

NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL DECISION



DECISION OF: COUNCILLOR HANNAH YOUNG. THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

WITH ADVICE FROM: THE DIRECTOR OF PLACE

Decision No: 23/24 DP 204

Subject: Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI) Commissioning Plan

Key Decision: YES

Reason:

The Commissioning Plan is for £851,000 of central government grant funding. The subsequent delivery will have effects across multiple communities.

Background:

North Somerset Council adopted our Electric Vehicle Strategy in June 2023. The strategy outlines our approach of expanding the provision of electric vehicle charging in North Somerset, making specific reference to the need for a concessionary model and the use of available central government grant funding. This commissioning plan directly works to these objectives.

Decision:

To approve the commissioning plan for Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure fund through a joint procurement with West of England Combined Authority.

Reasons:

Introduction

- North Somerset Council are part of the Revive Electric Vehicle Charging Network. This is a non-profit network which works to provide a common charging experience across the West of England. An Inter-Authority Agreement governs the network, with Bristol City Council (Bristol City Leap) leading the operational function. The network operates on an 'own & operate' model, with contracts in place with supplier for back office and hardware. This has proved a successful collaboration across the region with an emphasis on developing a shared knowledge in what remains a fledgling sector.
- Department for Transport have announced a Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure fund with the stated aims of rapidly scaling electric vehicle charging infrastructure (EVI) provision and leveraging private sector investment in the EVI. North Somerset Council have been allotted a capital sum of £851,000, through a non-competitive allocation, West of England Combined Authority have an indicative allocation of £6,644,000.

- An initial expression of interest has been submitted, which outlines our preference to be included in the first of two available tranches. This is to ensure that we align with North Somerset's Climate Emergency Declaration and subsequent Climate Emergency Action Plan, by ensuring that we can commence and delivery the rollout of electric vehicle charging at pace. The EOI also outlines the opportunity presented to work with West of England Combined Authority in order build on our existing collaboration and maximise our attractiveness to the market.
- Joint procurement is important in ensuring that we are able to attract high quality charge point operator interest. This is particularly, relevant to this commissioning as the LEVI funding allocations have been made for 80 authorities, including 9 combined authorities. Subsequently, a high volume of tender opportunities will be available to a relatively small market of suppliers in parallel.
- A concessionary model will be critical in the delivery of the high volume and pace of delivery required for EVI. North Somerset Council's limited resource and the specialist nature of electric vehicle charging are both additional reasons for the requirement for procurement to outsource the delivery of this work.
- Initial, informal early engagement with the market by both North Somerset Council and West of England Combined Authority has been conducted with the intention of informing this commissioning plan.
- The outcome of the procurement activity will seek to award two contracts via a procurement framework: a contract for on-street residential charging and a contract for off-street (car park & mobility hub) charging.
- The informal engagement has supported NSC and our West of England Partners in developing an early specification which will be further tested as soft market testing progresses following this commissioning plan. This includes but is not limited to:
 - Accessibility (PAS 1899 Standards compliance, minimising impact on footways).
 - Renewable energy generation
 - Revenue share
 - Minimum reliability (99% uptime)
 - Customer service
 - Seamless experience for end users, focused on familiar look and feel of hardware, software with excellent maintenance response times
 - Competitive user tariffs
 - End to End (design → implementation → operation → maintenance)
 - Equity of provision across the district
 - Minimum payment methods
 - Data sharing

Contract Structure

- The value of this commissioning totals £851,000 as per North Somerset Council's indicative allocation from Department for Transport. At present, we are proposing a 15-year contract. This reflects the standard advice provided by PA Consulting, the LEVI Support Body's commercial arm. This is the length that the market will likely require in order to make a contract commercially viable for the operators.
- We are proposing a 2x 12months extension to this contract.

Outline Timeline

- September – Official soft market testing
- September to October - Tender Documentation Development

- November – LEVI Application Submission
- January to March 24/25 – DfT review and Approval to Tender
- April to June 24/25 – Contract Award
- July to September 24/25 – Service Start

Options Considered:

Option 1: Direct Award to a chosen charge point operator

This was not a compliant method of procurement for this work package, as per the government's OZEV (Office for Zero Emission Vehicles) guidelines for the bid.

Option 2: Procure without West of England partners

This option has been considered, however a number of factors highlighted throughout this commissioning plan evidence that this would not deliver best value to North Somerset. Firstly, North Somerset Council funding allocation is relatively small compared with larger authorities like the West of England Combined Authority. With all authorities approaching the market within a short timeframe of each other, North Somerset alone would not be an attractive proposition and may not be able to attract high quality and high value charge point operators alone. West of England Combined Authority have been allocated the 13th highest allocation nationally and will pose a very attractive offer to the market.

Additionally, North Somerset Council have developed extensive experience of collaborative delivery within electric vehicle charging, through the Revive network. Continuing this collaborative approach ensures consistency across the region for users and retention of a great level of shared knowledge in what remains a relatively new market.

Finally, the resource intensity of this work package is noted as being too great in this area of work for North Somerset Council to be able to satisfy the capacity required without working with officers in our neighbouring Tier 1 authority. This ensures a lighter touch approach for other internal teams, such as highways electrical and engineering.

