

## **COMMUNITY TRANSPORT – FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

### **1       SUMMARY**

- 1.1    Members to consider the joint report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management and the Corporate Policy Manager on the second phase of the partnership arrangement with Essex County Council (ECC) to develop and expand on community transport in the District.

### **2       INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1    In February 2002, the Council signed a partnership agreement with Essex County Council to jointly fund and develop community transport across the District. The partnership sprang from the decision to withdraw from the South East Essex Dial-a-Ride (SEEDAR) Partnership and secure equal or better funding from the County Council to enable Rochford District Council to continue to provide transport for those with special needs. In 2002/3 ECC provided £34,532. Around £10,000 of this was earmarked to help develop a Community Transport Strategy and to start to roll out the second phase of the agreement which was the provision of either a social car scheme or minibus brokerage service.

### **3       TAXI VOUCHER SCHEME**

- 3.1    The first phase was the introduction of the taxi voucher scheme, which came into being on 1 April 2002. ECC Officers have watched very closely how this scheme developed as they felt it might be the way forward for other substitute transport services across Essex. A report on the first full year's operation of Taxi Vouchers appears elsewhere on this Agenda. It was clear at the six-month review period (October 2002) that the Council would meet its County-set targets, both in terms of passenger membership and journeys.
- 3.2    Essex County Council passenger Transportation Officers were pleased with progress and, together with the Portfolio Holder for Transportation, decided to reward Rochford's success with the purchase of a wheelchair accessible mini-bus for the further provision of community transport in the District. The cash value of the vehicle is around £38,000. The vehicle arrived mid-May and has been stored on Council premises.

### **4       COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SCHEMES**

- 4.1    In March the Head of Service circulated to all existing Members a copy of a 20 page report on Community Transport drafted by the Community Planning Officer. An executive summary of this report is reproduced at Appendix 2. New Members of Council have recently received their copy and a copy has also been placed in the Members' Library for reference.

- 4.2 The most successful Community Transport Schemes (CTS) in Essex are those set up and part-funded by Local Authorities but run by voluntary organisations. These have been visited and assessed so that Rochford can now draw upon the experience and practices of these schemes.
- 4.3 Social car schemes are a formalised system of 'lift-giving' where volunteer drivers use their own vehicles to provide a service for individuals for a variety of reasons. It is useful for those people who can access a car but, perhaps, cannot access public transport.
- 4.4 The advantages of social car schemes are:-
- The passenger can request transport for the time that it is needed.
  - A co-ordinator will accept a booking for an agreed time at which he/she knows that transport is available.
  - A volunteer driver will provide the transport – usually using the driver's own car.
  - Working through the co-ordinator distances the client from the lift-giver. The existence of an intermediary saves the possible embarrassment with informal lift giving.
  - A fair payment can be made for the journey and thus the passenger is not "receiving charity" and the driver is reimbursed for the costs incurred.
  - There is a high degree of certainty that the journey will be completed safely and at a predictable time.
- 4.5 The operation is non-profit making and no individual driver makes a profit from taking part. This will ensure the scheme is outside the legislation governing Public Service Vehicle, Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Operations. It is therefore proposed to operate the mini-bus along the lines of a 'social car' until there are sufficient volunteer drivers and cars in the scheme, at which time the mini-bus can be transferred to a brokerage scheme.

## **5 ELIGIBILITY**

- 5.1 The scheme is for residents of the Rochford District who are unable to access existing conventional public transport. It may be that they have restricted mobility, live in an isolated area or that their transport needs are not met by existing timetables.

Some form of criteria should be set, for example:

- People who have restricted mobility
  - People who live in isolated areas not served by public transport
  - Those whose transport needs are not met by existing timetables
  - Those who are temporarily unable to access public transport.
- 5.2 It would be preferable that the criteria was managed in a flexible manner, and that eligibility for membership was decided by the Co-ordinator of the scheme

on an individual basis. For example, it may be that a person who would not normally meet the criteria is suddenly without a car or unable to drive or access public transport through a temporary disability such as a broken leg – such people should not be disadvantaged.

