the scheme. Whilst the grant payment from the council is still necessary to ensure that the service can be re-started, options are being considered for income generation, which would involve a small fee payable by users together with sponsorship income. These income opportunities should enable the scheme to be more financially secure and enable any expansion of the scheme to be funded and consideration given to the possible future reduction in grant aid. To achieve this it will be necessary to consider the operating accounts from One Voice to be aware of the ongoing viability of the scheme.
- 2.5 It should be noted however that the previous SLA with Preston Community transport would have expired in March 2011 and at this stage the Council has not had the opportunity to review the provision of such grant support for the future.

3.0 Details of Consultation

- 3.1 Discussions have been held with Preston Community Transport, One Voice and the local branch of the CVS. A number of members of the public have been in contact with the council about the current lack of service provision.
- 3.2 Further consultation will be carried out by One Voice to determine the future potential expansion of the scheme.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

- 4.1 Option 1 – to enter into a new long term SLA with One Voice to provide a shop mobility scheme in Lancaster and Morecambe. This would enable the provision of a service to local customers to be continued by a local provider. Opportunities also exist for the future expansion of the scheme for which funding arrangements are being considered.
- 4.2 Option 2 – to enter into a new SLA with One Voice up to 31st March, 2011 and during this time scale look at the development of the long term scheme following consultation. This will mean that this SLA will be reviewed and kept in line with all other SLAs which are to be reviewed this financial year.

4.3 Option 3 is not to provide the service. This would result in a saving to the council of £12,300 in current and future years. However there would be no immediate provision of shop mobility services in the district. Although the service is not directly provided by the council, complaints about the lack of accessibility into the town centres would continue to arise.

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

5.1 Option 2 is preferred as this continues the shop mobility scheme within the district this financial year by One Voice and allows the review of the long term development of this scheme, following consultation.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

There are no direct links to the current policy framework.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

The provision of the service from a local organisation will be more sustainable. Transport will not be required to deliver the equipment from Preston to the district twice each week thereby reducing carbon emissions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional financial implications arising for the city council should an SLA expiring in March 2011 be approved as the service will be provided within available budgets.

Should a longer term SLA be considered however this would need to be considered alongside other competing priorities during the 2011/12 budget process since a number of current SLAs are due to expire in March 2011.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The S151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

A new Service Level Agreement will be entered into with One Voice if either Options 1 or 2 are approved.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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