

**WOKING COMMUNITY TRANSPORT (TOWN CENTRE BUGGY) – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

**Executive Summary**

Woking Community Transport has applied to extend its revenue funding of £18,000 in the financial year ahead towards the continuation of the service provided by the Town Centre Buggy. The Buggy service is much valued by its disabled or elderly users. The Group highlights that the ongoing expansion of the Town Centre, along with changing demographics, will increase the demands on the Buggy as the number of passengers and distance covered will also rise. The new Buggy vehicle was introduced in December 2015, replacing the previous vehicle which was 17 years old.

The maintenance of the existing Town Centre Buggy service is essential for those with mobility difficulties enabling them to maintain independence and access the services and outlets that they require in the Town Centre. Alongside the Dial-a-Ride service, the Buggy provides an integrated channel whereby Dial-a-Ride users arriving in the Town Centre can be met by it for onward transport to their destination.

Last year 2,496 individual passenger journeys were made in the Town Centre using the Buggy, slightly fewer than last year due to Covid-19. Usage figures are expected to rise again once the pandemic has passed, particularly once the redevelopment work in the Town Centre has been completed. Due to restrictions placed on the general population during the lockdowns, WCT was forced to suspend the service of the Buggy during these times.

The budget submitted for the operation of the Town Centre Buggy next year sets out an anticipated deficit of circa £1,336, with the deficit normally addressed through provision of other services and sponsorship received. This year the a contribution of £1,000 has been received from SpecSavers towards the costs of the Buggy which will be reviewed annually.

It is proposed that the application from Woking Community Transport for its Buggy service is approved on the same basis as the previous year, with revenue support of £18,000.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is requested to:	<b>RESOLVE That</b> , subject to the outcome of the Council’s budgetary process, a grant of £18,000 be awarded from the Community Grants Budget to assist towards the costs of the Town Centre Buggy service operated by Woking Community Transport.
Reason for Decision	To enable Woking Community Transport to continue to provide the Town Centre Buggy service in Woking.
Legal Authority	S106 Transport Act 1985
Confirmation of funding	This award is provisionally made on the expectation that the Council’s budgets for revenue and capital projects remain at the same level allocated for the current financial year. The Council’s overall budget, including the sums allocated for community grants, will be determined by Council at its meeting on 11 February 2021. In the event the grant budgets are set at the anticipated levels, confirmation of the Council’s support will be sent to successful applicants. Groups should not plan

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	<p>for the 2021/22 funding until this confirmation has been received.</p> <p>Should the budgets be reduced as part of the Council's efforts to achieve savings to offset the impact of Covid on the Council's financial position, a special meeting of the Executive will be held to review the provisional awards and allocate the funds available on a priority basis.</p>
<p>Conditions</p>	<p><b>Accounts.</b> 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><b>Monitoring Information.</b> 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><b>Publicity.</b> Where possible, the Organisation is required to publicise the support received from Woking Borough Council, including on all literature and leaflets produced.</p> <p><b>Payments.</b> 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><b>Payment Period.</b> 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><b>Joint Working.</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</b> 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>Performance Indicators</p>	<p><b>Users.</b> The Organisation to provide a breakdown of the users in the past quarter.</p> <p><b>Publicity.</b> The Organisation to advise how the Council's support has been publicised over the last quarter.</p> <p><b>Statement of Use.</b> The Organisation to provide a statement stating the use to which the grant money has been put.</p>
<p>Future Support</p>	<p>Due to the impact of Covid-19, the financial pressure on the Council's budgets is higher than ever and is expected to continue in the coming years. Accordingly the overall level of support available in future years may be reduced. The applicant is therefore to be advised that the award of funding for 2021/22 does not imply that a similar</p>

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application in 2022/23 would be supported. In particular, it is emphasised that the Council is extremely unlikely to be in a position to award any sums above the 2021/22 levels.

In view of this, the applicant is to be advised to ensure that contingency plans for the Group's operations for 2022/23 have been drawn up in the event that the Council is unable to continue its support beyond April 2022. 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:

2021/22 Application Form.

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<b>1.0 Summary of Application</b>	
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 (Send) and Adult &amp; Community Care) and is working with the 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 Woking Community Hospital, the Bedser Hub and similar Hub services at Ashford and Walton Hospitals, and transport on behalf of Woking Adult Social Services. The Hubs provide 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>The Charity manages the Town Centre Buggy.</p>
1.2 Employees	<p>82. 57 of the staff are employed as drivers, with 14 as Passenger Assistants and 11 as office staff. 12 members of staff are full-time (over 35 hours), 64 are part-time (10-35 hours) and 6 are on casual contracts.</p>
1.3 Volunteers	<p>5. There are two types of volunteer at the Charity:</p> <p>Directors take an active role within the organisation, travelling on vehicles to monitor the service, producing policies, accounts and general governance of the society.</p> <p>Drivers work on group transport to provide reduced cost services to local groups including schools, sports teams, assisted living home groups, local Charities, Centres for the Community (day trips for the elderly or to the Centres for activities) and occasional ad hoc requests from the Borough Council.</p>
1.4 Clients/Users	<p>The users of the service are also stated to be Members.</p>
1.5 Members	<p>3,117, comprising:</p> <p>969 male</p> <p>2,148 female</p> <p>2,309 disabled</p> <p>3,117 resident in Woking</p>

