

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORT INITIATIVES – INVITATION FOR BID SUBMISSIONS TO THE RURAL AND URBAN CHALLENGE FUNDS**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report brings to Members' attention information received from the County Council seeking bid submissions under the rural and urban challenge fund initiatives. In the light of the information contained therein, Members may like to consider whether it would be possible to submit one or more bids for possible projects within the Rochford District area.

### **2 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS**

- 2.1 Essex County Council's Road Passenger Transport Policy and Strategy Manager has recently written to the District Council advising that further submissions are now invited under the Rural and Urban Challenge funding initiatives relating to public transport.
- 2.2 The County Council has recently succeeded in winning two bids for funding from the Rural Bus Challenge Fund (RBCF). These are centred on the provision of community transport services in the Harwich area and backing for research into a taxi-bus transport project in North West Essex. Together these bids total more than £300,000.
- 2.3 The County Council has also been successful earlier in the year in winning funding of around £200,000 for a community transport scheme in Harlow under the Urban Bus Challenge Fund (UBCF). Similarly the long running Dengie Village Link project has received two grants from the RBCF and currently receives some £1.1m funding to cover its operations during the period 2001-2004.
- 2.4 Following these successes, the County Council is now looking to develop additional bids for funding under both the RBCF (for one year) and the UBCF (for the second year of its first term).

- 2.5 To this end the County Council is starting to consider proposals for new bids. While all bids for grants from the funds must be submitted through the County Council, a strong local input is a key element in their success. Therefore the Council is keen that new bids reflect a real demand for services and address genuine local transport concerns.
- 2.6 Draft bid suggestions for support are therefore requested as soon as possible. As a guide, the County Council will have to submit the finished proposal by the end of August 2002, so would ask that any projects to be considered be sent in by the 10<sup>th</sup> April if at all possible.
- 2.7 The County Council have prepared a short guide to the challenge funds, including an explanation of what they can be used for, and this is [attached](#). In brief, schemes have to be for specific road based projects (not single journeys or extending existing journeys) which include a degree of innovation. They can include both capital and revenue elements. However, given the relatively short duration of the grants (one or two years maximum) projects that concentrate on capital expenditure, or where the project is likely to be self supporting, without long term revenue support after the period of the grant, are preferred. Similarly ideas which include 'match funding' from other sources (Government grants are eligible for this) will be looked at with special interest.
- 2.8 At this stage, the County Council is looking for ideas. These need not be worked up in any great detail, but an outline of what would be required and an estimate of the resources needed to do so would be useful. A final decision regarding which projects will be entered for the bid is expected by the beginning of May 2002, with final submission in August 2002 and announcement of winners likely in January 2003. These lead times are necessary to allow full development of projects.
- 2.9 Richard Gravatt, the Road Passenger Transport Policy and Strategy Manager, has been invited to the Committee to give further details of what is involved. Mr. Nick McCullagh, as Highways Area Manager, has also been invited.
- 2.10 Details of this initiative have been circulated to the Town/Parish Councils in the District and also to RAVS, who are undertaking research into Community Transport Initiatives in the area. Any responses received from them will be reported to the meeting.

**3 RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 That Committee consider the details of the public transport initiative as outlined and determine whether any draft proposals should be put forward to the Environmental Services Committee for approval and onward submission to the County Council.

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