

WOKING COMMUNITY TRANSPORT (BUSTLER) – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary

Woking Community Transport has applied for the sum of £236,480 for the 2018/19 financial year. 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). 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). The operations aim to provide the drivers and vehicles necessary to meet requirements. In response to increasing membership and demand for Dial a Ride there are times when it operates with more than ten vehicles in the Borough and it will aim to continue to do as required.

Woking Community Transport has advised that there is uncertainty over the future levels of the grant received from Surrey County Council 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.

Woking Community Transport 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 the Group for its Bustler service is approved at the level of £236,480, the same level as for 2018/19. For services provided through the Council’s grant, the Group will be accountable to the Council’s Home Independence Manager. Taking into account the consultee comments, a condition is being added in relation to engagement with the Council’s Local Dementia Action Alliance Programme, as the service provided by Woking Community Transport benefits some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

Recommendations

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| The Executive is requested to: | RESOLVE That a grant of £236,480 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</p> |

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to the applicant on a quarterly basis.

Publicity. Where possible, the Organisation is required to publicise the support received from Woking Borough Council, including on all literature and leaflets produced.

Payments. Unless exceptional circumstances exist all invoices must be received quarterly with details of the costs incurred and monitoring information for the previous quarter.

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.

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.

Local Dementia Action Alliance Programme. The Organisation should engage with the Council's Local Dementia Action Alliance Programme as the service provided benefits some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

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.

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:

- 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).

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| 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 therefore to be advised that the award of funding for 2019/20 does not imply that a similar application in 2020/21 would be supported. In particular, it is emphasised that the Council is unlikely to be in a position to award any sums above the 2019/20 levels.</p> <p>In view of this, the applicant is to be advised to ensure that contingency plans for the Group's operations for 2020/21 have been drawn up in the event that the Council is unable to continue its support beyond April 2020. 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.</p> |

The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendations.

Background Papers:

2019/20 Application Form.

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| 1.0 Summary of Application | |
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| 1.1 Status and Aims | <p>Woking Community Transport 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. It also manages the Town Centre Buggy.</p> |
| 1.2 Employees | <p>84. 60 of the staff are employed as drivers, 6 of whom are full time and 40 part time (10 - 35 hours per week). 14 drivers are 'zero hours' or casual.</p> <p>There are 15 office based members of staff (management, admin, operations), 7 of whom are full time (37.5 hours per week) and 8 part time (hours variable).</p> <p>In addition there are 9 passenger escorts, both working part time (15 - 22.5 hours per week).</p> |
| 1.3 Volunteers | <p>2. The volunteers work as drivers for Group Transport and occasionally Centre Services.</p> |
| 1.4 Clients/Users | <p>The users of the service are also stated to be Members.</p> |
| 1.5 Members | <p>2,873, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 890 male 1,983 female 2,873 disabled 2,873 resident in Woking 9 aged 0-5 3 aged 5-10 9 aged 11-18 301 aged 19-65 2,551 aged 65+ <p>Dial a Ride fares range from £3.50 to £3.90 per single journey dependent upon the distance travelled.</p> <p>Hospital trips 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 free of charge.</p> |

