

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 7 April 2016

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Community and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Transportation

**SUBJECT:** Mersey Gateway Bridge Project – Revised Department for Transport Funding Letter

**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1. To seek approval for the Department for Transport's (DfT) Revised Funding Letter in respect of the Mersey Gateway Bridge Project, which now incorporates the improved Local User Discount Scheme.

**2. RECOMMENDED: That;**

- (i) The Department for Transport's Revised Funding Letter in respect of the Mersey Gateway Bridge Project, be approved.**
- (ii) The Operational Director, Finance be authorised to certify the Department for Transport's Revised Funding Letter on behalf of the Council, as the Section 151 Officer.**

**3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 On 23 January 2014 the Mersey Gateway Executive Board approved a number of documents and the process which took the Mersey Gateway Bridge Project through to Financial Close.
- 3.2 These included providing a delegation to the Operational Director, Finance as the Council's Section 151 Officer, to authorise such written confirmations as required by the Department for Transport's Funding Letter.
- 3.3 On 25<sup>th</sup> July 2014 the Chancellor announced that the Government would provide additional funding to improve the Local User Discount Scheme. This would enable Halton residents to undertake unlimited journeys at no cost (apart from an annual registration fee) across the Mersey Gateway Bridge.
- 3.4 On behalf of the Council, the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board Limited has undertaken negotiations with the Department for Transport, regarding the revised terms and conditions of the Government's additional funding offer following the Chancellor's announcement.
- 3.5 As a result of these negotiations, the Department for Transport have provided a Revised Funding Letter which is presented in the Appendix.

- 3.6 Prior to the Chancellor's announcement, the Local User Discount Scheme would have provided Halton residents with up to 300 journeys per year per vehicle across the Mersey Gateway Bridge, at no cost apart from an annual registration fee. The cost of these journeys will be funded from resources which will be available to the Council.
- 3.7 The improved Local User Discount Scheme will now provide Halton residents with unlimited journeys across the Mersey Gateway Bridge, at no cost apart from an annual registration fee.
- 3.8 The cost of these journeys will be part-funded by the Council, up to the estimated cost of 300 journeys per vehicle per year. The additional cost of the actual number of journeys made compared with the estimated cost had they been limited to 300 per year, will be funded by a new Extended Discount Scheme Grant.
- 3.9 The Department for Transport require the Operational Director, Finance as the Section 151 Officer, to certify the Revised Funding Letter, as confirmation that the Council accepts the revised terms and conditions contained within the Letter.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Mersey Gateway Bridge project is a key priority for the Council, which will deliver benefits locally and across the wider region.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The financial implications of the Department for Transport's Revised Funding Letter are as set out in the Appendix.

### **6. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

#### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

Mersey Gateway provides an opportunity to improve accessibility to services, education and employment for all.

#### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

Over 500 construction jobs will be required for Mersey Gateway and arrangements have been put in place to ensure the local community has access to these job opportunities. In the longer term, several thousand jobs are forecast to be created in the sub-region due to the wider economic impact of the project.

#### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Mersey Gateway provides an opportunity to improve accessibility to services, education and employment for all, including improved cycling and walking facilities.

#### 6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The project will produce road safety benefits for road users including improved cycling and walking facilities.

#### 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The Mersey Gateway Bridge project is a priority project within the Urban Renewal Programme.

### 7. **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 A full risk register is maintained and monitored by the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board Limited as part of the ongoing project management system.

### 8. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The Mersey Gateway Bridge Project provides an opportunity to improve accessibility to services, education and employment for all.

### 9. **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Mersey Gateway Bridge Project DfT Funding Letter and Annexes	Municipal Building Kingsway Widnes	Ed Dawson