



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

4th November 2020

Report of the Head of Engineering & Transport David W. Griffiths

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All

Continuation of Covid19-Bus Industry Support.

Purpose of the Report:

To obtain Members' approval to delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Regeneration and Head of Engineering and Transport to enter into Covid19-Bus Industry Support agreements with Passenger Transport Operators.

Executive Summary:

The Coronavirus pandemic has created uncertainty across all industries and sectors and the bus industry are no exception, many of whom are SME's or charities that are facing significant and unprecedented challenges in the provision of transport services.

Members will be aware that a report was brought before them in April 2020 requesting delegated power for officers to authorise payments to operators under the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) until October. However, the Council has received a letter from the deputy Transport Minister extending the scheme for the month of November 2020.

Background:

Welsh Government has been taking action to help bus operators in Wales, including the Operator, get through the inevitable uncertainty of the COVID-19 affected operating conditions. Funding has been provided by the Welsh Government to bus operators in Wales via the Bus Hardship Funding scheme and the Bus Emergency Support scheme. This provided money to operators through the Local Authority and other local transport authorities.

In April delegated powers were requested to administer the scheme until October 2020. However, on the 22nd October 2020, the Council received a letter from the Deputy Minister for Transport Minister requesting Local Authorities continue to pay operators for November. A copy of this letter is set out at Appendix A.

Financial Impacts:

Home to school and social services transport are already budgeted for by the Council and continuing to pay routes that are not running at 75% will reduce overall spend.

Concessionary fares reimbursement is funded by Welsh Government along with a contribution from the Council. Local bus support is wholly funded by Welsh Government BSSG (Bus Services Support Grant). Welsh Government are releasing funding based on historical payments made to each Local Authority. Financial spend will therefore be similar to last year and budgeted for.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage Impact Assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The first stage assessment, attached at Appendix B, has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No impacts.

Workforce Impacts:

No impacts.

Legal Impacts:

The Council has a statutory obligation to provide home to school transport under The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. Also under Section 145 of the Transport Act 2000 it is mandatory that concessionary travel schemes be provided by the bus operators and section 149 of the Transport Act 2000 requires travel concession authorities (such as County Councils) to reimburse operators for providing concessions.

Risk Management Impacts:

No impacts.

Consultation:

The proposal is in response to Covid19 emergency measures to support the Bus Industry in Wales by Welsh Government to maintain Transport Services in consultation with the Welsh Local Government Association, Local Authorities, and The Association of Transport Coordinating Officers.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that

- 1) The Director of Environment and Regeneration, the Head of Engineering and Transport and those officers so designated by them be granted delegated authority to implement the Welsh Government guidance on the administration of the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) while this mechanism continues to support the bus industry
- 2) Delegated authority be granted for the Council to enter into Covid-19 Indemnity Agreements with Passenger Transport Operators in accordance with the guidance provided by Welsh Ministers, the Welsh Government

Covid19-Bus Industry Support April 2020 and any subsequent guidance that may be issued by the Welsh Government.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The proposal will help maintain transport services in the short term and ensure that there are services at the end of the Covid19 public health crisis.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision is proposed for immediate implementation.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Letter 20 October 2020

Appendix B – Integrated Impact Screening Assessment

List of Background Papers:

Covid 19 Bus Industry Support April 2020.

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