

ESSEX DISABLED PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION TRAVEL VOUCHER SCHEME

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' views on a request from Braintree District Council that all Essex authorities support the above scheme.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Following a successful Lottery bid, for the past three years the Essex Disabled People's Association (EDPA) has been running the above scheme. The scheme provides help towards travel costs to those least well off.

- 2.2 The details of the scheme are set out below:-

Eligibility:

- Over 18 years of age
- Are wheelchair users for outdoor mobility or registered deaf and blind
- Are without the use of a car
- Are in receipt of benefit related to low income
- Rochford residents must supply a letter of refusal for the Council's Taxi Voucher Scheme.

Scheme provision:

- Vouchers to the value of £25 per month useable on:
 - Rail
 - Bus
 - Community transport (eg., Dial-a-Ride)
 - Taxis
 - Go airline (leaving Stansted airport for the UK and European destinations).
- Travel vouchers are redeemed against normal full cost fares

There are currently 10 Rochford residents benefiting from the scheme.

- 2.3 If further Lottery funding is not achieved, then without the support of local authorities the scheme is likely to be terminated.
- 2.4 In view of this, Braintree District Council is requesting all Essex authorities to give financial assistance in order to maintain the scheme.

3 COMPARISON WITH ROCHFORD TAXI VOUCHER SCHEME

- 3.1. As Members will be aware, this Council already operates the very successful Taxi Voucher Scheme. The estimated cost to the Council of this scheme next year is £90,000, with £34,500 being funded by Essex County Council.
- 3.2. The details of the District Council scheme are as follows:-

Eligibility:

- Over 18 years of age and be a permanent resident of the District
- Be in receipt of at least one of the following allowances or benefits:-
 - Attendance Allowance (higher level)
 - Disability Living Allowance (mobility component)
 - War pension (mobility supplement)
- Be blind or partially sighted.
- Be able to confirm that they are unable to use conventional forms of public transport unaided because of their disability.
- Be able to confirm that they do not have a vehicle of their own other than a personal mobility buggy.

Scheme provision:

- Annual registration fee of £5 payable by applicant
- Quarterly issue of taxi vouchers, currently to the value of £48 for non-wheelchair and £72 for wheelchair bound residents.
- Useable with any taxi registered with Rochford District Council.

- Vouchers to be used within three months of issue.

At present there are 254 non-wheelchair users and 61 wheelchair users of the scheme.

- 3.3. As may be seen from the above, the two schemes, whilst similar, target slightly different clientele. The Rochford scheme covers a wider range of disability in that users do not necessarily have to be wheelchair bound. The EDPA scheme picks up Rochford residents who are wheelchair bound but, for some reason, do not receive one of the allowances specified within our scheme. The use of Rochford Taxi Vouchers is more restrictive than for the EDPA scheme.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1. In the unfortunate event of the EDPA scheme closing down, ten Rochford residents would lose the benefit of £300 worth of travel vouchers each year.
- 4.2. At present no information is available as to how much each Council would be required to contribute to maintain the scheme. For example, the cost of providing for the ten Rochford residents is £3,000, but presumably there would also be a requirement to contribute towards the running costs of the scheme.
- 4.3. The EDPA currently receives grant funding from Essex County Council, the two unitary authorities and a number of District Councils. Many other associations provide benefit in kind.
- 4.4. Throughout the whole of Essex, after three years of operation, there are 572 members and the project has helped 675 people.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. At present there is no provision within the 2003/4 budget to accommodate the additional cost of supporting the EDPA scheme.
- 5.2. The budget does, however, have to be flexible to finance unforeseen items of expenditure as and when they arise. To accommodate this type of issue the contingency fund would normally be utilised.
- 5.3. There is, however, still the possibility that Lottery funding will be achieved. In view of this, the Council may not wish to make a specific commitment at this time.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1. In view of the above, Members may wish to express support for any funding bid made by the EDPA, should we be requested to do so, but reserve its position in respect of funding until such time as the issue becomes clearer.

7 RECOMMENDATION

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

To give a view on the request received from Braintree District Council

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Background Papers:

Letter from Braintree District Council dated 17 January 2003

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