

## **AGENDA ITEM 9 – COMMUNITY TRANSPORT**

### **1 Background**

Bath & North East Somerset Council provides financial support to 2 dial-a-ride schemes and 8 other voluntary groups who operate Community Transport (CT) services. In addition, a dial-a-ride service in Bath is operated by the Council's in-house fleet.

The dial-a-ride schemes operate under service level agreements for two or three years and these specify the area to be served and the minimum level of service to be provided. The other voluntary groups apply for grants each year.

Total financial support for community transport in 2015/16 will be £288,972. In addition, the Council provides funding for safeguarding checks for paid staff, training for trustees in their roles and responsibilities, and basic first-aid training for volunteer drivers – total cost in the region of £1k per annum.

105,155 single passenger journeys were made on CT services in 2014/15 – an increase of 74% since 2005/06. The average subsidy per passenger journey is £2.72.

### **2 Current issues**

#### **(i) Strategic Review**

Initial work on the Council's Strategic Review has identified that CT should play a bigger role in overall transport provision. This was also a manifesto commitment by the Conservative Party in the recent Council elections. The Strategic Review identified, too, that CT schemes need to broaden the scope of their operations to ensure their survival should financial support from the Council be reduced.

- There may be scope for some rural bus services to be replaced by CT services linking rural communities with core bus service corridors.
- Community transport groups should put themselves on a footing where they can submit tenders for home-to-school transport contracts, public transport contracts and other transport work.

The Review is ongoing and these ideas will be explored with CT groups in the coming months.

#### **(ii) Internal Audit**

The Council is carrying out an internal audit of its spending on community transport. Work began at the start of September 2015 and is likely to be completed by December 2015. This will be seeking:

- to ensure that applications for community transport grant funding are effectively and consistently assessed against approved key criteria to make certain that all schemes provide value for money, accessibility, coverage and adherence to the Council's strategy and objectives.
- to ensure that community scheme contracts and SLAs are robust and effectively monitored and reported.
- to ensure that grant funding and concessions are accounted for in accordance with the Council's financial regulations and that any income due to the Council is received in full and on time.

#### **(iii) Total Transport Pilot Fund**

The Council bid successfully for £60k to fund a consultant to look at the provision of all types of passenger transport in the Chew Valley area, including bus services, home-to-school transport, community transport and non-emergency patient transport. The work will be carried out alongside work on a draft Chew Valley Transport Strategy. It is envisaged that the work will be completed in March 2016.

#### **(iv) Paper by Cllr Brian Simmons**

Cllr Brian Simmons wrote a paper in November 2013 called "*The future of Community Transport schemes in modern society.*" This outlined some ideas on how CT could become more sustainable and less dependent on financial support from the Council. Also, it argued that provision of CT should be seen as part of the Wellbeing agenda because of the important role it plays in helping assist independent living.

### **3 Recommendation**

That the Panel consider a full report on the outcomes of the current work on community transport at a meeting in early 2016.

Andy Strong  
Public Transport Manager  
Bath & North East Somerset Council  
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