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| 1.6 Sum Requested | £236,480 (Revenue/Capital) |
| 1.7 Project | <p>Woking Community Transport 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's aim is to continue to provide the vehicles and drivers necessary to meet increasing requirements where there are times it has been necessary to operate more than 10 vehicles in the Borough.</p> |
| 1.8 Cost breakdown: | <p>The budget is set out at section 2.1 and shows a shortfall of around £9,000. Woking Community Transport 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>However, the Group highlights that there is uncertainty over the continuation of the grant it receives 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>Woking Community Transport 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 Centres to travel at fares determined by WBC. Carers and assistance dogs travel free. Its services are designed to promote health and wellbeing, independence and social inclusion.</p> <p>In 2017/18 the Group undertook approximately 40,000 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 vehicle technology systems providing automated schedule communication and vehicle management information, including tracking, thus enabling it to maximise its fleet efficiencies.</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 | |
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| 2.1 Budget | <p>At the time of the application, the Group held £149,000 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 during 2019/20 which shows an anticipated income of £151,219 against an anticipated expenditure of £396,756, resulting in an anticipated deficit of £245,537. The income does not include the grant from Woking Borough Council.</p> <p>Anticipated income includes fares (£105,000) and Surrey County Council (£37,188). Items of expenditure include staffing costs (£234,523), vehicles (£77,648) and overheads (£84,585).</p> |
| 2.2 Accounts | <p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2017/18. The Income and Expenditure account which shows a surplus for the financial year of £96,943 (£117,159 in 2016/17). The sum of £537,628 was carried forward at the end of the 2017/18 year.</p> |
| 2.3 Support over the past five years | <p>2018/19 – £236,480</p> <p>2017/18 – £253,400</p> <p>2016/17 – £253,400 towards the Dial-A-Ride and Centre Service (in addition to funding of £26,575 allocated from the Personalisation Partnership Prevention Fund)</p> <p>2015/16 – £253,400 towards the Dial-A-Ride and Centre Service (in addition to funding of £26,575 allocated from the Personalisation Partnership Prevention Fund)</p> <p>2014/15 – £253,400 towards the Dial-A-Ride and Centre Service (in addition to funding of £26,575 allocated from the Personalisation Partnership Prevention Fund)</p> |

| 3.0 Assessment of Application | | |
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| 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>* purchase of new accessible minibus</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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| <p>3.2 Consultee Comments</p> | <p><u>Sylvie Marshall, Community Development Manager</u></p> <p>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 40,000 journeys to passengers in the year 2017/18 showing a definite local need.</p> <p>The funding requested has remained at the same level as 2018/19 and will continue to provide the Dial a Ride service but this may need to be revised in the future if funding is reduced / ceased from Surrey County Council.</p> <p>I would recommend that the full amount requested of £236,480 be awarded to Woking Community Transport however, criteria of grant award would include 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.</p> |
| <p>3.3 Assessment</p> | <p>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 order to provide dial-a-ride, hospital, community centre and group hire services. In 2017/18 around 40,000 passenger journeys were undertaken.</p> <p>The Group is applying for a revenue grant of £236,480 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.</p> <p>Since Woking Community Transport 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 Woking Borough Council. It aims to continue to pursue this strategy to minimise the cost of the service provided to Woking Borough Council.</p> <p>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. The Group highlights the winning of eight additional contracts in February of last year, the expansion of its services to the locality hubs (now encompassing three sites) alongside its continues ability to provide services to the hospitals outside of Woking despite previous grant reductions.</p> |

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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 SCC 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 Surrey 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. Discussions are in hand to create 13 new minibus sized parking spaces within St Mark's Church to meet parking requirements.

Within its grant application, the Group points to the 2011 Census results which indicate that:

- the population aged over 65 in Woking has increased by 13.7% since 2001
- the equivalent percentage for the over 85's is 27.8%
- 13.0% of people in Woking suffer from long term illness or disability which limits their day to day activities.

These trends are expected to continue and as the Group's users are principally drawn from these groups, the number of people to whom the service is relevant will continue to grow. For many users, the services are essential in enabling them to get out and about in the Borough, with Dial-a-Ride membership having increased by 211 over the past year. Users were surveyed in 2017 about the quality and appropriateness of the service provided. The results were positive with an excellent response rate. The highlights have been included within the application:

- 83% say the DAR service encourages them to get out.
- 32% would not go out at all if the service was not provided.
- 58% use the service more than once per week.
- 71% highly value the social interaction arising from use of the service and would feel cut off if it did not exist.
- 50% say there are no negative elements of the service, however, where improvements are suggested, half of them relate to problems booking the specific trips required suggesting a need for WCT to increase its DAR capacity to be able to accommodate.

Woking Community Transport provides an accessible transport

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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 the Group for its Bustler service is approved at £236,480, the same level as for 2018/19.

REPORT ENDS