

DIAL-A-RIDE – OPTIONS FOR SERVICE REVISION

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members to consider the future of the Dial-a-Ride Service in Rochford District following notice given to South East Essex Dial-a-Ride (SEEDAR) of its provisional withdrawal from 31 March 2002.

2 PROPOSAL

- 2.2 This issue was referred up from Transportation and Environmental Services Committee of 22 March 2001. A comprehensive report (Appendix 1) was considered by Transportation Sub-Committee. A further proposal was made at the parent Committee to seek the views of Castle Point Borough Council on whether they would be prepared to consider providing a joint substitute service with Rochford. Additionally, the Essex Disabled Persons Association was asked to contribute to the debate.
- 2.3 The meeting between Castle Point Borough Council and Rochford Members and Officers was held on 11 April 2001 and the minutes of that meeting are shown on Appendix 2.

3 RECOMMENDED

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

That Members consider the future provision of the Dial-a-Ride Service in the District.

S J Clarkson

Head of Revenue & Housing Management

For further information please contact S J Clarkson on:-

Tel:- 01702 318005
E-Mail:- steve.clarkson@rochford.gov.uk

Minutes of Dial-a-Ride Meeting with Castle Point Borough Council 11 April 2001

Present: Cllr J Cook (Castle Point BC) - Chairman
Cllr R A Pearson (Rochford DC)
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn (Rochford DC)
Steve Clarkson (Head of Revenue & Housing Management)
Alan Langford (CPBC)
Janice Dibner (Essex Disabled Persons Assn)

1 ROCHFORD PERSPECTIVE

- 1.1 Steve Clarkson outlined the position regarding Rochford's provisional notice of withdrawal from the South East Essex Dial-a-Ride (SEEDAR) Scheme. The agreed date of withdrawal was 31 March 2002 subject to a final decision being made at Council on 24 April 2001. He further explained that the reason behind the decision was a general dissatisfaction with the service provided, with evidence of lack of access to the service by some registered users. There was also strong evidence of abuse by some users to the disadvantage of others.
- 1.2 Councillor Mrs Glynn said she often saw dial-a-ride vehicles either empty or with only one passenger on board and favoured a substitute service being provided by a combination of special vehicles and taxi vouchers.
- 1.3 Councillor Pearson explained that he had a little 'first hand' evidence of inefficient use of vehicles but was concerned that some users were gaining an unfair advantage over others, in particular those who had registered with SEEDAR but who had not used the service. Both he and Councillor Mrs Glynn favoured a limit on the times the service could be used or some form of means testing for admission to the service.

2 CASTLE POINT PERSPECTIVE

- 2.1 Alan Langford explained that CPBC were satisfied that the service was fulfilling its prime objectives and that it met a number of measures to combat social isolation. The level of complaints that come to the attention of the Council was low and the service was held in high regard within the Borough.

3 SUGGESTED JOINT INITIATIVE

- 3.1 Steve Clarkson explained that this meeting was to explore whether there was scope for Rochford and Castle Point Councils to join forces

to provide a joint scheme for the future. The survey undertaken in Rochford revealed that a number of users preferred to travel in a saloon type vehicle rather than a wheelchair accessible 'ambulance' type vehicle; it might therefore be possible to introduce a Taxi Voucher Scheme for this type of user and specialist vehicles being made available for those who were not so ambulant.

- 3.2 Councillor Cook explained that CPBC would be subject to the three year notice period if they were to decide on withdrawing from SEEDAR and setting up a joint initiative so the earliest date it might be considered is 2004. In any case CPBC were currently satisfied with the service.

4 EDPA SERVICE

- 4.1 Janice Dibner explained the EDPA Voucher Scheme which had recently attracted Lottery Commission Funding. From her extensive knowledge of community transport she also went on to describe schemes which operated in other Essex Districts. These included brokered vehicles, social car schemes and other dial-a-ride type services.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Councillor Cook thanked Rochford for including CPBC in the debate but concluded that:
- CPBC were currently satisfied with the SEEDAR Service.
 - Further research was needed into Rochford's legitimate concerns over the efficient use of vehicles.
 - There were other avenues to explore before a final withdrawal from the partnership.
 - CPBC were subject to 3 year notice.
 - CPBC would like to see a further survey of users particularly those registered persons who currently did not use the service.
 - CPBC felt that a better way forward would be to discuss, as a Partnership, the concerns of Rochford. In this way Southend-on-Sea Council could be included in discussions.
 - Finally, CPBC urged Rochford to remain within the scheme and to influence the delivery of the service from the inside.