

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT – FIRST SIX MONTH OPERATION REPORT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members to consider the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on the development of the Community Transport and Social Car Scheme, in its first six months of operation. The Scheme is operated by Rayleigh Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Service (RAVS) with support from the Council and other statutory bodies.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Scheme was introduced in October 2003, to provide a transport service to special groups within the District, who are unable to access public transport. It offers a door-to-door service to its members for a minimal fee.
- 2.2 The scheme operates one 16-seater wheelchair accessible minibus with 2 part-time drivers and 5 social car drivers.
- 2.3 The social cars are used on occasions when the bus is fully booked. However, it is expected that they will be used on a more regular basis, when bookings increase or when a member wishes to travel on a longer journey outside of the Rochford District.

3 OPERATION

- 3.1 Members have come to rely on the Community Transport Scheme for visits to the hospital or doctors, shopping trips and social events. Group members book the vehicle for day trips to Southend or just to the supermarket to get their weekly shopping.
- 3.2 Members have praised the scheme, saying it has given them their independence back. One user claimed it was the first time he had been out of the house, on his own, for over 2 years.
- 3.3 The Scheme clearly offers great benefits to its members and it is therefore essential to secure funding for its future development.

4 TARGETS

- 4.1 Targets were set for the scheme to achieve 100 members and complete 300 journeys per month in its first 6 months of operation (by 1 April 2004).

- 4.2 Membership targets were achieved far sooner than expected and by 1 April 2004 the scheme already had 171 members and 7 group members. The number of journeys undertaken in a month reached the target of 300.
- 4.3 Further targets were set for the scheme's first anniversary, on 6 October 2004, for 150 members, which has already been exceeded and 500 journeys per month, which has not been reached, but is achievable.

5 FUNDING

- 5.1 The scheme currently relies on funding, donations, membership fees and journey costs to keep it operating. Funding for 2004/5 included £18000 from the Council although this was just recycled grant from Essex County Council. Donations were also received from Parish Councils amounting to £650. This has proved to be insufficient for the continued running of the scheme and the Head of Service will be reporting to the Policy and Finance Committee on future funding arrangements.
- 5.2 The Community Transport and Social Car Scheme will continue to promote its services to ensure that all eligible residents are aware of the scheme and that their transport needs are being met. If the vehicle is being used to its full capacity, the income for journeys will assist with the costs of running the scheme.

6 RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Operational Risk

It is the responsibility of the Community Transport Scheme to ensure that its members feel safe when booking a journey and that the vehicles used are MoT'd, taxed and insured.

6.2 Resource Risk

The scheme currently has a very limited impact on the Council's resources. The Transportation Manager attends regular progress meetings and the grant received from Essex County Council is merely passed on to RAVS without any top-up. If funding continues to be limited, it will impede on the ability of the project to develop and to expand the services provided.

6.3 Reputation Risk

Community Transport schemes operate successfully in other Local Authorities, providing valuable transportation to residents. It is therefore important that the scheme continues to be successful within the Rochford District.

6.4 Regulatory Risk

All appropriate controls on vehicles are met.

6.5 Third Party Risk

There is no risk to the Council

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Community Transport Scheme is jointly funded by Rochford District Council, Essex County Council and from income generated from fees and charges. Proposals are that the project should swiftly move to a Community Transport Trust with a Management Board. The service level agreement provides for this to happen in 2004/05. However, both the Council and RAVS would want to see the scheme financially solvent before handover.

8 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That the development of the Community Transport and Social Car Scheme in its first six months of operation be noted. (HRHM)

Steve Clarkson

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Background Papers:

None

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