
ESSEX RURAL TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' views on a request for financial assistance from the Rural Community Council of Essex to support the post of Co-ordinator for the Essex Rural Transport Partnership (ERTP).

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The ERTP has been in existence for about 2½ years and, during that time, it has succeeded in enabling nearly £200,000 of project funding to be channelled into rural transport projects.
- 2.2 In Rochford District, the ERTP has enabled funding for the Great Wakering Helping Hands Association to continue to provide accessible transport for the community (£1,500 for mini-bus improvements). The partnership provides advice and guidance to Parish Councils and Community Groups. The key to all funding projects is to provide support for initiatives that tackle social exclusion in rural communities.

3 FUNDING

- 3.1 The ERTP Co-ordinator post is crucial to the partnership. The Co-ordinator promotes the scheme, contacts and visits communities to develop projects.
- 3.2 At present, 75% of the funding for the Co-ordinator's post is received through a grant from the Countryside Agency. Match funding is required from Local Authorities to make up the balance.
- 3.3 The Rural Community Council for Essex has written to the Council seeking a one-off grant of £1,000 to support the Co-ordinator's post in 2002/2003.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 The ERTP has certainly been successful at pulling in funds for a wide range of rural transport projects across the County. At least one project in the District has benefited from the involvement of the project Co-ordinator, and it is understood, a further project is being discussed with Hullbridge Parish Council which may result in a Parish Transport Grant being awarded. Tentative discussions have also taken place with Canewdon Parish Council.
- 4.2 The remit of the ERTP is to enable projects across the County and there could be no guarantees that any financial assistance from Rochford would result in project assistance within the District.

However, even without funding, the partnership would not be fulfilling its remit if it discriminated against approaches for help from communities in the District. Such projects might be based in urban areas where there is a link to the countryside through Green Travel projects or non-motorised travel projects.

- 4.3 There is no doubt that access to transport in rural areas for some sections of the community is a problem and anything that can be done to improve the situation should be welcomed. On this basis, it is suggested that a one-off contribution to the E RTP for 2002/03 would be worth considering, with a request for a report back on activity within the District, in order to assess the value of the project locally.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Rural Community Council of Essex is seeking a grant of £1,000 to help fund a Co-ordinator post for the Essex Rural Transport Partnership. The Co-ordinator's post is 75% funded by the Countryside Agency.

6 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The E RTP can advise Parish Councils on transport projects to provide accessible transport for local communities. Funding for projects is available from various sources, including the now Vital Villages Parish Transport Grant.

7 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

Whether to offer a grant of £1,000 to the Essex Rural Transport Partnership for the 2002/03 financial year. (HPS)

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Background Papers:

Letter from the Rural Community Council of Essex – 25 October 2001

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