

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT – LONGER-TERM FUNDING

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members to finalise the longer-term funding for the Community Transport project and encourage the establishment of a Community Transport Trust. This is the end of the scrutiny process following three committee meetings and two site visits.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In March 2002 the Council entered into a three-year agreement with Essex County Council (ECC) for the provision of a range of community transport options to meet the needs of those who had difficulty accessing or using conventional forms of public transport. ECC provided funding for the projects which were planned over a three-year timescale:

2002/3	Taxi Voucher Scheme
2003/4	Community Mini Bus and Social Car
2004/5	Minibus Brokerage Scheme

With the late start of the Community Mini Bus Project (October 2003) it was agreed with ECC to defer work on the Brokerage Scheme.

- 2.2 Funding has been extended by ECC into 2005/6 in order to co-ordinate projects with the 2006 Local Transport Plan and the County have confirmed continued funding. The exact amount will not be known until early in April but current indications are that it should be no less advantageous than 2004/5 funding (£61,402).

Community Transport (CT) Trust

- 2.3 Initially Rochford and Rayleigh Association for Voluntary Services (RAVS) managed the scheme but the Service Level Agreement saw a move to a CT Trust within an 18-24 month period. The Council have nominated Councillor T Livings as one of the trustees.
- 2.4 The Policy and Finance Committee met on 8 July 2004 and Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 16 September and 9 December 2004 to consider financial support and a constitutional model for the new trust and to this end visited two CT schemes operating in Basildon and Chelmsford. The model operated in Chelmsford seemed better suited to the nature and clientele of the Rochford District and this has been conveyed to RAVS, who agree.
- 2.5 A model Constitution, Memorandum and Articles of Association have been obtained from Chelmsford Community Transport Ltd. and are attached for

consideration (Appendix 1). The Community Transport Association provide a registration pack which generally covers all aspects of setting up and running a CT Scheme. This has been obtained and the content discussed with RAVS. It is now appropriate to give encouragement to RAVS to constitute a Trust for Rochford.

- 2.6 Once established, the Trust will achieve charitable status with all the attendant benefits.
- 2.7 It will be for the Trust to appoint their own trustees and it is hoped that the right calibre of volunteer will be recruited.

Financial Support

- 2.8 As indicated above, the Council receive funding for community transport from Essex County Council. The funds are distributed on a formula basis explained by the Head of Service at an earlier meeting. 2004/5 funding is illustrated below:

	£
Basildon	104,177
Braintree	91,042
Brentwood	59,122
Castle Point	52,701
Chelmsford	96,290
Colchester	110,635
Epping	71,045
Harlow	83,848
Maldon	60,457
Rochford	61,402
Tendring	129,729
Uttlesford	85,001
Central Training	1,826
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	1,007,275

- 2.9 The complex formulae basis was explained at an earlier meeting when the Head of Service demonstrated that by meeting the County requirements, above inflation annual increases have been achieved.
- 2.10 All Essex authorities top-up the grant received from County except Rochford. However, Rochford partially funds from its own resources the very successful taxi voucher scheme. In 2004/5 funding was:

	Taxi Vouchers £	Community Transport £
Essex County Council	21,000	33,500
Rochford District Council	<u>69,000</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>90,000</u>	<u>33,500</u>

- 2.11 The Council also hold £6,902 of the £61,402 in reserve for the development of a vehicle brokerage scheme but it is unlikely that this will be used for this purpose as the demands of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement have delayed this project. Members may wish to consider the allocation of this to Community Transport.
- 2.12 The Council have earmarked £42,000 in the 2005/6 Budget for support of the CT Trust and this is in line with the Business Plan. If future financial support is agreed, then it is proposed to incorporate this into the five-year budget strategy later in 2005/6

Business Plan

- 2.13 Together with Council staff, RAVS have produced a five-year Business Plan which is shown at Appendix 2.
- 2.14 Members will note the anticipated level of funding from the Council is indicated as:

2005/6	£42,000
2006/7	£44,100
2007/8	£46,300
2008/9	£48,600
2009/10	£51,100

Taxi Vouchers

- 2.15 Members are asked to consider recommending to the Policy Committee that the Taxi Voucher Scheme be amended to a Travel Voucher Scheme, allowing its members to use the vouchers for taxis and the Community Transport Bus.
- 2.16 Users will have the freedom of choice to travel in a taxi or in a 16-seater wheelchair accessible minibus. The travel vouchers will be used in the same way as full or part-payment for a journey.

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- 2.17 Members of the scheme that are in receipt of taxi voucher and wish to use the community transport bus, would also be required to register as a member of the Community Transport Scheme at a cost of £5 per year.
- 2.18 Council has approved additional funding of £30,000 for the Taxi Voucher Scheme for 2005/6. With this in mind, there would be minimal or no impact on the taxi trade of including the community transport bus into a Travel Voucher Scheme.
- 2.19 Both the CT Scheme and taxis provide a door to door service. However, the CT scheme only operates Monday to Friday 9am-5pm, all journeys must be pre-booked, giving at least 24 hours notice, members of the scheme must accept that journeys are not always direct, due to other travelling passengers.
- 2.20 Extension of the scheme would fit well into the County Local Transport Plan of giving travellers a choice of transport.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** to Policy and Finance Committee:
- (1) That Rochford and Rayleigh Association for Voluntary Services be encouraged to establish a Community Transport Trust as soon as possible.
 - (2) That subject to (1) above, the Council commit to a five-year support plan for County Transport as indicated in the report.
 - (3) That the existing Taxi Voucher Scheme be renamed Travel Voucher Scheme and that vouchers be accepted on the Community Bus.

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Background Papers:

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