- 5.3 Schemes are often seen as catering for older and disabled people, though it is clear that there is a need in Rochford for people of all ages to have greater access to transport. This might include young adults or parents with young children who might otherwise feel isolated and excluded. However, it is important that system abuse prevalent in the Dial-a-Ride regime should not be allowed in the social car scheme. It is therefore proposed to limit journeys to no more than six per week (or three return journeys)

## 6 NEGOTIATIONS WITH RAVS

- 6.1 Conscious of the need to keep Council involvement to a minimum, the Head of Service and Corporate Policy Manager opened discussions with Rochford Association for Voluntary Services who undertook a Community Transport Needs Analysis during 2002. The results of that study are also available to Members in the Library at the Civic Suite.
- 6.2 RAVS have also engaged the services of a Transport Co-ordinator who undertook the principal part of the needs study. It therefore seemed sensible to take advantage of this work and the expertise gained by the Co-ordinator in undertaking the study.
- 6.3 Subject to Member approval it is proposed that the Council enter into an agreement with RAVS to set up and run a Community Transport Scheme for the Rochford District. RAVS could run the scheme initially but within a 12 – month period a properly constituted Trust ought to be established. Although the Council's Transportation Manager will maintain management responsibility for the delivery of a CT scheme, Members may wish to have Councillor representation on the Board.

## 7 FINANCE AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Generally, RAVS (and then the CT Trust) ought to have the freedom to set their own fees and charges to establish a cost neutral service. However, there is a financial model for the County and it seems sensible to keep to this to remain consistent. These are:-
- Individual Membership £5.00 pa  
Mileage rate £1.50 for first 5 miles then 40p per mile.
  - Group Membership (for minibus) £10.00 pa  
Mileage rate £15.00 for first 5 miles then £4.00 per mile.
- 7.2 On the basis of the foregoing it is envisaged that the mini-bus could be managed in the same way as a social car until a fleet of volunteer drivers and vehicles is established for a full Social Car Scheme.

- 7.3 Volunteer drivers are paid for the 'dead mileage' incurred in travelling to the pick-up point and it is envisaged that this would be covered by the small surpluses shown on Appendix 1.
- 7.4 As the Taxi Voucher Scheme exceeded target membership in 2002/3, Members increased the Council's contribution in the current budget to £60,000 to meet increase demand. This is in addition to the contribution from ECC. It is estimated that the mid-year scheme membership will plateau around 400 members with an annual demand for vouchers of £75,000 in total. Where vouchers are unused by the expiry date their value is 'recycled' for future quarterly issues. Accordingly, the Council has an unallocated amount of £20,600 to roll out the Social Car Scheme and to develop Community Transport further. This is illustrated on Appendix 3.
- 7.5 The Head of Service is recommending that the Council commits £10,000 p.a. of the grant received from ECC for the next three years in order to help RAVS, and latterly the Trust, establish itself. This Committee may, therefore, agree the funding for 2003/4 and to register its bid for inclusion in the 2004/5 Budget Strategy for consideration along with other Budget submissions.

## **8 SUMMARY**

- 8.1 By working in partnership with an organisation like RAVS (or a CT Trust established by RAVS) the Council will be able to discharge its commitment to deliver Community Transport in the Rochford District with a minimum of officer involvement. There might also be a possibility of attracting additional funding from organisations such as the Rural Community Council of Essex for RAVS or the Trust

## **9 RECOMMENDATION**

- 9.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That a Community Transport Scheme for the Rochford District be established initially by working in partnership with RAVS who should set up a Community Transport Trust within 12 months.
  - (2) That a grant of £10,000 for 2003/4 be made to RAVS to establish the provision of Community Transport. This to be funded from the grant from ECC.
  - (3) That this Committee registers a bid for the 2004/5 Budget so that this level of funding be guaranteed for a further two years beyond 2003/4.
  - (4) That this Committee nominates a Member to the Trust Board.
  - (5) That the minibus be transferred into the ownership of RAVS for scheme administration

S J Clarkson

Head of Revenue and Housing Management

---

**Background Papers:**

ECC Partnership Agreement

For further information please contact S J Clarkson on:-

Tel:-            01702 318005

E-Mail:-       [steve.clarkson@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:steve.clarkson@rochford.gov.uk)

