

Proposal	go 2 - A Demand Responsive Bus Service
Applicant	Go-Taxi Hire Limited & Go-Coach Limited
Ward(s)	All Sevenoaks District Wards

RECOMMENDATION: That the **£71,961.98** applied for, as set out in the report, for scheme “go 2 - A Demand Responsive Bus Service” be approved on the following grounds:

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community
- The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan
- There is strong community support of the scheme

Introduction

- 1 Go-Coach Limited is Kent’s largest independent bus operator which has a fleet of 50 vehicles operating 46 routes. It is the principal network provider in the Sevenoaks District, linking a number of rural communities in the District to the town centres.
- 2 The application was received before the application deadline closed on Monday 30 September 2019. This proposal has not been previously considered by the CIL Spending Board.

Description of Proposal

- 3 The proposal is an innovative infrastructure project for the provision of a flexible, demand-response ‘little bus’ public transport scheme. The ‘little buses’ will be four (4) Ford Transit Tourneo vehicles modified to accommodate passengers with mobility issues and to be fully wheelchair accessible. These vehicles will be London ULEZ compliant with Euro 6 diesel engines. They will also be fitted out to provide a comfortable, trusted and safe journey including air conditioning, CCTV and USB charging points.
- 4 The vehicles will be branded accordingly and all partners will have their branding incorporated in the vehicle branding ‘wraps’. The operation of these ‘go 2’ vehicles is based on the following model:

- Mornings and evenings - cater for commuters wishing to go to the Railway Stations and places of work in the Sevenoaks town area;
 - School run hours (morning and afternoons) - transport SEN students to and from school;
 - Daytime:
 - transport older people to lunch clubs, day care facilities and shopping trips (working with Age UK (Sevenoaks & Tonbridge)) providing subsidised rate (possible because of income from journey types 1 & 2 above).
 - Replacing Rural KCC supported bus and Taxibus services with DRT (Demand response Transport).
 - Providing public transport to remote areas to help remove social isolation by using smaller vehicles.
- 5 The scheme will begin with 4 vehicles serving the District. This will be a pilot scheme. The above model means that this scheme will be financially sustainable, with profits reinvested to enlarge the scope of the infrastructure. If successful it is envisaged that within five years there could be ten (10) 'go 2' vehicles, rolling it out to other parts of the District.

Funding

- 6 Go-Coach Limited has estimated that the total cost of the project will be £143,173.96
- 7 Go-Coach Limited has identified the following additional funding sources and grants to support their application to the Board:
- Go-Taxi Hire Limited - £71,71,211.98
- 8 Therefore to meet the funding gap for the full cost of the project, Westerham Town Council has applied to the Board for £71,961.98 of CIL funding.

Representations and Support

- 9 The application submitted indicates that Go-Coach Limited will be working in partnership with Go-Taxi Hire Limited, Age UK (Sevenoaks and Tonbridge) and Sevenoaks District Council.
- 10 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:
- Cllr. Merilyn Canet (SDC Member for Sevenoaks Northern

- Sevenoaks Town Council
- Simon Goldsmith (Chair, Sevenoaks District Access Group)
- Dr Marilyn Canet (Vice-Chair, Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum)

Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid

Principal Criteria met

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community
- The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan
- There is strong community support of the scheme

Appraisal

Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community

- 11 Firstly, the application sets out a number of community benefits to the area, including social, economic and environmental gains. The applicant has demonstrated that the scheme will have significant impacts not just in the local project area but also provide benefits to the wider District.
- 12 The applicant suggests that there are a number of economic benefits to the scheme. It is noted that the existing fleet of vehicles that are operated by Age UK are in a state of decline, to the point where it is limited scope to maintain the fleet at adequate operational levels. By allowing Go-Coach to take over some services which are provided by Age UK, it would allow a greater focus of time and resources to be redirected onto other projects provided by Age UK.
- 13 With regards to the environmental benefits to the proposed scheme, the vehicles used will be more fuel efficient and compliant with recent legislation with regards to vehicle emissions standards. The applicant notes that the current fleet of vehicles are old and are not compliant with the updated regulations on vehicle emission standards. It is therefore anticipated that by running these services with greener vehicles, it will improve air quality and resident's health.
- 14 In terms of the social benefits for the scheme, the applicant has described that by bringing under utilised routes back into use, it will help provide better connections between communities. The scheme would help to prevent social isolation and loneliness, especially for those residents who are in rural communities throughout the District.

The project is identified in an adopted strategy/plan

- 15 As submitted within the funding application, Go-Coach Limited has identified the need for the scheme in a number of established strategies and plans. This includes:
- Sevenoaks District Council's Council Plan;
 - Sevenoaks District Community Plan;
 - Age UK (Sevenoaks & Tonbridge) Strategy for reducing loneliness and isolation; and
 - Go-Coach Development Plan
- 16 There are references to the Sevenoaks Local Plan and the Sevenoaks Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Whilst both documents make references to how transport and infrastructure will be provided over the Plan period, neither document specifically refers to this scheme.
- 17 However, after careful consideration, it is considered that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project is identified in an adopted strategy or plan.

There is strong community support for the scheme

- 18 In the applicant's application for CIL funding, it is evident that there is strong community backing for this scheme.
- 19 A number of community representatives, organisations and charities have supported the project, as well as a public consultation by Go-Coach has been carried out during 2019. The project is also supported by Sevenoaks District Council as key delivery partner.
- 20 Therefore, after careful consideration, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the project has strong community support for the scheme

Other considerations

Project management

- 21 In the application submitted, it has been stated that Austin Blackburn of Go-Taxi Limited will project manage the scheme. Further input will be required from Age UK (Sevenoaks & Tonbridge) to work on the delivery of appropriate routes/journeys for clients and other frequent users.
- 22 A project timeframe has been submitted as part of the application. The applicant has also stated that they would advise the CIL Spending Board when

the project has commenced with the option to provide progress updates to Officers.

Requirement for Planning Permission

- 23 An additional consideration of the criteria is which applications are assessed is whether a proposal has the appropriate consents in place to carry out the project.
- 24 The key aspect of the proposal is to provide vehicles to facilitate the delivery of transport and appropriate routes for clients and other users to use. As a result the applicant does not require planning permission for this.
- 25 It is worth noting that the applicant would require a operator's licence before the project could take effect. The applicant in its submission has confirmed that discussions have taken place between Go-Coach Limited and the Licencing Team at Sevenoaks District Council. It has been confirmed by the applicant that a formal licencing application would have been submitted by October 2019.

Application Considerations - Weakly Performing Criteria

- 26 When carrying out the assessment of this funding application, Officers felt that the application did not perform strongly against the following criteria:
 - Local and/or strategic benefits have not been clearly laid out in the application
 - Not specifically mentioned in the Council's Local Plan or IDP
 - The scheme not maximising funding sources / CIL funding from the relevant town or parish council(s)

Conclusion

- 27 Go-Coach Limited has submitted an application to the Board to consider funding for a demand responsive bus service to support the local community. The need for the scheme has been clearly demonstrated and there are a number of social, economic and environmental benefits. The proposal is formally identified in a number of plans and strategies and is supported by the local community. It is noted that the applicant is providing a large amount of its own CIL funding towards the project. It is noted has not benefited from CIL funding from the CIL Spending Board previously.
- 28 After reviewing the application and subsequent supporting evidence, it is recommended by Officers that £71,961.98 of CIL funding be approved to support the delivery of the project. As it is considered to provide a clear

public benefit and approving this bid would provide good value for the amount of CIL money applied for compared to the cost of the overall project.

Appendices Original bidding proforma and supporting information

Background Papers None

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