

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT – REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 A request for additional funding from Rayleigh and Rochford Association for Voluntary Services in order to continue to run the Community Transport facility was originally considered by Policy and Finance Committee on 8 July but was referred to this Committee for scrutiny.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In October 2003 the Community Transport project was launched to provide a transport service for special groups within the District who are unable to use or access conventional forms of public transport. It offers a door-to-door service to its members for a minimal fee.
- 2.2 The scheme operates a “flexible seating” 16-seater wheelchair friendly minibus and also has access to 5 volunteer drivers under a ‘social car’ arrangement. Social cars are used when the minibus is fully booked, or for longer journeys which would tie-up the minibus to the detriment of other users. The scheme is attempting to encourage more social car drivers when membership expands.
- 2.3 The report on the first six months performance of the scheme was considered by Environmental Services Committee on 6 July when Members were pleased to note the success of the scheme and that all targets set by Essex County Council had been met. It was, however, noted that there was still spare capacity for additional journeys.
- 2.4 In June 2003 Environmental Services Committee considered a report on the project and, conscious of the need to keep Council involvement to a minimum, agreed that a Community Transport Scheme be established initially by working in partnership with RAVS who should work towards setting up a Community Transport Trust by October 2004. Councillor T Livings was nominated to the Board of Trustees, once established, as the Council’s representative.
- 2.5 The Committee also agreed to make a grant of £10,000 to RAVS for 2003/4 (six months) to establish the provision of Community Transport and that this funding be met by grant from Essex County Council (ECC). This meant that there was no impact on our core budget. In the 2004/5 budget £18,000 was earmarked for Community Transport and was paid over in April 2004. Again, this was grant money received from Essex County Council.

3 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Head of Service and Transportation Manager met with the RAVS Transport Co-Ordinator in June to discuss progress and finances, as it was apparent that assumptions in the original business plan were not representative of the emerging position.
- 3.2 Salary and accommodation costs have increased and membership and fare income reduced. The revised budget forecast shown as appendix 1 represents the current projections.
- 3.3 With the amended business plan it is an opportune time for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at the potential for the medium and long term future of the project before deciding any short term financial support.
- 3.4 The revised budget at appendix 1 shows a grant funding requirement of £33,000 - £35,000. At the moment the main funding body is Essex County Council. In the absence of service generated income the future of this funding will obviously be critical to the project.

4 ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 To consider the way forward the following issues may assist Members in formulating questions: -
- The current estimate is that the likely maximum number of active members within the scheme will be around 300. Is this sufficient to use the vehicle at optimum capacity. If not, can it be increased and what are the financial implications.
 - What is the actual pattern of usage by active members
 - This report shows the main funding body is Essex County Council. What is the future policy of Essex County Council regarding this scheme and what are their future funding proposals.
 - What other funding is available to the scheme. Areas such as Trusts, commercial funding, Parish Councils and other public bodies.
 - What is the progress in setting up the Community Transport Trust
 - If Members agree that there is a viable and valued scheme what funding should be available from the District Council as planned support over say 3 years
 - What short term funding is required

- 4.2 The RAVS Transport Co-ordinator, Tony Ashley will attend the meeting to answer any Member queries.

5 RECOMMENDATION

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

- (1) To consider the elements of the current scheme and consider the Future projections of the scheme
- (2) To consider any recommendations for any planned support by Rochford District Council
- (3) To consider any short term funding for the scheme

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Background Papers:

None

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Appendix 1

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

BUDGET FORECAST FOR 2004/5

1	<u>Expenditure</u>	£	£
	Salaries	30,000	
	Fuel	4,800	
	Insurance	1,600	
	Vehicle Servicing	1,500	
	Office Accommodation and Stationary	<u>4,000</u>	
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE		41,900
2	<u>Income</u>		
	Balance b/f from 2003/4	2,400	
	Grant from Rochford District Council	18,000	
	Membership Fees	1,000	
	Fare Income	<u>5,000</u>	
	TOTAL INCOME		<u>26,400</u>
	<u>EXCESS OF EXPENDITURE</u>		<u>15,500</u>