

Active Travel Schemes in Area East (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

To update Members of the Area East Committee on a number of local schemes which, combined appear to be an emerging theme as a priority for the Area.

Public Interest

The report sets out the details of an emerging theme and priority area of work.

Recommendation

1. That Members consider the inclusion of Active Travel routes in the draft Area Chapter for 21/22
2. That Members agree to release funds allocated in the area reserve for Community Planning, Derelict sites (Castle Cary), Rural business units and the Retail Support Initiative and ring-fence £35,370 to be held in reserve and used towards the development and delivery of Active Travel Schemes in Area East.
3. That Members agree to award a total of £20,000 (£10,000 from the Community Grants and Discretionary budgets, £10,000 from the area reserve) towards the Wincanton to Bruton Active Travel route feasibility study, subject to standard community grant conditions and DX agreement.

Background

Active travel is not only an important part of the solution to the problem of obesity but also for a range of other health issues at a population level. It may also have other important non-health outcomes, including a reduction in traffic congestion and carbon emissions.

There are a number of projects that aim to provide opportunities to improve walking and cycling in Area East.

Yeovilton to Yeovil

The creation of a safe route for cyclists and pedestrians between Yeovilton and Yeovil has been an aspiration since 2006 when the Base assessed the level of interest in travelling to and from Yeovil by bicycle or foot. Significant work has been done over the years. A potential route (Hook Drove) was identified, feasibility work completed and an engineering solution designed and costed. The scheme would involve upgrading the surface of an existing bridleway between Ashington and Upper Mudford. A number of local stakeholders were involved in the project which proved to be too costly to deliver due to the need to accommodate the use by tractors. Maintenance was also an issue. The total cost of the scheme was in excess of £200,000 and despite the allocation of £70,000 of SCC SIS

funding, the stakeholder group, at the time considered the shortfall to be too much to proceed.

Bruton to Wincanton – Reinstatement of the old railway line as an Active Travel route.

The Rail to Trail project hopes to create a level path allowing walkers, cyclists, mobility scooter and wheelchair users, runners and horse riders to travel safely away from traffic between towns and villages across Somerset.

The project aims to develop a multi-user path between Wincanton and Bruton. The path would use the pre-existing infrastructure of the disused Somerset and Dorset railway line, which was decommissioned in the Sixties.

A Community Interest Company has been established and is run by one volunteer and three Directors. As a review of the governance arrangements, this will become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

A survey has been carried out which generated over 500 responses with 98% of people indicating that they support the project and 54% of people reporting that the route would be used by a member of their family.

The project has clear benefits to the environment as it will reduce reliance on a car. It will also contribute to the local economy of both Bruton and Wincanton as it encourages people to visit local attractions and facilities.

The scheme itself is likely to require significant investment beyond the financial means of the council. Area East has received a request from the group for a financial contribution towards the feasibility study for the scheme. A full community grant application has been completed and assessed. The scheme meets the criteria. However, due to the scale of the project and the link to other schemes in development, the amount recommended is above the maximum for a community grant which is £12,500. Any award above £12,500 will require the agreement of the District Executive.

Milborne Port to Sherborne

There has been a long-standing aspiration to develop a safe route for walkers and cyclists as mentioned in the Milborne Port Community Plan. The original route identified has been developed further by the Parish Council to include an exit opposite the rear of the Gryphon School instead of joining - or crossing - the A30. Much of the route is on existing public roads (minor), paths and bridleway but further work is required with Sherborne Castle Estates regarding parts that abut/cross land farmed by tenants. Existing landowners have not, at this stage, objected to the proposed route.

A working party for Cycling Initiatives has been formed to take the work forward and the group is in discussion with the Parish Council regarding a feasibility study. It is highly likely that we will receive a request for financial support towards the study.

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

In addition to the locally led initiatives set out in the report, SSDC has received a proposal to develop Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for Chard and Wincanton.

The plan (which would be commissioned by SCC would produce the following: -

- a Cycling Network Map and corresponding list of cycling infrastructure improvements;
- a Walking Network Map and corresponding list of walking infrastructure improvements;
- a prioritised programme of cycling and walking infrastructure improvements; and
- a summary report bringing together the above outputs and outlining the process undertaken.

The cost of the proposal is in the region of £30,000 per town. A further report will be bought to AEC detailing the process and funding options.

Financial Implications

At the June meeting of the Committee, The Locality Manager presented details of the area reserve. At the time it was noted that some of the allocations had been made some time ago with no recent activity or spend.

The table below shows the current allocations in the reserve.

	Original allocation	Balance remaining
Community Planning - Project Spend (Approved April 05)	£50,000	£15,930
Derelict Sites Castle Cary (Approved June 05)	£4,000	£4,000
Rural Business Units (Approved Nov 05)	£25,000	£5,800
Retail Support Initiative (Approved May 09)	£10,000	£10,000
Wincanton Retail Support Initiative (Approved July 14)	£10,000	£10,000
Total balance of allocation		£45,730

Requests for project spend related to Community Planning exercises are likely to be eligible for support from the Community Grants Scheme which has been underspent in recent years.

Balance in the budget for Rural Business Units has remained the same for a number of years.

Funds have been held in reserve for the Retail Support Initiative for a number of years. However, it has been possible to meet requests for funding within the annual budget. It is recommended that £10,000 is released and £10,000 kept in reserve.

If members agree recommendation 2 above, there will be £10,000 for the Retail Support Initiative and £35,370 held in reserve for Active Travel Schemes.

If members agree recommendation 3 above, there will be £25,370 remaining in the Reserve for Active Travel schemes.

There is currently £16,500 unallocated in the revenue grants and discretionary budgets for 20/21. If members agree recommendation 3, there will be £6,500 to spend by March 2021.

Corporate Priority Implications

The priorities have been developed taking into account the SSDC Corporate plan priorities.

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

The provision of safe walking and cycling routes will have a direct, positive impact on carbon emissions and climate change by reducing reliance on motor vehicles and encouraging sustainable travel.

Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no implications as a result of this report.

Background Papers: *None*