
TAXI VOUCHER SCHEME

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the operation of the Taxi Voucher Scheme.
- 1.2 The scheme is a Discretionary Service

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The scheme was introduced on 1st April 2002 as a replacement for the Dial-a-Ride service, to respond to the needs of special groups within the community who are unable to use conventional forms of public transport. It provides users with a number of vouchers, in £2.00 denominations, which can be surrendered as part or full payment for fares incurred whilst using Taxis licensed in the Rochford District.
- 2.2 The admission criteria for the scheme are:

Applicants must be resident in the Rochford District.

Applicants must be in receipt of at least one of the following:

- Attendance Allowance (higher level)
- Disability Living Allowance (mobility component)
- War Pension (mobility supplement)

or be blind or partially sighted.

Confirmation is required that the applicant is unable to use conventional forms of public transport and does not have a vehicle of their own.

- 2.3 Wheelchair users receive an additional voucher allocation of 50%.
- 2.4 Successful applicants pay a £5.00 annual registration fee.
- 2.5 The budget allocation for 2004/05 is £90,000, plus unused funds from 2003/04 of £29,349, totalling £119,349, and includes a contribution from Essex County Council of £21,000 for this financial year.
- 2.6 The Essex County Council contribution is subject to a minimum of there being 80 users and 4000 journeys per annum and these conditions have been met and exceeded.
- 2.7 Members determine the amount of the quarterly voucher issue.

3 SCHEME USAGE

- 3.1 The number of voucher recipients has continued to grow since the scheme's introduction, and the number of users as at 1 November 2004 was 366 Non-wheelchair users, 68 Wheelchair users, totalling 434 users.
- 3.2 Vouchers are issued quarterly and are valid for three months. New applicants join the scheme on the first day of each month and receive an apportioned number of vouchers, which are valid until the next quarter date. Issues to 1 November 2004 are shown below:

Quarter Commencing	Value per Non-Wheelchair user	Value per wheelchair user	Total value
1 st Quarter	£72	£108	£31,368.00
2 nd Quarter	£72	£108	£32,340.00
3 rd Quarter	£72	£108	£34,104.00
Total			£97,812.00

- 3.3 Voucher redemption's currently total £44,591.00. A redemption rate of about 70%, but this is an increasing trend and in 2005/6 is likely to be around 80%.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The above usage statistics together with comments from the Customer Survey (reported to the Environmental Services Committee on 7 November 2002) would indicate that the objectives of the scheme are being satisfied.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Projections indicate that if the standard quarterly issue is maintained at 36 vouchers (£72) with Wheelchair users receiving 54 vouchers (£108), until 31 March 2006, the Council's budgetary provision will need to be increased from £69,000 to £85,000 (exclusive of any contribution from Essex County Council).
- 5.2 Alternatively, if the standard quarterly issue were reduced to 30 vouchers (£60) with Wheelchair users receiving 45 vouchers (£90), the current provision would result in a reserve of £4,000. This could be rolled over into the following year.

6 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That the current number and value of vouchers issued be maintained.
- (2) That budgetary provision of £106,000 (including an estimated contribution from Essex County Council of £21,000) be set for the 2005/2006 financial year.
- (3) That, as part of Environmental Services Committee's overall responsibility for the Taxi Voucher Scheme, a further report be prepared after the completion of 3 full years operation of the scheme.

Steve Clarkson

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Background Papers:-

None

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