

WOKING COMMUNITY TRANSPORT (BUSTLER) – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary

Woking Community Transport (WCT) has applied for the sum of £175,757 for the coming financial year, a reduction of almost £30,000 in comparison with the amount awarded in the previous year. The purpose of the funding is to provide its valued eight bus 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). In 2020/21, 7,082 passenger journeys were completed.

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 vital service in Woking and relies upon grants from WBC and SCC to provide borough wide Dial a ride, Centres for the Community transport, and Group Transport services. Additionally, under contract, it provides services to SCC (Home to School (SEND) 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.

WCT also delivers transport services for the Community Centres, Woking Community Hospital, 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. WCT was crucial in helping during the pandemic with the food bank initiatives etc.

It is proposed that the application for the Bustler service is approved at the level of £175,757 for the year ahead, noting the reduction of circa £30,000 in the amount applied for compared with the award last year. As set out in the officer comments in paragraph 3.2 of the report, the funding is conditional on a Service Level Agreement being in place from April 2022.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That, subject to the outcome of the Council’s budgetary process, a grant of £175,757 be awarded from the Community Grants Budget towards the core costs of the existing Borough-wide Dial-a-Ride service, additionally conditional on a Service Level Agreement being in place from April 2022.

Reason for Decision

To support the Dial-a-Ride service across the Borough of Woking.

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 10 February 2022. 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 2022/23 funding until this confirmation has been received.</p>
<p>Conditions</p>	<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> <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>Performance Indicators</p>	<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>
<p>Future Support</p>	<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 therefore to be advised that the award of funding for 2022/23 does not imply that a similar application in 2023/24 would be supported. In particular, it is emphasised that the Council is unlikely to be in a position to award any sums above the 2022/23 levels.</p> <p>In view of this, the applicant is to be advised to ensure that</p>

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contingency plans for the Group's operations for 2023/24 have been drawn up in the event that the Council is unable to continue its support beyond April 2023. 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:

2022/23 Application Form.

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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 (Send) and Adult & 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 also manages the Town Centre Buggy.</p>
1.2 Employees	<p>84. 45 of the staff are employed as drivers, with 19 as Passenger Assistants, 15 as Office Staff and 5 as Garage Staff. 16 members of staff are full-time (over 35 hours), 50 are part-time (10-35 hours) and 18 are on casual contracts.</p>
1.3 Volunteers	<p>4. 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>3,298, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,029 male 2,269 female 2,318 disabled 3,298 resident in Woking 7 aged 11-18

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	<p>331 aged 19-65 2,957 aged 65+</p> <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> <p>In 2020/21, 7,082 passenger journeys were completed, taking members to hospital appointments, WBC Centres for the Community, and other dial a ride locations.</p>
1.5 Members	The users of the service are also stated to be Members.
1.6 Sum Requested	£175,757 (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. Two electric vehicles are currently operated on the dial-a-ride service, with another electric vehicle on order. It plans to develop a mobile app for customer use, to be used in conjunction with its vehicle tracking system. Over the past financial year it has successfully tested a customer app on some services, with more development required for Dial-a-Ride use. It is formally trialling the next-generation tracking system, incorporating live CCTV, enhanced vehicle telematics, and vehicle diagnostics.</p> <p>To ensure customer safety, CCTV has been introduced onto many of the vehicles, which records the road ahead and an image of the inside of the vehicle.</p>
1.8 Cost breakdown:	<p>The budget for the Dial-a-Ride service is set out at section 2.1. The estimated cost of operating the eight bus service in 2022/23 is £389,559 and the estimated income from fares and charges is £164,708, leaving a shortfall of £224,851. This is around £20,000 higher than the previous year due to increased costs and lower income arising from the pandemic.</p> <p>Woking Community Transport is however applying for a lesser grant of £175,757 and states that it aims to cover the remaining shortfall by increased contract work throughout the year (via SCC, NHS and other partners), a delay in the recruitment of office staff, cost savings where possible, and a planned increase of dial-a-ride fares by 20p per journey.</p> <p>The amount requested is a decrease from the amount of £205,000 applied for and awarded towards the Dial-a-ride service in 2021/22.</p> <p>Funding has been applied for from Surrey County Council to purchase</p>

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	<p>new electric vehicles, some of which would be used on services provided for Woking Borough. If successful, the grant from the County Council for Woking Dial-a-Ride (circa £42,000) would be withdrawn, although it is anticipated that there would be compensating savings arising from operating the new electric vehicles. The Group estimates that the purchase of additional electric vehicles will reduce its carbon footprint by over 140 tonnes per annum.</p> <p>The costings for 2022/23 have been prepared on the basis that a sufficient recovery from Covid-19 has taken place.</p>
<p>1.9 Community Benefit</p>	<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. Carers and assistance dogs travel free.</p> <p>The Centre service enables users of the Community Centres to travel at fares determined by the Council. Its services are designed to promote health and wellbeing, independence and social inclusion.</p> <p>In 2020/21 the Group undertook 7,082 passenger journeys including hospital appointments. Under the vehicle replacement programme its fleet is regularly refreshed with vehicles conforming to current standards, ensuring the safest and most environmentally friendly journey as possible.</p> <p>Under its vehicle replacement programme, the fleet is regularly refreshed with vehicles conforming to the latest Euro standards, ensuring the safest and most environmental friendly journey as possible. More electric vehicles are on order, and in addition, it hopes to secure multiple electric vehicles via a grant from the County Council.</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. The system maximises fleet efficiencies through the monitoring of driver styles and speeds, resulting in reduced fuel bills and minimisation of its carbon footprint.</p> <p>As a result, Woking users are able to enjoy vehicles which are up to date, quiet and fuel efficient. It also offers a non-subsidised enhanced Dial-a-Ride (taking Members to locations outside of the Borough), Group Transport, advice and support on transport related matters and Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS) training for drivers to other voluntary groups in the Borough, charities, schools and other educational establishments.</p>
<p>1.10 Covid-19 Impact</p>	<p>Throughout the pandemic, WCT has continued to provide a Dial-a-Ride and Community Centre service at a reduced level due to an initial reduction in demand resulting from the national lockdown, which led to a lower than normal operating cost. However, during the crisis many of the most vulnerable members of the community have found it extremely difficult to get out. This may have been due to shielding, reduced mobility, or not having the means to travel. The Group recognised the difficulty many of its Dial-a-Ride members would have getting to hospital appointments and shops etc, and introduced a free Dial-a-Ride service to members throughout August and September</p>

