

WOKING COMMUNITY TRANSPORT (BUSTLER) – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary

Woking Community Transport (WCT) has applied for the sum of £227,670 for the 2019/20 financial year, a reduction of almost £9,000 in comparison with the amount awarded in 2018/19. The purpose of the funding is to provide its valued Dial a Ride service which operates across the Borough and now includes transport for the Group’s members to the main hospitals outside of Woking (St Peters, Ashford and Royal Surrey). The total membership of the Dial a Ride service has increased by 172 users over the past year.

In addition, the Group will continue to provide transport for residents to Woking Borough's Centres for the Community and its vehicles will be available for use by community groups, either with a supplied driver or on a self-drive basis (subject to MiDAS training).

It is noted that uncertainty remains over the future levels of the grant received from Surrey County Council, currently equating to £42,500. If the grant was to end, a review of the funds requested from the Borough Council would need to be undertaken by the Group.

WCT provides an accessible transport service of which Woking Borough can be proud and also has demonstrated its ability to provide a high level of service in other parts of Surrey. It is a well regarded voluntary organisation with a high profile inside and outside of Woking, demonstrating high levels of customer satisfaction. The maintenance of the existing service is essential for those with mobility difficulties enabling them to maintain independence and access services and outlets of their choice.

It is proposed that the application for the Bustler service is approved at the level of £227,670 for the year ahead.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:	RESOLVE That a grant of £227,670 be awarded towards the core costs of the existing Borough-wide Dial-A-Ride service.
Reason for Decision	To support the Dial-A-Ride service across the Borough of Woking.
Legal Authority	S106 Transport Act 1985
Conditions	<p>Accounts. The Organisation must submit audited accounts for the year in which the grant is awarded, including an income and expenditure account and balance sheet. Please note that accounts for other years may also be required.</p> <p>Monitoring Information. The Organisation must submit quarterly monitoring information as a measure of its achievements. Failure to provide details will jeopardise the award. E-mail requests will be sent to the applicant on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Publicity. Where possible, the Organisation is required to publicise the support received from Woking Borough Council, including on all literature and leaflets produced.</p>

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	<p>Payments. Unless exceptional circumstances exist all invoices must be received quarterly with details of the costs incurred and monitoring information for the previous quarter.</p> <p>Payment Period. Final quarter claims must be made by the second week in March. Unclaimed awards will not be available at a later date unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated to the Council before the end of the award year.</p> <p>Joint Working. WBC expects the Organisation to engage positively on health and wellbeing multi-agency joint work affecting Woking. Groups which refuse may place their Council support at risk, e.g. grant, concessionary rent and other assistance. For services provided through the Council's grant, the Group will be accountable to the Council's Home Independence Manager.</p> <p>Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. With the introduction of new legislation from April 2018, the Council will expect the support of partner agencies in identifying people at risk of homelessness as early as possible to maximise the opportunities to prevent such. Partner agencies / organisations will be expected to be engaged in joint working arrangements to assist in finding suitable housing and support solutions, and where appropriate to undertake and respond to the new 'duty to refer'. Groups which do not support this new legislation and way of working positively, may put their Council support at risk.</p> <p>Venue Hire. Woking Borough Council has a duty to ensure that publicly-owned venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists and are not used to disseminate extremist views. This duty extends to organisations that work with the local authority so this includes recipients of any grants from Woking Borough Council. If you hire out your venue/s you should ensure you have good processes in place for record keeping and checking if they are an appropriate group to be making the hire arrangements. The following are some of what should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic details should be recorded to include speakers address, mobile phone number & organisation details. • Has the identity of the speaker been confirmed & is their organisation bona fide? Are they known to you? • Is the speaker from the area? Are they UK citizens or from overseas & will they travel specifically for this event? • Consider checks on the internet to confirm the status of speaker to include website, YouTube or social media sites. • How many people are likely to attend (check previous or similar events either locally or online).
Performance Indicators	<p>Users. The Organisation to provide a breakdown of the users in the past quarter.</p> <p>Publicity. The Organisation to advise how the Council's support has been publicised over the last quarter.</p> <p>Statement of Use. The Organisation to provide a statement stating the use to which the grant money has been put.</p>
Future Support	<p>The financial pressure on the Council's budgets is expected to continue in the coming years and accordingly the overall level of support available in future years may be reduced. The applicant is</p>

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therefore to be advised that the award of funding for 2020/21 does not imply that a similar application in 2021/22 would be supported. In particular, it is emphasised that the Council is unlikely to be in a position to award any sums above the 2020/21 levels.

