

Divisions Affected – N/A

Cabinet Member for Public Health & Inequalities

5 September 2023

Community Outreach Active Travel (COAT) programme

Report by Corporate Director for Public Health & Community Safety

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to

- a) Note that officers have undertaken a procurement to commission the provision of the Community Outreach Active Travel (COAT) programme comprising a service contract and a grants programme over 3 years with the option to extend the service by up to a further 2 years, with a total estimated value of £1,025,000;
- b) Authorise the award of the Community Outreach Active Travel (COAT) programme to the preferred bidder identified in confidential Annex A for the price tendered for a period of 3 years with the option to extend the service by up to a further 2 years;
- c) to delegate authority to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer to finalise the contract documentation; and
- d) delegate authority to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer to approve the exercise of the option to extend the contract for up to a further 2 years as detailed in recommendation (b) above.

Executive Summary

2. Activities to increase the number of people walking and cycling for daily journeys (active travel) have been supported by OCC Public Health and the Active Travel team in Environment and Place since 2020 with funding from the Department for Transport's Emergency Active Travel Fund, introduced following the first lockdown to support social distancing and other Covid-19 secure measures. Since then, Oxfordshire County Council has been successful in securing funding on a yearly basis for infrastructure projects and revenue costs to support a range of active travel schemes and the delivery of complementary measures to promote walking and cycling. The complementary measures have formed the basis of OCC's Cycling and Walking Activation Programme (CWAP), led by Public Health and delivered by the Council's active travel team and a number of external agencies including Sustrans, Active Oxfordshire and Street Tag.

3. The activation programme aims to capitalise on the infrastructure works and engage the population with this new infrastructure to increase numbers cycling and walking for active travel. Its projects seek to identify effective ways to achieve modal shift, to understand barriers to cycling and walking and to work with the community to deliver interventions to enable residents to change their behaviour.
4. The community outreach project is one of the projects within CWAP; its specific objectives are:
 - To reduce inequalities in active travel (including geographical inequalities and those by age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status)
 - To identify and understand the barriers to walking and cycling of people who are least likely to walk or cycle, including hyper-local barriers
 - To build local capacity to address these barriers
5. In 2021/22 and 2022/23 the community outreach project has been procured through exemption waiver on an annual basis. Given the effectiveness of the existing projects (participants reporting cycling and walking on 33% more days/month after six months engagement with community activities) and the need to be able to deliver a programme that can bring sustained behaviour change over a longer timeframe, support was secured to allocate £200,000 per annum for three years from the public health reserve to commission a 3-year contract through standard open market procurement processes.

Exempt Information

6. Annex A has been placed on the exempt part of the agenda because it contains exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Business Need

7. The existing contract with Active Oxfordshire ended in June 2023 and the current procurement process is on target to be completed with a service start to the new contract on 1 October 2023.
8. Previous experience of this service supports delivery based on the academic year with a 6-month period of co-production of activities with community stakeholders, followed by their introduction in March/April when the weather has improved and there are longer days.
9. Promoting and encouraging active travel and achieving an increase in walking and cycling is a key corporate priority and forms a central part of OCC's strategy to deliver a net-zero Oxfordshire transport and travel system.
10. Active travel also contributes to delivering two other key corporate priorities: improving health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities. It promotes active and healthy lifestyles, improves road safety, and creates more inclusive communities. It is a key element of healthy place shaping which aims to create

sustainable, well designed, thriving communities where healthy behaviours are the norm and which provide a sense of belonging, identity and community.

11. In OCC's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, the Council has set ambitious targets for active travel. By 2030 OCC's target is to:
 - a) Replace or remove 1 out of every 4 current car trips in Oxfordshire;
 - b) Increase the number of cycle trips in Oxfordshire from 600,000 to 1 million cycle trips per week;
 - c) Reduce road fatalities or life changing injuries by 50%.
12. Delivering this level of modal shift requires significant investment in new and upgraded cycling and walking network infrastructure across the county to make active travel a safer, more attractive option. Although improvements to the built environment are essential, they are not sufficient alone to deliver the desired increase in walking and cycling. National guidance is clear that infrastructure improvements need to be supported by a range of behaviour change interventions to enable and activate people to change their mode of travel. Studies show that the places where reducing car-use and modal shift have been most effective are the ones which have employed a combination of different policy instruments¹.
13. In 2020/21, in Oxfordshire, 18% of adults were considered inactive (doing less than 30 minutes of physical activity each week) and almost half of Oxfordshire's children didn't reach recommended levels of activity. Crucially, this was worse amongst people living in areas of greatest deprivation². According to the UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines, active travel is one of the important ways in which people of all ages can help to meet physical activity targets³. These factors combined show a need to channel community outreach funding into specific areas where active travel can have the most effect on improving health.
14. In the general population of England, physical inactivity is notably higher in more deprived areas⁴. There is a clear need to target community outreach work in areas of inequality to ensure people have the best possible chances of engaging in active travel for the benefit of their health and wellbeing.