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	<p>2020.</p> <p>There have also been increased costs for PPE and the purchase of monitoring devices to check staff and customers' temperatures. It has also invested in a machine to deep clean vehicles, with extra costs from the costs of the chemicals used within the machine.</p> <p>In addition to the above, WCT was called upon under the emergency callout provision, and has provided several vehicles to SCC for use on the (7 days a week) emergency food delivery service, which included delivering food boxes to Woking residents. It has provided PPE delivery across Surrey, along with home to school transport for key worker children. Its vehicles were also used on NHS staff transport, clinic transport, transporting people for Covid-19 testing, and for the delivery of NHS electronic devices to care homes.</p> <p>The Group has provided drivers for the Woking Meals on Wheels service, and transported homeless people from the York Road Project to the St Mary's Centre for the Community to undertake project work there. It has supported the Woking Foodbank by collecting supplies from supermarkets, and completed numerous ad hoc requests from WBC, SCC, and the NHS.</p> <p>Woking Community Transport has also provided free shuttle transport in Woking Town Centre from the car park to the vaccination centre and back; assisted the County Council in the delivery of almost 8,000 activity bags to 214 primary schools across the county; and supplied vehicles in liaison with NHS vaccination staff to provide mobile vaccination centres for the travellers' community.</p>
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2.0 Financial Background	
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £277,578 in the bank.</p> <p>Three new electric vehicles not purchased during the pandemic are awaiting delivery at a cost of £82,611 to £98,556 each.</p> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for 2022/23 which shows an anticipated income of £164,708 against an anticipated expenditure of £389,559, resulting in an anticipated deficit of £224,851. The budget does not include any grant award from the Council.</p>
2.2 Accounts	<p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2020/21. The Income and Expenditure account shows a surplus for the financial year of £463,478 (£71,287 in 2019/20). The sum of £1,160,478 was carried forward at the end of the 2020/21 year.</p>
2.3 Support over the past five years	<p>2021/22 – £205,000 2020/21 – £227,670 2019/20 – £236,480 2018/19 – £236,480 2017/18 – £253,400</p>

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3.0 Assessment of Application		
3.1 Key Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Constitution ○ Registered Charity ○ VAT Registered ○ Equal Opportunities Policy ○ Safeguarding Policy ○ Reserves Policy ○ Quality Mark ○ Other funding sources pursued ○ Other support by the Council ○ Fundraising ○ Two quotes ○ Regular monitoring provided previously <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>
3.2 Assessment	<p><u>Officer Comments</u></p> <p>WCT is a vital service in Woking and relies upon grants from WBC and SCC to provide borough wide Dial a ride, Centres for the Community transport, and Group Transport services. Additionally, under contract, WCT provides services to SCC (Home to School (SEND) 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 Community Centres, Woking Community Hospital, 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. WCT was crucial in helping during the pandemic with the food bank initiatives etc.</p> <p>It is recommended that the full grant of £175,757 should be awarded for 2022/23 on the condition the Service Level Agreement is in place from April 2022.</p> <p><u>Comments from Councillors Appointed to Group (Councillors Josh Brown and Deborah Hughes)</u></p> <p>Woking Community Transport services are designed to promote the health and well-being, independence and social inclusion of our residents.</p>	

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Over the past year WCT have made had to modify their service in response to the Covid 19 pandemic. In this they have demonstrated how relevant they are to our community, stepping up and diversifying to take on other essential roles. For example; they delivered emergency food parcels. With many transport providers suspending operations over the past year, WCT have picked up additional school runs for those often with SEND and disabilities who otherwise would not have had transport to school. They delivered PPE to local councils, nursing homes and medical centres across Surrey. They supported the food bank, collecting from supermarkets etc and have acted as a mobile 'flu vaccination unit. At a time of working from home and lockdowns they maintained their whole workforce in full employment.

Now as we are starting to resume more 'normal' activities, so WCT are gradually and safely reverting back to their more normal activities. They anticipate normal activity numbers by early 2022. The numbers on Dial a Ride (DAR) are still lower than pre pandemic, but the number of members of this service have increased to 3360, with over 94 since June alone, many of them utilising this service to access appointments at Ashford Hospital. A contactless payment system on the DAR service was implemented during the pandemic and has been accepted by virtually all users.

A highly professional and forward thinking management they are always looking at improving the efficiency of their services. They have made great progress in their aspiration of having an all- electric fleet by 2030. However, these vehicles are significantly more expensive to purchase. They have been successful in a grant from the Government via SCC for further EV to assist in this.

The grant request from WBC is a reduction in real terms for now the fourth consecutive year. This grant is however essential to the running of an effective DAR service, a fleet of 8 vehicles which are dedicated to this service. Without this the DAR service would not be viable, nor would the services it provides to the four community centres.

REPORT ENDS