

TAXI VOUCHER SCHEME

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the performance of the Taxi Voucher Scheme after the first year of operation.
- 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 18 years of age or over.

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 2002/03 was £33,000, plus a contribution from Essex County Council of £20,000, totalling £53,000.
- 2.6 The Essex County Council contribution is subject to a minimum of there being 80 users and 4000 journeys per annum.
- 2.7 Members determine the amount of the quarterly voucher issue.

3 SCHEME USAGE

3.1 The number of voucher recipients has grown since the scheme's introduction, and is shown in the following table:

As at	Non-wheelchair users	Wheelchair users	Total Users	Increase
1 April 2002	93	23	116	
1 May 2002	157	36	193	77
1 June 2002	172	42	214	21
1 July 2002	191	49	240	26
1 August 2002	206	50	256	16
1 September 2002	214	52	266	10
1 October 2002	225	55	280	14
1 November 2002	237	57	294	14
1 December 2002	249	59	308	14
1 January 2003	254	59	313	5
1 February 2003	263	59	322	9
1 March 2003	263	59	322	0
1 April 2003	271	59	330	8

3.2 Vouchers are issued quarterly and are valid for three months. The total value of vouchers issued are as follows:

Quarter Commencing	Value per Non-Wheelchair user	Value per wheelchair user	Total Non-wheelchair user	Total wheelchair user	Total value
1 April 2002	£120	£180	£16,718.00	£ 5,908.00	£22,626.00
1 July 2002	£48	£72	£9,688.00	£3,552.00	£13,240.00
1 October 2002	£48	£72	£11,376.00	£4,104.00	£15,480.00
1 January 2003	£48	£72	£12,576.00	£4,296.00	£16,872.00
Total			£37,206.00	£13,420.00	£68,218.00

3.3 Members will of course note from the above table, that the total value of vouchers issued is in excess of the budget. However, not all vouchers are used within their expiry date, which allows the value of unused vouchers to be returned to the scheme. Vouchers to the value of £49,358.00 have been redeemed by the taxis within the District. This leaves a balance of £3,642.00, which has been carried forward to 2003/2004.

3.4 During the year a total of 7,708 journeys have been recorded, representing an average of 23.94 journeys per user with an average of £6.40 per journey.

4 CONCLUSIONS

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

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The financial provision for the scheme in 2003/04, within the overall budget, is £75,000. In addition, the value of unused budget from 2002/03 of £3,642.00 is available, totalling £78,642.00. Given the current trend in the growth of the number of users qualifying for the scheme, it is estimated that by April 2004 there will be 70 wheelchair users and 348 non-wheelchair users. Assuming a quarterly allocation of £48 for a non wheelchair user, and that the number of new users joining the scheme has an even distribution throughout the year, the calculation for the budget in respect of 2003/2004 would be:

348 users at £48 per quarter	£59,424
70 users at £72 per quarter	£18,576
Total issue of vouchers	<u>£78,000</u>
Current Provision	<u>£78,642</u>

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That the report be noted and a further report be prepared after 18 months operation of the scheme.

Steve Clarkson

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Background Papers:

None

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