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	<p>11 aged 11-18          330 aged 19-65          2,776 aged 65+</p> <p>Dial a Ride fares range from £3.50 to £3.90 per single journey dependent upon the distance travelled. Hospital trips (Royal Surrey, Ashford, St. Peters) range from £8 to £12 per single journey. 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	£18,000 (Revenue)
1.7 Project	<p>With the demands of changing demographics and the extensive changes to the shopping area in the Town Centre that are currently in hand, Woking Community Transport expects that the demands on the Buggy in terms of the numbers of passengers and distances covered will increase. The Group is therefore requesting to extend its existing grant of £18,000 as a substantial contribution to cover the revenue costs of providing the service (after deducting expected fundraising).</p> <p>The Town Centre Buggy is operated for five days a week (Monday to Friday) between 9.30am and 1.30pm. It provides an integrated service whereby Dial-a-Ride users arriving in the Town Centre can be met by it for onward transport to their destination.</p> <p>It is worthy of note that a Quartix tracking device has been installed on the Buggy, which improves vehicle security and enables its location to be pinpointed should telephone requests be received for a pick up. Additionally, ease of access has been improved through a second telephone number through which the Buggy can be reached. These improvements have been funded by Woking Community Transport and have not been included within the grant request.</p>
1.8 Cost breakdown:	The budget is set out at section 2.1.
1.9 Community Benefit	<p>The Town Centre Buggy carried approximately 2,496 passengers last year. A reduction in passenger numbers was recorded in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Up until the end of February 2020 there had been an increase of 115 journeys over the previous year. The Buggy has continued to operate through the extensive building work being undertaken in the Town Centre, and a large increase in passenger numbers is expected once the work has been completed..</p> <p>Users vary greatly in age, ethnicity and disability but all have significantly reduced mobility and welcome the help they receive in accessing the Town Centre and its facilities. For many, it enables them to shop and bank independently as well as accessing other amenities. Population trends, along with the Bustler's increasing membership, means that the need for the service is likely to increase.</p>
1.10 Covid-19 Impact	<p>Due to restrictions placed on the general population during the lockdown period, WCT was forced to suspend the service of the Town Centre Buggy for a short period of time. Users of the Buggy are those who are elderly or who have mobility problems and would have been likely to have been particularly adversely affected during the Covid-19 period.</p>

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<b>2.0 Financial Background</b>	
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £205,086 in the bank. The sum of £96,000 is reserved for a new electric bus and £70,211 for wages.</p> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for the Town Centre Buggy during 2021/22 which shows total income of £18,500 and total costs of £19,836, equating to an anticipated deficit of £1,336.</p> <p>Items of income include WBC grant (£18,000) and other fundraising (£500). Items of expenditure include the driver – 25 hours per week (£14,914), management (£3,122), insurance (£1,000), other maintenance (£500), communications (phone, radio) (£200) and publicity (£100).</p>
2.2 Accounts	<p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2019/20. The Income and Expenditure account shows a surplus for the financial year of £87,755 (£76,726 in 2018/19). The sum of £796,913 was carried forward at the end of the 2019/20 year.</p>
2.3 Support over the past five years	<p>2020/21 – £18,000                  2019/20 – £18,000                  2018/19 – £18,000                  2017/18 – £18,000                  2016/17 – £18,000</p>

<b>3.0 Assessment of Application</b>		
3.1 Key Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Constitution</li> <li>○ Registered Charity</li> <li>○ VAT Registered</li> <li>○ Equal Opportunities Policy</li> <li>○ Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>○ Reserves Policy</li> <li>○ Quality Mark</li> <li>○ Other funding sources pursued</li> <li>○ Other support by the Council</li> <li>○ Fundraising</li> <li>○ Two quotes</li> <li>○ Regular monitoring provided previously</li> </ul> <p>* In the past WBC has purchased one vehicle each year to support the services, however due to the expected electric vehicles from SCC, this will not be requested this year.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes *</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Yes</p>

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### 3.2 Consultee Comments

#### Councillor Gary Elson and Councillor Deborah Hughes

Woking Community Transport services are designed to promote the health and well-being, independence and social inclusion of our residents. The sight of a 'Bustler' is a common one around the Borough and it has become an integral part of our support for our elderly and vulnerable in the community. This last year has been exceptional and WCT has demonstrated its flexibility to adapt and to respond to the national crisis. It continued to function throughout lockdown taking DAR members to hospital appointments and other essential visits; it has provided PPE deliveries for the NHS; deliveries of food for the food bank, ferrying of users of the York Rd Project in their refurbishment of St Marys and Moorcroft . They have adapted their working hours, working longer into the evenings and at weekends.

