



**DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE**

**PROPOSED INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR LOCAL ECONOMY**

**TOPIC - WHEELS TO WORK SCHEME**

**PROCEDURAL INFORMATION**

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

**If you wish to make representation on this proposed Decision please contact the relevant Portfolio Holder and the following Democratic Services Officer by 5.00pm on Monday 24 August 2015.**

**Contact Officers:**

**Case Officer:** Kate Cloud, Head of Economy and Arts, 01962 848 563, [kcloud@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:kcloud@winchester.gov.uk)

**Democratic Services Officer:** Nancy Graham, 01962 848 235, [ngraham@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:ngraham@winchester.gov.uk)

**SUMMARY**

- Winchester City Council has supported the Wheels to Work scheme led by Hampshire County Council since 1999. The scheme, run by Community First New Forest, gives users very low cost (£17-£20 per week depending on age and size of bike) access to a moped to enable them to get to work related training, work or job interviews. The scheme also provides compulsory basic training (CBT) for riders, insurance and appropriate protective equipment for each service user.
- The scheme has seen 54 users benefit from the scheme in the Winchester District. These service users have typically been under 25 years of age

(although there is no current age restriction), rural residents who use the scheme to access employment.

- The scheme has cost Winchester City Council around £6,300 per year (the price has fluctuated slightly with inflation rates, and with the number of bikes available in the area) which has been taken from the Local Economy budget, with some match funding from the Community Transport budget in the first year.
- Whilst the cost to the Council per user may seem high, the benefits to each individual far outweigh the financial cost. Benefits have included the ability to access work, training for employment and job interviews where this would otherwise have been impossible, in many cases due to rural bus provision being insufficient for the destinations required or shift patterns worked. In addition, each user has enjoyed the independence the moped scheme has given them, and the other intangible benefits of greater self awareness and responsibility.
- Hampshire County Council is concluding a process of retendering the scheme, and embarking on a further agreement for a minimum of two years, with an option to extend this to six years. The operator will continue to be Community First New Forest. Bike hire numbers are currently slightly low, although this is expected to increase over August, September and October and students begin a new academic year, apprenticeships commence, and past students find employment. The cost to Winchester City Council is due to be £2,685.15 for the period 1 August to 31 December 2015, when the usage figures will be reviewed and further funding levels negotiated in line with demand for the service.
- This project meets the Prosperous Economy aim of the Community Strategy, in particular supporting the local economy and promoting education and training.

### **PROPOSED DECISION**

1. That the continued use of Local Economy budgets to fund the Wheels to Work scheme across the Winchester District for at least the next two years (to 31 July 2017) be agreed.
2. That the Head of Economy and Arts be authorised to negotiate funding levels beyond December 2015 in line with demand for the service.

**REASON FOR THE PROPOSED DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

The Wheels to Work scheme is highly valued, especially in the rural areas of the District. Continuing the scheme will allow more individuals to benefit from the ability to access training, job interviews and places of work.

An alternative would be to cease support for the scheme altogether. The result of this action would be that existing service users would have their moped removed, and they would need to find alternative means of travel. Where this is not possible, service users risk losing their jobs, and finding it extremely difficult to find alternative employment. In addition, potential new users of the scheme would not benefit from the mopeds, and are also likely to find job seeking more difficult.

A further alternative would be to source a Wheels to Work scheme independently from Hampshire County Council. However, this would not allow us to benefit from the economies of scale Winchester City Council currently enjoys with the Hampshire County Council led scheme. There would also be a greater staff time requirement of commissioning a third party to run the scheme, and ongoing monitoring of that contract.

**RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

A cost of £2,685.15 between August 2015-December 2015, estimated to equate to an annual cost of up to £7,000 until July 2017, to be funded by existing Local Economy budgets.

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE PROPOSED DECISION**

Discussion about the ongoing benefits of the scheme has taken place with the Portfolio Holder for Economy, and also with Cllr Humby as a rural ward member and County Councillor. In addition, the Employment Mentoring Programme Manager regularly refers users of that scheme to the Wheels to Work scheme, as part of her work helping people into employment.

**FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE**

N/A

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED**

None.

**DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

n/a

**Approved by: (signature)**

**Date of Decision**

**Councillor Byrnes – Portfolio Holder for Local Economy**