

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL – 15 MARCH 2016

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Community transport services play an important role in enhancing accessibility and social inclusion; and helps the District and County Council meet their transport objectives.
- 1.2 A task and finish group was set up involving members from the Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel and the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel to look at community transport and how this could assist the Council tackle child poverty. This report sets out the current projects that are being funded and makes recommendations on how community transport initiatives can aid child poverty.

2. PROJECTS

- 2.1 New Forest District Council have for a number of years funded three main community transport project jointly with Hampshire County Council (HCC) through a funding agreement. This agreement provides funding for the following services:
 - Call and Go
 - Wheels to Work
 - Group Hire Mini Bus Scheme / Transport Worker.
- 2.2 In January 2015 this Council extended the funding arrangements with Hampshire County Council to provide community transport within the District. The current funding arrangements with HCC for these three projects continue to 31 July 2017.

3. CALL & GO

- 3.1 Call & Go is a Community Transport scheme and consists of a flexible bus service operating a fleet of wheelchair accessible minibuses that can collect people from their home, at pre-arranged times, taking them to the nearest major town/major supermarkets etc. It is operated by Community First New Forest.
- 3.2 The service is available to anyone who has a mobility or sensory impairment which means that they are unable to or experience difficulty or discomfort in using bus services; or who lives more than 400 metres from an available bus service/stop or who does not have access to a car and there is no bus service running when they need to travel.
- 3.3 Nine routes operate during the week in all areas of the District (including the National Park) and the costs will vary according to the distance travelled. Full return fares range from £2.50 – £6.00 and are less than those for public transport. In total between April 2015 and December 2015, 7,521 passenger trips were made.

3.4 There are 9 minibuses used to run this service, and in between April 2015 – December 2015 there were 1,271 registered users. This is broken down as follows:

3.5 The age profile of the users is:

- 40 – 59 - 21
- 60 – 69 - 88
- 70 – 79 - 311
- 80 Plus - 851

3.6 The drivers of the minibuses are predominantly volunteer drivers who are MiDAS trained. Should a proposed driver not be MiDAS trained, they will be funded to achieve this.

3.7 The District Council contribute 50% of the required funding and HCC contribute the remaining 50% (the amounts are set out in paragraph 6).

3.8 Whilst there is also a Cango service also operating in the District between Lymington and New Milton, this is not funded by the District Council and is run independently to them. Community First New Forest also ensure that their Call & Go routes do not compete with this Cango service.

4. WHEELS TO WORK

4.1 This is a moped loan service which aims to help young people aged 16-25 who have difficulty accessing public transport to enable them to access employment opportunities or vocational training.

4.2 The scheme provides a fully taxed, insured and maintained 50 cc or 125cc moped to enable access to employment opportunities that may otherwise be unacceptable due to lack of suitable local transport. In total there are 28 bikes available within the New Forest area, 15 mopeds and 13 motorbikes. Approximately 50 people use this service each year.

4.3 The loan period is generally for 6 months but can be extended for up to a maximum of 12 months and a deposit is taken at the start of the agreement. There is a weekly hire charge, payable by debit card:

- £17 per week if you are under 21 and on a 50cc bike
- £19 per week if you are under 21 and on a 125cc bike
- £17.50 per week if you are 21 and over and on a 50cc bike
- £20 per week if you are 21 and over and on a 125cc bike

4.4 The loanee is responsible for supplying their own licence. The minimum requirement being a provisional motorbike licence, the scheme provides full RAC cover for the bike during the duration of the lease.

4.5 This was a competitively tendered scheme with a 2 year contract term from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2017. The tender was awarded to Community First New Forest.

4.6 The District Council contribute around (but no more than) 50% of the cost of delivering the service in the New Forest (the amounts are set out in paragraph 6).

5. GROUP HIRE

5.1 The Council contribute funding towards a Transport Worker post whose primary role is to run the Group Hire mini bus scheme.

5.2 This scheme is for local voluntary or charitable organisations who can hire a minibus. The buses are available for regular repeat bookings or even as 'one offs,' for community travel purposes. The scheme aims to contract 500 bookings per annum with the current year to date being 451 from 212 unique hiring organisations.

