

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING:	Communities, Transport & Environment Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
DATE:	11 January 2016	
TITLE:	Update on community transport issues	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Appendix 1 – Single passenger journeys on community transport schemes supported by Bath & North East Somerset Council		
Appendix 2 – “The future of community transport in modern society” – Paper by Cllr Brian Simmons		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Panel asked for an update on community transport.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That this Report be noted.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 Costs of community transport are managed within existing budgets.
- 3.2 Any proposals which could have resource implications for the Council will be subject to the Council’s corporate financial approval processes, which includes any proposals highlighted through the strategic review process. These items were included within the Directorate Plan reviewed by this Scrutiny Panel in November 2015.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 There is no statutory duty for the Council to provide or support community transport but it is recognised that community transport plays an important role in enabling people to live independent lives and to access services and facilities.

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 Community transport (CT) relies very heavily on the ability and willingness of people to give up their time and energy to assist others in their community who are unable to use mainstream public transport. With the exception of Bath Dial-a-Ride, all schemes within Bath & North East Somerset developed because the

community identified a local need and sought to meet it. The Council's role has been to assist and encourage that development.

- 5.2 The Council's Internal Audit Team has conducted an investigation into support for CT but the final report has not yet been published. The draft version makes some recommendations on the grant application process and on the monitoring of CT schemes that receive grants. Overall, the draft audit opinion is "satisfactory."
- 5.3 CT providers other than dial-a-ride schemes have been invited to apply for grants for 2016/17 through a slightly modified process that takes account of the emerging audit recommendations. A report will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Transport to make a decision on the awards, subject to Council decision on the budget in February 2016.
- 5.4 The Council's Strategic Review has identified that CT should play a greater role in overall transport provision. It has identified, too, that CT schemes need to broaden the scope of their operations to ensure their survival in the event that the Council is unable to maintain the current level of grant funding. Officers have been talking to CT schemes and encouraging them to place themselves on a footing from which they can submit tenders for home-to-school transport contracts, public transport contracts and transport work for other bodies. In the future, conditions could be attached to grant awards to require schemes to evolve in this way. There may be scope for some rural bus services to be replaced by CT services linking rural communities with core bus service corridors.
- 5.5 The Council was awarded £60k by the Department for Transport to fund a project 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 is being carried out alongside work on a draft Chew Valley Transport Strategy. Much of the background information has been collected and engagement has taken place with several stakeholders, although engagement with the health transport sector is not proving to be easy.
- 5.6 CT is likely to play a key role in the emerging Transport Strategies for the Somer Valley and Chew Valley. Public consultation events for these are planned for early 2016.
- 5.7 The service level agreements for the Keynsham and Midsomer Norton Dial-a-Ride schemes will expire in September 2016. This presents an opportunity to review the performance of the schemes and redefine what level of basic service provision is wanted for the next few years. A key issue to consider will be the appropriate level of funding for each scheme.
- 5.8 The service level agreement for Bath Dial-a-Ride expires in March 2017. This service is more limited than the other two dial-a-rides because it operates from 0900 to 1430 only. Outside those hours, the vehicles are used for home-to-school transport. Therefore, the cost of providing the dial-a-ride service is relatively low (£18k per annum) but it means that persons wishing to travel earlier or later cannot be accommodated.
- 5.9 All CT providers in Bath & North East Somerset are invited to a bi-annual Community Transport Liaison Group meeting with the Cabinet Member for Transport, at which information and best practice are shared.

- 5.10 Cllr Brian Simmons wrote a paper in November 2013 entitled “The future of Community Transport schemes in modern society.” This outlined his 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 assisting independent living. A copy is attached in Appendix 2. Some of the ideas are being followed up in the Strategic Review and in work on the Total Transport Pilot Fund.

6 RATIONALE

- 6.1 The Council provides financial support to two dial-a-ride schemes and eight other voluntary groups who operate community transport services. In addition, a dial-a-ride service in Bath is operated by the Council’s in-house fleet.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 Total direct financial support for community transport in 2015/16 is budgeted at £288,972, covering the dial-a-ride services in Bath, Midsomer Norton/Radstock and Keynsham/Saltford as well as the group minibuses and volunteer car schemes. 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.
- 6.4 105,155 single passenger journeys were made on CT services funded by Bath & North East Somerset in 2014/15, which represents an increase of 74% since 2005/06. Total direct financial support in 2014/15 was £285,819 so the average subsidy per single passenger journey was £2.72. Most of the growth has been in passengers using dial-a-ride services and this is illustrated in the table in Appendix 1.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 None

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Council’s Strategic Director of Place and Section 151 Officer have had the opportunity to input to this report.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council’s decision making risk management guidance.

Contact person	Andy Strong, Public Transport Manager - 01225 394201
Background papers	<i>List here any background papers not included with this report, and where/how they are available for inspection.</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