Service Need

15. In the last two years £100K per annum has been allocated for community outreach activity to take place in four areas of Oxfordshire where improvements to the cycling infrastructure are being delivered: East Oxford; Witney, Abingdon and Bicester. These areas were selected to meet Department for Transport criteria that active travel activation needed to align with where improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure were being delivered. In these communities the COAT activities were targeted on more deprived communities: in Barton, Rosehill and Blackbird Leys in Oxford, in

¹ Kuss and Nicolas (2022) - A dozen effective interventions to reduce car use in European cities: Lessons learned from a meta-analysis and transition management

² 2022/23 Director of Public Health Annual Report, Oxfordshire County Council (yet to be formally published)

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/832868/uk-chief-medical-officers-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf

⁴ Farrell L and others. The socioeconomic gradient in physical inactivity: Evidence from one million adults in England. *Social Science & Medicine*, 2014. 123: p. 55-63

Caldicott in Abingdon and in the deprived areas of Witney and Bicester. The provider has offered grants to community organisations for activities that will promote active travel with between £15,000 - £25,000 being taken up by each community to fund grants ranging from £2,000 to £10,000. This funding level reflects community capacity to engage with this work.

16. In funding this contract from public health reserves, OCC would like to expand the grant funding to all the 10 most deprived wards in Oxfordshire and to sustain the activity in some of the market towns where infrastructure improvements are being delivered, as there is an opportunity to maximise modal shift. Funding of £200K per annum would enable OCC to target all 10 wards experiencing greatest health inequalities.

Strategic Commissioning Priorities

17. The Community Outreach Active Travel programme supports the strategic objectives of the organisation:
- a) Oxfordshire County Council's Strategic Plan 2023-2025⁵ includes commitment to put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work such as:
 - i. tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire;
 - ii. prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents;
 - iii. support carers and the social care system;
 - iv. create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential;
 - b) The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023;
 - c) Oxfordshire's Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Framework;
 - d) Oxfordshire Climate Action Framework;
 - e) The Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2023⁶;
 - f) The Early Help Strategy⁷ updated June 2022;
 - g) BOB ICS Strategy 2023 which identifies the need to address the wider determinants of health.
18. The service also fits with national priorities:
- a) The Government's Second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2) – March 2023⁸;
 - b) Public Health England's Working Together to Promote Active Travel – May 2016⁹;
 - c) House of Commons Transport Committee's Active Travel: Increasing Levels of Walking and Cycling in England – July 2019¹⁰;

⁵ [Our strategic plan 2022 - 2025 | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

⁶ [Oxfordshire Public Health | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

⁷ [Early-Help-Strategy-Update-June-2022-v2.1-1.pdf \(oscb.org.uk\)](#)

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-second-cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy/the-second-cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy-cwis2>

⁹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/523460/Working_Together_to_Promote_Active_Travel_A_briefing_for_local_authorities.pdf

¹⁰ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmtrans/1487/1487.pdf>

- d) National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's Physical Activity: Encouraging Activity in the Community – June 2019¹¹.

Procurement and Contract Overview

19. Prior to commencing the tendering process, market research was carried out and several potential bidders were contacted to discuss the COAT programme – this was an opportunity for them to ask any questions;
20. Since the total service contract value, excluding grant funding, was not expected to exceed £150k based on 3+2 years term.), the OCC procurement route comprised a single stage process advertised on Contracts Finder since the service contract value is below the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 threshold under the Light Touch Regime. It used the Council's e-tendering portal and organisations were invited to tender for the provision of the service;
21. The tender was published on the 16 June 2023 and closed on the 17 July 2023; A paper recommending the preferred supplier was presented to Public Health DLT on 22 August 2023;
22. Details of the tender assessment are set out in Exempt Annex A and it can be seen that the most economically advantageous tender is that submitted by the preferred bidder.
23. It is proposed that the preferred bidder will be notified in early September and then a mobilisation period of 3-4 weeks begins, during which time the contract is signed by both parties. This allows time for the preferred bidder to set up the service and for the current provider to transition clients across to the new provider and establish functional contacts with referral partners;
24. The contract is scheduled to begin on 1 October 2023.

Financial Implications

25. The contract is for 3 years, plus up to a further two years as an optional extension if funding is available;
26. The estimated value of the service contract was £30,000 per annum that is £90,000 over 3 years' contract term. The total value of the grant funding available for COAT projects is £170,000 per annum that is £510,000 over 3 years' term;
27. Additional £25,000 is available in year 1 of the contract to be spent on COAT projects in Banbury. This has been provided by Active Travel England;
28. The approximate total value across the 3+2 term of the contract, was estimated to be up to £1,025,000 (£150k + £870k + £25k);
29. Funding has been sourced from the public health reserve and the £600,000 required to support the first 3 years of the contract has been secured and approved for spending.

