

Brentwood Community Transport Ltd
Pepperell House
44 High Street
Brentwood
CM14 4AJ

Date: 14th March 2017

Dear Tina

Re: 2017/18 COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT

I am aware that you along with other community transport scheme partners funded by Essex County Council have been anxious to know the outcome of the 2017/18 funding settlement. I apologise for the delay in letting you know. The Cabinet Member is due to publish the decision very shortly on our electronic system <http://cmis.essexcc.gov.uk>.

As you will be aware the County Council is under unprecedented financial pressure needing to save some £300 million by 2021 while the demands on its statutory services continue to rise. As you know, we have been discussing the inevitability of a reduction in taxpayer funding at some point for around two years now and at the meetings held in January 2017, to which all schemes were invited, the Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member indicated that grants would fall for 2017/18 and that a further reduction was likely for 2018/19.

The decision on the level of funding for community transport for 2017/18 has therefore been a difficult one. However, I am now in a position to tell you that the overall grant has been set at £1,089,451.40. This does represent a 14.4% reduction on the grant from the 2016/17 figure and has been applied equally to all scheme services. The amount due for your scheme(s) is set out in Table 1 below. The County Council is still making grants with a value in excess of £1 million to the Community Transport sector in Essex and the reduction is significantly less than for some other services across the County.

I am also taking this opportunity to give you some important information about how the County Council wants to approach the 2017/18 service level agreement and how we would like to develop it in future years.

I would be grateful if you could read all sections of this letter very carefully as it contains critical information about the coming and future years. If you would like to discuss the overall level of the grant settlement then please do email me at Helen.morris@essex.gov.uk.

Table 1 Essex Community Transport Scheme Funding 2017/18

District	Organisation (name of scheme in brackets if different)	Amount
Basildon	Basildon Community Transport Services Ltd	£103,367.00
Braintree	Braintree District Council (Braintree Community Transport)	£90,332.50
Brentwood	Brentwood Community Transport Ltd	£59,853.00
Castle Point	Wyvern Community Transport Ltd	£52,289.50
Chelmsford	Chelmsford Community Transport Ltd	£95,540.60
Colchester	Colchester Community Voluntary Services Ltd (Colchester Community Transport)	£109,775.10
Epping Forest	Epping Forest Community Transport (Epping Forest)	£70,645.10
Harlow	Epping Forest Community Transport (Harlow)	£103,929.30
Tendring	Harwich Connexions Transport Cooperative Ltd	£61,190.80
Maldon	Colchester Community Voluntary Services Ltd (Maldon District Community Transport)	£59,985.70
Rochford DC	Wyvern Community Transport Ltd	£60,923.80
Tendring DC	Tendring Community Transport Ltd	£128,720.50
Uttlesford	Uttlesford Community Travel Ltd	£92,898.50
Total		£1,089,451.40

I would be grateful if, once you have reviewed your grant levels, you could identify any potential significant impacts on front line services and write by 31 March 2017 to Deborah.fox@essex.gov.uk setting these out.

Although there is no further money available in the budget, we may be able to signpost you to other opportunities to enable you to mitigate impacts or offer support, for example in training on how to bid for contracts or accessing other grant funding streams.

We are as keen as you are to continue to protect front line services in this challenging financial environment.

The Service Level Agreement for 2017/18

As part of the discussions over funding in the last two years we have all focused on how we can mitigate the risks to our customers and avoid the need to make reductions to services. This has seen some services diversify their income streams, merge and set up a trading arm. Together we agreed a joint action plan as a result of previous workshops to assist with:

- Maintaining current levels of service in order to protect customers.
- Identifying efficiencies, better ways of working, opportunities to share resource and 'back office' savings to enable us to continue to support current service levels.
- Seeking alternative funding routes, including other grant and competitive opportunities from ECC where those are appropriate.

In addition we have identified several actions that we believe we can take together to further mitigate the cost pressures and support services into a draft joint action plan, including:

1. Having regular conversations with ECC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.
2. Holding collaborative workshops to identify priorities together and how the business and its marketing are best approached.
3. Maintaining safeguarding and excellent customer rating that builds on and improves core service provision.
4. Having a joint marketing approach.
5. Reviewing opportunities to develop existing services.
6. Maximising changes to the transport network for new services that attract new customers.
7. Developing public transport travel options to increase knowledge and publicity.
8. Working collaboratively to understand demand, and future options, using existing information and data.

One of the things we want to do better is identify where schemes are having particular difficulties and be ready to work with the scheme to resolve them. To this end we will ask schemes to give us a quarterly update on progress against the actions in a joint action plan. This requirement will be built into the SLA. Both will be provided separately.

The reporting is aimed to be as light touch as possible and we will be happy to discuss a consistent format with you.

Future Years

I know the Cabinet Member and his deputy greatly valued the meeting that they held with the majority of the Essex community transport providers in January. As part of that they have asked us to work with you to identify:

- How we can continue to build and strengthen our partnership.
- What value there is in multi-year grant funding settlements and how we can give you more certainty while enabling effective decision making across budgets.
- How we could review the appropriateness of the current funding formula that allocates the grant pot between schemes. This is now some 15 years old and the underlying factors that govern it may need updating.

Your first points of contact for future liaison are:

Deborah Fox Deborah.fox@essex.gov.uk

and

Richard Gravatt Richard.gravatt@essex.gov.uk.

They will welcome your feedback on the draft action plan, to be provided separately with the draft SLA, so that it will truly be a joint effort in managing the wider system.

Please continue to route all enquiries from the public and service users through Passenger.Transport@essex.gov.uk where all correspondence is tracked.

Yours Sincerely



Helen Morris
Essex County Council

Telephone: 0345 603 2200

**Email: Passenger.Transport@essex.gov.uk
www.essex.gov.uk**