5.3 Buses can be hired for periods ranging from 2 hours up to one week (subject to availability). The organisation hiring the bus can provide their own MiDAS trained driver or alternatively a volunteer driver could be sought from Community First New Forest if one is available. There are two charging options available for those who wish to use the service:

- Mileage rate at £1.20 per mile which includes the fuel used on the day, or:
- Day rate, which is £65 plus the cost of fuel used.

5.4 As per the January 2015 Cabinet decision this was appointed as a single tender contract to Community First New Forest from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2017 and further information on the organisation and the other projects they run / support can be found here: <http://www.cfnf.org.uk/>

6. FINANCE

6.1 The current levels of funding per annum towards the three projects are as follows:

- Call & GO - £26,000
- Wheels to Work - £7,300
- Group Hire / Transport Worker - £12,400

6.2 As the agreements for all three projects ends at the end of July 2017, HCC will start of the process of new arrangements for these Community Transport services before this time and the level of contribution will be renegotiated.

6.3 The current agreement with HCC allows a termination by either party in writing at a date mutually agreed or by not less than six calendar months' written notice to the other, such notice to expire on 31 March or 30 September in any year.

7. COMMUNITY TRANSPORT ISSUES

7.1 Currently there is a waiting list for the Call & Go scheme and many of the users are repeat customers who have used the scheme for many years. Little marketing of the scheme is currently undertaken due to the high levels of use.

- 7.2 The current Call & Go scheme has fixed routes but this does not include visits to out of the area hospitals, such as Bournemouth and Southampton where some residents are taken when medical assistance is needed. Some schemes do exist which involve volunteer drivers using their own vehicles, where bookings can be made to attend such things as medical appointments.
- 7.3 Ensuring young people are safe in the evenings around the District is important. A possible scheme that could be implemented is a safe bus which is staffed by volunteers, including special constables, police community support officers, paramedics, club chaplains and alcohol addiction counsellors with the bus providing a safe place for vulnerable people to go and could help with:
- Physical injury or illness
 - Concerned for your or someone's safety
 - Alcohol or drug misuse
 - A victim of alleged crime
 - People separated from their friends
 - Emotional distress
- 7.4 Due to the rural nature of the New Forest District area, and the distance between major the settlements, such a scheme may prove costly and difficult to run.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Community First New Forest be asked to carry out a feasibility study to explore a neighbour car / volunteer driver scheme in the New Forest to assist young people attending medical appointments.
- 8.2 That Community First New Forest be asked to carry out a feasibility study to explore the option of running a weekly Call & Go route to Bournemouth, Southampton and Lymington hospitals to coincide with visiting times, and the potential of also using the Group Hire scheme for this purpose.
- 8.3 That Community First New Forest be recommended to undertake wider promotion of Call & Go scheme to the under 25 age group and exploration of potential grant funding available for Group Hire specifically to assist the under 25 age group.

For further information please contact:

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Background Papers:

The following decisions have been made by New Forest District Council in relation to Community Transport Projects:

- Cabinet October 2008 – Approval of contributions towards Call & Go
<https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20081001/Agenda/CDR04199.pdf>

- Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder Decision 4 March 2009 – Approval of contributions towards Wheel to Work & Community Transport Workers post until 2012.
[https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/Data/Planning%20and%20Transportation%20Portfolio%20\(Decisions\)/20090304/Agenda/CDD04714.pdf](https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/Data/Planning%20and%20Transportation%20Portfolio%20(Decisions)/20090304/Agenda/CDD04714.pdf)
- Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder Decision 29 May 2012 – Renewal of funding agreement for Call and Go, Wheels to Work and Community Transport Workers post until 2015.
[https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/Data/Planning%20and%20Transportation%20Portfolio%20\(Decisions\)/20120529/Agenda/CDD07608.pdf](https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/Data/Planning%20and%20Transportation%20Portfolio%20(Decisions)/20120529/Agenda/CDD07608.pdf)
- Cabinet 7 January 2015 – Renewal of funding agreement for Call and Go, Wheels to Work and Community Transport Workers post until July 2017.
<https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/20150107/Agenda/CDR09425.pdf>