Comments checked by:

Stephen Rowles, Assistant Finance Business Partner for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Community Safety Stephen.rowles@oxfordshire.gov.uk

¹¹ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs183/resources/physical-activity-encouraging-activity-in-the-community-pdf-75545719693765>

Legal Implications

30. The council is required to comply with its Contract Procedure Rules when procuring goods, works and services. This service has been procured as a light touch regime contract below the threshold set by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
31. The grant funding to be administered on the council's behalf by the service provider does not constitute consideration to the service provider under the contract. The service provider will not be retaining any of the grant funding or benefitting from it.
32. Where any proposed grant award constitutes a subsidy, the award will need to be dealt with in accordance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

Comments checked by:

Jayne Pringle, Principal Solicitor – Contracts & Conveyancing

Jayne.pringle@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

33. The service will be contract managed within existing staffing and funded from the Public Health reserve. The Healthy Place Shaping Team will carry out the procurement process (within programme allocations already agreed), with the support of partners. Procurement and Legal staff time will also be required to complete the procurement to the tight timescales of service commencement on 1 October 2023.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

34. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and submitted to Lauren Rushen in the Policy Team (please see Annex 1).

Sustainability Implications

35. The provision of the service will contribute to the Councils Climate ambitions. The programme will work to increase uptake of active travel modes, thereby promoting modal shift and reducing the reliance on the private car. This in turn will reduce traffic congestion and benefit the health and wellbeing of the wider population through improved air quality and reduced noise pollution.

Risk Management

36. The table below outlines the risks, mitigations and benefits and opportunities

Risks and mitigations (shown in italics)	Benefits and opportunities
---	-----------------------------------

<p>One or more of the projects that the supplier provides funding for might be unsuccessful with poor uptake or negative reviews.</p> <p><i>OCC will work closely with the provider to ensure that lessons learned from previous community outreach work are integrated into future projects.</i></p>	<p>OCC Public Health can use the benefit of their experience having worked with Active Oxfordshire as the previous COAT provider to ensure that any mistakes are learned from, and opportunities are nurtured.</p>
<p>The procurement fails because potential bidders are unaware of the scope of the programme or may feel ineligible to bid</p> <p><i>OCC have established working relationships with both the previous provider and other potential providers. A market engagement exercise has shown that there are a range of providers who would be interested in delivering this contract</i></p>	<p>The benefit of conducting the market research meant that interested parties could be better prepared for the tendering process and parties who weren't previously aware of the programme could find out more about it and consider whether to bid.</p>
<p>Tight timescales to complete the procurement process</p> <p><i>We are working closely with Alex White, Contract Manager in Public Health to ensure that momentum is maintained with the procurement process</i></p>	<p>The conciseness of this procurement timetable has ensured a strong focus has been maintained on deadline and outcomes, and this will enable good time management for future procurement exercises.</p>
<p>Infrastructure schemes don't come forward with which this activity could be aligned</p> <p><i>We have regular contact with the Infrastructure Locality teams and can find out at an early stage where and when infrastructure schemes are being installed</i></p>	<p>A high level of investment has gone into new active travel infrastructure in the wake of the pandemic – this provides an opportunity to harness behaviour change in areas that have benefited from this funding.</p>
<p>Potential duplication of effort if other physical activity work is targeting the same groups</p> <p><i>We will continue to maintain strong partnership working with district councils and other external parties to ensure efforts are aligned and not duplicated</i></p>	<p>There are opportunities here to encourage greater partnership working by introducing community groups and other stakeholders to each other and enabling/promoting co-production of active travel initiatives</p>
<p>If the future provider is different to the existing one, this will potentially result in a longer mobilisation period as details will need to be handed over and new relationships formed</p> <p><i>OCC will work closely with any future provider(s) to ensure that the handover and contact from the existing provider is swift and meaningful. This has been allowed for in the mobilisation period.</i></p>	<p>The mobilisation period will include ample time for contract signing, and all relevant handover of information. This presents an opportunity for providers of similar backgrounds/aims to work collaboratively, with the help of OCC.</p>

Consultations

37. Communication has been ongoing with the following stakeholders:
- Between OCC Public Health and colleagues from Information Governance, Legal, Procurement and Finance
 - Between OCC Public Health and stakeholders include district councils and registered charities, as part of the market engagement aspect of this procurement exercise

Key Dates / Next Steps

- 38.
- 17 July: tendering process ends
 - 18 July-18 August: OCC moderation and possible interviews/clarification questions with candidates
 - 22 August: Gate 3 paper and successful provider to be approved by Public Health DLT
 - 5 September: Key Decision to be approved by Cabinet Member
 - Early September: Successful candidate notified, and 3-4 week mobilisation begins
 - 1 October: Contract begins
39. As this is a key decision and delegated decision steps will be taken to secure appropriate approvals with the council throughout the process including Finance, Procurement and Legal approval.

Annex 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Annex 2 – Exempt – tender evaluation

Ansaf Azhar
Director of Public Health and Community Safety

Contact Officer: Rosie Rowe, Head of Healthy Place Shaping
Rosie.rowe@oxfordshire.gov.uk

16 August 2023