In view of this, the applicant is to be advised to ensure that contingency plans for the Group's operations for 2021/22 have been drawn up in the event that the Council is unable to continue its support beyond April 2021. All applicants are strongly recommended to pursue alternative sources of funding and are encouraged to approach Woking Borough Council's Community Support Team for advice and support.

The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendations.

Background Papers:

2020/21 Application Form.

Reporting Person:

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18 February 2020

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1.0 Summary of Application	
1.1 Status and Aims	<p>Woking Community Transport (WCT) was founded in 1991 and is a registered society under the Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 regulated by the FCA. It is accepted by HMRC as having exempt charitable status. The Group provides accessible door to door transport to those who would otherwise be socially excluded because of poverty, disability or age.</p> <p>It is based in Woking and relies upon grants from Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council to provide Dial A Ride, Centre and Group transport services. Additionally, under contract, the Group provides services to SCC (Home to School and Adult & Community Care) and is working with the NHS (North West Surrey Clinical Commissioning Group) and the South Central Ambulance Trust in respect of Hospital related non-emergency patient transport.</p> <p>WCT also delivers transport services for the Bedser Hub. The Bedser Hub provides proactive and reactive care for older people with frailty and multiple long-term conditions who are registered with a Woking GP. The service is provided by an integrated team of health, mental health and social care staff. It is an innovative, multi-disciplinary model that has received local and national praise for the benefits it has delivered for patients and the local health system overall.</p> <p>In Spring 2018 transport services were extended to a similar Hub service (The Ashford Hub), which was opened on the Ashford Hospital site for people registered with a Spelthorne GP, and at Walton Hospital (The Thames Medical Hub) for people registered with a Walton or Weybridge GP.</p> <p>It also manages the Town Centre Buggy.</p>
1.2 Employees	85. 58 of the staff are employed as drivers, 13 Passenger Assistants and 14 office staff. 12 members of staff are full-time (over 35 hours), 64 are part-time (10-35 hours) and 9 are on casual contracts.
1.3 Volunteers	1. The volunteer works as a driver for Group Transport and occasionally Centre Services.
1.4 Clients/Users	The users of the service are also stated to be Members.
1.5 Members	<p>2,943, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 955 male 1,988 female 2,943 disabled 2,943 resident in Woking 4 aged 5-10 9 aged 11-18 309 aged 19-65 2,621 aged 65+

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	<p>Dial a Ride fares range from £3.50 to £3.90 per single journey dependent upon the distance travelled.</p> <p>Hospital trips (Royal Surrey, Ashford, St. Peters) range from £8 to £12 per single journey.</p> <p>WBC Centres are charged at £5.20 return.</p> <p>The Town Centre Buggy is provided to users free of charge.</p>
1.6 Sum Requested	£227,670 (Revenue)
1.7 Project	<p>WCT will continue to provide its valued Dial a Ride service which operates across the Borough, including transport for members to the main hospitals outside of Woking (St Peters, Ashford and Royal Surrey). In addition it will continue to provide transport for residents to the Woking Borough Centres for the Community, and its vehicles will also be available for use by community groups either with a supplied driver or on a self-drive basis (subject to MIDAS training).</p> <p>The Group continues to invest in environmentally friendly vehicles, including fully electric. It plans to develop a mobile app for customer use, to be used in conjunction with its vehicle tracking system.</p>
1.8 Cost breakdown:	<p>The break-even budget is set out at section 2.1. WCT continues to provide the recently increased workloads undertaken for Surrey County Council and also hospital related work. Such expansion enables the Group to limit the cost of the service provided to Woking Borough Council as it is better able to spread its overheads.</p> <p>The Group notes that there is uncertainty over the grant received from Surrey County Council. If the funding was reduced, it would require a review of the level of grant requested from Woking Borough Council.</p>
1.9 Community Benefit	<p>WCT provides an essential service for those of any age with reduced mobility who are unable to use ordinary public transport. Dial A Ride services enable people to travel at affordable fares from their home to any other place in the Borough and also to St Peters, Ashford and Royal Surrey hospitals.</p> <p>The Centre service enables users of the Community Centres to travel at fares determined by the Council. Carers and assistance dogs travel free. Its services are designed to promote health and wellbeing, independence and social inclusion.</p> <p>In 2018/19 the Group undertook approximately 39,000 passenger journeys including hospital appointments. Under the vehicle replacement programme its fleet is regularly refreshed with vehicles conforming to current standards.</p> <p>Additionally, it continues to improve its vehicle technologies providing automated schedule communication and detailed vehicle management information, including tracking, through the introduction of its Quartix system.</p> <p>As a result, Woking users are able to enjoy vehicles which are up to date, quiet and fuel efficient. It also offers enhanced Dial A Ride, Group Transport, advice and support on transport related matters and MIDAS training for drivers to other voluntary groups in the Borough, schools and other educational establishments.</p>