WCT have operated a free Dial a Ride (DAR) for 2 months over the summer to encourage those who were isolated to start to get out. Numbers of DAR users in June were 189, by September this increased to 819. Services have recommenced to the community centres.

Last year was a good year for WCT and they were able to move forward in progressing the service. Contactless card readers are now in situ on the DAR service. They have taken delivery of the first 2 electric vehicles with the aspiration of gradually becoming an all - electric fleet over time. They are the first community transport in the Country to go down this route.

They are looking ahead at new models of working in the post Covid world. Surrey choices for example has indicated that they will not be returning to their pre Covid model but will be providing a flexi choice approach with a block access approach and mix of home visits. They are in discussion with NWS CCG on the new non-emergency transport contract where an increased role may exist for WCT. The business continues to actively seek new opportunities.

Over the past year 2019/20 WCT have made a further increase in journeys (121 319- 127,357), this continues the year on year increase in resident demand for their services. DAR journeys alone have increased by over 13% in year. Their user membership continues to increase. 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 for the benefit of our residents. They have increased their journeys to the Council's Centres by almost 8% in the year.

Their work with the NHS has increased providing a door to door service for the elderly to Woking, Walton and Ashford Hospital Hubs, on fully accessible vehicles. They have been able to reintroduce the service to Ashford Hospital which is particularly important for our residents as Ashford becomes increasingly the non- acute site for out -patient services as St Peters remains the Covid site and acute centre.

The grant request from WBC is a reduction in real terms for the fourth 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

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	<p>would not be viable, nor would the services provided to the four community centres. The grant for the town centre buggy supports this service which is otherwise a cost pressure.</p> <p><u>Diana Chan, Health and Wellbeing Manager</u></p> <p>Due to the changing demographic in Woking and extensive changes to the shopping area in the town centre, it is anticipated that there will be increased demand for the buggy service in terms of passenger numbers and distance covered.</p> <p>Woking Community transport have updated the Quartix tracking device on the buggy. This will improve the vehicles security, and also enables them to pinpoint its location at any time and maximise efficiency if any requests for pick ups are received.</p> <p>Their grant request has remained static for 5 years with WCT absorbing all inflational increases. I am supportive of the £18,000 funding requested as a substantial contribution to cover the total costs of running the service.</p>
3.3 Assessment	<p>The Buggy Service was first introduced in 1994 (the first in the UK), operates in the area of Woking Town Centre and provides a free service to pedestrians who have a mobility difficulty. The Buggy is operated in the pedestrianised areas of the Town Centre each weekday between 9.30 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. The Buggy is not used on Saturdays because of the number of people in the Town Centre.</p> <p>Woking Community Transport has submitted an application to continue its revenue funding of £18,000 per annum. The Group highlights that the expansion of the Town Centre, along with changing demographics, will increase the demands on the new Buggy as the number of passengers and distance covered will also rise.</p> <p>Last year 2,496 individual passenger journeys were made in the Town Centre using the Buggy, slightly fewer than last year due to Covid-19. Usage figures are expected to rise again once the pandemic has passed, particularly once the redevelopment work in the Town Centre has been completed. All passenger usage of the Buggy is recorded at the time by the driver and monitored on a regular basis, forming part of the statistical reporting. Any un-met requests are also recorded. Users are surveyed every three years or so and regular forums are held with members, both of which enable the Group to establish that it is succeeding in meeting user requirements.</p> <p>The survey of Buggy users carried out in August 2017 was very positive. 75% of those surveyed said they used the service weekly; 55% of respondents said that if the service did not exist, they would have to manage by themselves; 27% said that they would just stay at home; and 57% said that the existence of the Buggy encourages them to come to Woking Town Centre.</p> <p>The maintenance of the existing Buggy service is essential for those with mobility difficulties enabling them to maintain independence and access the services and outlets that they require in the town centre.</p> <p>The budget submitted for the operation of the Town Centre Buggy during 2021/22 sets out an anticipated deficit of £1,336. The Group notes that the deficit is normally addressed through support from the provision of other services (which are not grant funded) and, if possible, sporadic sponsorship received from other organisations.</p>

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This year the Group has secured a contribution of £1,000 from SpecSavers towards the operational costs of the Town Centre Buggy, to be reviewed annually by SpecSavers.

It is proposed that the Town Centre Buggy continues to be supported with revenue support of £18,000 for the year ahead.

REPORT ENDS