APPENDIX 1

**Community Transport – Business Plan**

	Set-up Cost	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Revenue Cost	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year Revenue Cost	Subsequent Years
<b><u>Office Equipment</u></b>	£	£	£	£
PC & Printer	1000	-	-	-
Consumables	-	500	500	500
Phone/fax	200	-	-	-
Phone/fax line installation	120	-	-	-
Phone/fax rental	-	180	180	180
Notice Board	180	-	-	-
<b><u>Scheme Costs</u></b>				
Launch	300	-	-	-
Publicity	-	500	250	100
Recruitment advertising	250	100	100	100
C T Association Membership	-	300	300	300
<b><u>Staff Costs</u></b>				
Co-ordinator (inc on cost) (based on 30 hpw)		14,500	14,500	14,500
Drivers (inc on cost) (based on 30hpw)		7500	7500	7500
MIDAS training	100	-	-	-
MIDAS Trainer training	350	-	-	(£400 in year 4)
Equipment & uniforms	300	150	150	150
<b><u>Vehicle Costs</u></b>				
Road Fund Licence	-	110	110	110
Insurance	-	1500	900	900
Running costs based on 10500mls pa	-	6000	7000	7000
VI & tail-lift tests	-	-	80	80
Section 19 vehicle permit	-	10	-	-
Depreciation (over 7 yrs)		6000	6000	6000
Breakdown rescue	-	-	200	200
	2,800	37,350	37,770	37,620

	Set-up Cost	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Revenue Cost	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year Revenue Cost	Subsequent Years
<b><u>Income</u></b>				
Funds earmarked from RAVS	-	10,000	10,000	10,000
Recommended contribution from RDC	2800	7200	10,000	10,000
Membership fees				
- Individual @ £5	-	1500	2000	2000
- Groups @ £10	-	300	400	400
Journey Fees (based on 900 mls per month @ £1.50 per trip carrying an average of six passengers)	-	19400	19400	19400
	2800	38400	41800	41800
Surplus	-	1050	4030	4180
<b><u>NB</u></b> These costs are associated with scheme administration and mini-bus use only. Social car users settle their fare direct with the driver				

**Community Transport – Social Car Schemes****Appendix 2****Summary**

Research that has been carried out recently within the Rochford District which has shown that there is demand for a Community Transport Scheme for the District to cover all age ranges. A partnership made up of Rochford District Council, Essex County Council, Rochford Association for Voluntary Service, StAR Partnership, the Primary Care Trust and Community representatives was formed last year to consider the way forward for the District.

There are a variety of forms of Community Transport that are in place in other areas, the most common are social car schemes, dial-a-ride and brokerage. This report was drawn up as a result of research carried out into these different types of Community Transport and concentrates on the Social Car option.

Established Community Transport Schemes throughout Essex were visited and best practice has been drawn from each of them and input into the report. Advice has also been drawn from the Community Transport Team from Essex County Council and the Rural Transport Partnership arm of the Rural Community Council of Essex.

A Social Car scheme is a non-profit making, formalised system of “lift-giving”, where volunteer drivers are recruited to drive their own cars to provide a service to members of the scheme. The report discusses how it works and its benefits to the Community. It suggests the way forward for Rochford to develop a scheme to benefit a wide range of residents of the District. Consideration is given as to what would be needed to set up a scheme in the area, the roles of those involved and suggestions are made as to the best way that a social car scheme could be implemented based on the experience of others.

Key considerations that are drawn are that some criteria need to be set for membership to the scheme, a paid co-ordinator should be employed to run the scheme and that additional funding would need to be sought in order for the scheme to be successful.

A Community Transport scheme would be a positive move to improve the quality of life of those residents who are currently unable to get out and about due to transport restrictions.

The full report has been circulated to all Members of Council and a further copy placed in the Members Library in the Civic Suite



APPENDIX 3

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Budget for 2003/4

	£
Rochford District Council Contribution	60,000
Essex County Council Contribution	<u>35,600</u> 95,600
Reserved for the issue of Taxi Vouchers	<u>75,000</u> 20,600
Earmarked for scheme development in 2003/4	<u>10,000</u>
Unallocated amount	<u><b>10,600</b></u>