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2.0 Financial Background	
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £110,413 in the bank. The reserves are stated to provide a working balance and vehicle replacements as per the Group's reserves policy.</p> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for the Dial a Ride service 2020/21 which shows an anticipated income of £162,648 against an anticipated expenditure of £390,318, resulting in an anticipated deficit of £227,670. The income does not include the grant from Woking Borough Council.</p> <p>Anticipated income includes fares (£112,800) and Surrey County Council (£42,500). Items of expenditure include staffing costs (£231,982), vehicles (£71,856) and overheads (£86,480).</p>
2.2 Accounts	<p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2018/19. The Income and Expenditure account shows a surplus for the financial year of £88,062 (£96,643 in 2017/18). The sum of £625,710 was carried forward at the end of the 2018/19 year.</p>
2.3 Support over the past five years	<p>2019/20 – £236,480 2018/19 – £236,480 2017/18 – £253,400 2016/17 – £253,400 2015/16 – £253,400</p>

3.0 Assessment of Application																																								
3.1 Key Information	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 5%;"><input type="radio"/></td> <td style="width: 70%;">Constitution</td> <td style="width: 25%;">Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Registered Charity</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>VAT Registered</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Equal Opportunities Policy</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Safeguarding Policy</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Reserves Policy</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Quality Mark</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Other funding sources pursued</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Other support by the Council</td> <td>Yes *</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Fundraising</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Two quotes</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/></td> <td>Regular monitoring provided previously</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">* purchase of new accessible minibus</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="radio"/>	Constitution	Yes	<input type="radio"/>	Registered Charity	Yes	<input type="radio"/>	VAT Registered	Yes	<input type="radio"/>	Equal Opportunities Policy	Yes	<input type="radio"/>	Safeguarding Policy	Yes	<input type="radio"/>	Reserves Policy	Yes	<input type="radio"/>	Quality Mark	Yes	<input type="radio"/>	Other funding sources pursued	Yes	<input type="radio"/>	Other support by the Council	Yes *	<input type="radio"/>	Fundraising	Yes	<input type="radio"/>	Two quotes	N/A	<input type="radio"/>	Regular monitoring provided previously	Yes	* purchase of new accessible minibus		
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3.2 Consultee Comments	<p><u>Councillor Gary Elson and Councillor Deborah Hughes</u></p> <p>Woking Community Transport services are designed to promote the health and well-being, independence and social inclusion of our</p>																																							

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residents. Over the past year WCT have made 121,319 journeys, this continues the year on year increase in resident demand for their services. In the Dial a Ride (DAR) service alone the numbers this year to date exceed those of the whole of the last year. They have a business model which works by flexing the services provided to their contracts to SCC and the NHS with that they provide for WBC. This enables an improved utilisation of the vehicles throughout the working day. They have presented to the Borough's Health and Well Being team on their services and the enhanced relationship between WCT and the Council has been welcomed. A highly professional and forward thinking management are always looking at improving the efficiency of their services. They are keen to move their fleet towards electric vehicles and the first two will arrive at the end of the year. They are also looking at installing a contactless payment system on the DAR service.