Option 3: Joint procurement and delivery with West of England Authorities – Preferred option

This option is considered the most advantageous for North Somerset Council. Collaboration between Tier 1 authorities is actively encouraged by the Department for Transport for LEVI applications. In contrast to Option 2, joint procurement will create the most attractive approach to the market that North Somerset Council can achieve to maximise potential leverage from the private sector.

This approach will also continue the excellent working relationship and shared knowledge that has been developed across the West of England through the Revive Network. This element also maximises available resource in development of the tender across the authorities, including new electric vehicle commercial resource recently appointed at WECA.

LEVI Support Body guidance including Heads of Terms as well as DfT's rigorous application process will provide additional levels of support to the joint procurement

exercise. Further, North Somerset Council will operate as S151 for our own allocation, which will mean we can ensure that the funds allocated to North Somerset are protected for delivery of infrastructure within the district.

Financial Implications:

Costs:

See below

Funding:

North Somerset Council have received an allocation of LEVI Capability funding. This is to be received in three allocations. 2022/23 £51,850, 2023/24 £123,410, 2024/25 £123,410. This funding is specifically intended to support the delivery of a LEVI application and the initial set up of the service alongside a chosen operator. These funds have been identified to cover, engineering, electrical, legal and commercial support (this may include WECA's commercial team), alongside supporting a Sustainable Travel and Road Safety team member to coordinate the work for the council.

North Somerset Council have been allocated £851,000 through the capital element of the LEVI Fund. The chosen operator will be responsible for the ongoing costs associated with operating the network due to the concessionary nature of this commissioning. However, should subsequent resource be required internally, for example for site approvals this will be funded through the revenue share, which will be required as outlined as part of the contract. Soft market engagement will further inform the indicative revenue share which can be expected annually.

Legal Powers and Implications:

NA

Climate Change and Environmental Implications:

Transport accounts for 40% of North Somerset's carbon footprint. In order to address these emissions North Somerset Council are working to introduce interventions throughout the transport travel hierarchy. Notably, this includes working to develop a network across the district of improved provision for walking and wheeling, alongside a step change in the public transport network. Alongside these modes, electric vehicles also have a significant role to play in reducing the emissions of transport in our district. Electric vehicles emit no tailpipe emissions and notably have reduced brake wear.

The Committee for Climate Change (CCC) Surface Transport Balanced Pathway requires 97% of the UK fleet to be electric by 2030. Whilst the removal of tail pipe emissions is a considerable emissions reduction, there are further environmental gains to be made as the energy generation sector decarbonises in parallel; renewable energy production in the UK currently accounts for approximately 48% of overall generation.

This commissioning will enable a significant increase in the charging infrastructure, a factor which is commonly referenced as a barrier to mass adoption of electric vehicles and unlocking the subsequent emissions reductions. As of June 2023, 17.9% of all new vehicle sales were battery electric vehicles.

Consultation:

This plan has been subject to Transport and Highways Scrutiny (04/09/23). The North Somerset Electric Vehicle Strategy which sets out the intention to pursue a concessionary approach to infrastructure delivery for electric vehicles went through a full consultation process.

Early engagement with the market and with the LEVI support body has also been ongoing since the announcement of LEVI funding. This has been with the intention of understanding the market's interest in working with North Somerset and informing later procurement specifications.

Risk Management:

The risk register for this work has not highlighted any 'High' residual scores. Inherent risk of North Somerset Council interests not being given equal impetus to those of our neighbouring authorities was identified at the early stages of this work as being 'High' risk, however, work has been already undertaken to mitigate this risk. These have included asserting that North Somerset Council will retain S151 for our allocated funds, ensuring our Tier 1 status is preserved, operating in equal collaboration with our WECA partners. These actions have ensured that the residual risk has been reduced to that of 'Med/High'.

Equality Implications:

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? Yes

The LEVI fund gives us the opportunity to reduce barriers to electric vehicle uptake for those with protected characteristics. For people on low income, this funding will support the implementation expansion of the public network, for those living in flats or other housing types without a private driveway this is important in providing local charging.

Moving forward, designs will work to incorporate PAS1899, which provide a set of accessibility standards for electric vehicle charging. We will also work to not inhibit walking and wheeling in charging locations. This is an important step in reducing barriers for disabled users. Notably, Motability (Motability Operations Ltd) now provide plug-in hybrid and battery electric vehicles as part of their wheelchair accessible vehicle scheme offering and as such require charging provision.

Corporate Implications:

The Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund aligns with a number of strands within our corporate aspirations. Principally, the council's climate and transport decarbonisation ambitions will reflect in our approach to LEVI and identifying a suitable concessionaire for the work. Throughout the process we will be ensuring that we follow an open and fair approach to procurement.

This work will follow the Project Management Office's (PMO) suite of documentation to ensure that correct process is followed internally. Consequently, overall senior responsibility for budgets will be identified and regular reporting provided. Governance will also be implemented between the two Tier 1 authorities to preserve the interests of North Somerset. A progressive assurance model will be used to ensure that North Somerset

maintain oversight of West of England Combined Authority's procurement activity and are able to review all documentation throughout the project lifecycle.

Appendices:

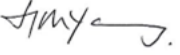
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Background Papers:

none

Signatories:

Decision Maker(s):

Signed:  The Executive Member for Highways and Transport

Date: 29 September 2023

With Advice From:

Signed:  Director of Place

Date: 29 September 2023