The grant request from WBC is a reduction in real terms for the third consecutive year. However this does not indicate that this grant is not essential to their continued existence. Indeed the grant provided by the Council is the core of their funding. Without this the DAR service would not be viable, nor would the services provided to the four community centres. They continue to work in a challenging environment with a threat over the Section 19 licenses which is pending a national ruling via the high court on the future of community transport organisations being able to continue to have non-commercial exemption; and they are having to pay Old Woking District Social Club and SCC for space to park their vehicles whilst they wait for their new premises at the Old Robin Hood site. The grant for the town centre buggy supports this service which is otherwise a cost pressure. The grant application for this service is unchanged thanks to the new sponsorship achieved from SpecSavers this year. The Councillor observers are confident that the Council's grant funding of WCT is well spent and constitutes good value for money, and therefore fully support their application for this grant.

Julie Meme, Home Independence Manager

Woking Community Transport provides an essential service across the borough of Woking to those with reduced mobility in order to promote health and wellbeing, independence and social inclusion. Dial A Ride services enable people to travel at affordable prices from their home to St Peters, Ashford and Royal Surrey hospitals and also Centres for the Community. The Group provides over 40,000 journeys to passengers.

I would recommend that the full amount requested of £227,670 (a reduction from last year) be awarded to Woking Community Transport. The grant award condition would continue that the organisation engaging positively and actively with the Council's Local Dementia Action Alliance Program as the service provided by the organisation supports some of our most vulnerable members of the community and they meet with the Home Independence Manager on a quarterly basis to ensure partnership working.

3.3 Assessment

Woking Community Transport (WCT) provides accessible door-to-door transport to those who would otherwise be socially excluded due to poverty, disability or age. The service is based in Woking and relies on grants from Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council in

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order to provide Dial a Ride, hospital, community centre and group hire services. In 2018/19 around 39,000 passenger journeys were undertaken. In addition, over 4,600 group transport journeys were completed. The total membership of the Dial a Ride service has increased by 172 users over the past year.

The Group is applying for a revenue grant of £227,670 to provide its valued Dial a Ride service operating across the Borough, including transport for members to the main hospitals outside of Woking (St Peters, Ashford and Royal Surrey). In addition it will continue to provide transport for residents to the Centres for the Community in Woking.

Since WCT began, the organisation has sought new contracts with other organisations thereby spreading overheads and continues to do so. This enables the provision of service improvements for Woking residents whilst minimising the costs to the Council.

The Group continues to provide Home to School and Adult and Community Care services for Surrey County Council. Additionally it now provides non emergency patient transport services for the NHS through sub-contracts with South Central Ambulance Service and transport services for the locality hubs based in Woking, Ashford and Walton. It continually tries to improve its financial position by attracting new contracts, previously resulting in particular success with Surrey Choices, improving margins on existing agreements and also seeking sponsorship donations.

A grant is received from Surrey County Council that is used to directly support the Dial a Ride service in Woking. In line with SCC's intentions, this was reduced by 10% last year and the Group is aware that further reductions are planned. It should be noted however that the current request for funding from the County Council has been permitted at existing levels pending the outcome of the current Department for Transport consultation with regard to the necessity for Commercial Operator licences ('O' licences). During the deliberations, Woking Community Transport is prohibited from bidding for new contracts with the County Council and is therefore taking action in order to mitigate the impact of the possible consultation results should it become necessary.

Therefore, the Group is training one of its drivers for a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) qualification with the intention of delivering driver CPC training in the future, should it become a requirement of the consultation. Preparations are also being made to recruit fully qualified CPC drivers if need be. The professional qualification held by Senior Management is the International Transport Management (Passenger Transport). Additionally, provision has been made to ensure that the required amount in reserves to cover financial standing requirements is held.

WCT has stated that it has been invited to participate in the 2019/20 Parliamentary Review, which focuses on individual industry sectors. The aim is to share knowledge and best practice to help raise standards nationally, with 10-15 organisations participating within the transport sector. In addition, Surrey County Council has asked the Group to take part in its Rethinking Transport projects, and is assisting with potential pilot.

It should be noted that for many users, the services provided by WCT

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are essential in enabling them to get out and about in the Borough. The Group provides an accessible transport service of which Woking Borough can be proud and also has demonstrated its ability to provide a high level of service in other parts of Surrey. It is a well regarded voluntary organisation with a high profile inside and outside of Woking, demonstrating high levels of customer satisfaction. The maintenance of the existing service is essential for those with mobility difficulties enabling them to maintain independence and access services and outlets of their choice.

It is proposed that the application from WCT for its Bustler service is approved at £227,670 as applied for.

REPORT ENDS