

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

9 May 2018

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT OPERATIONS IN WORCESTERSHIRE

Summary

1. The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel will receive an update on Community Transport in Worcestershire.

Background

2. There are 18 Community Transport (CT) schemes in the County which provide transport using volunteers driving their own cars, dial-a-ride minibuses, community buses and fully-accessible Multi-Purpose Vehicles (MPVs) for those who cannot travel by other means – either because no appropriate services are available or due to their mobility limitations.
3. The Worcestershire CT Consortium exists to provide a forum for not-for-profit operators and it currently has 14 members. It works to an annual Development Plan which is approved by the Local Authority and includes such actions as the sharing of administrative procedures, vehicles, volunteers and best practise, working with commercial, local authority, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Health partners to provide a more joined-up, efficient and effective service and undertaking various promotional campaigns with relevant publicity material.
4. CT schemes throughout the County have been extending their operations and taking on new services to cater for a wider range of passengers across Worcestershire. Approximately 500 volunteers are involved in delivering around 165,000 journeys by CT each year.
5. Information about all the County's Community Transport operators can be found at www.communitytravel.org.uk

Strategic Grant for Community Transport

6. A Council grant has been approved for another two years from April 2018 enabling Worcestershire County Council (WCC) to ensure that CT Consortium members work with the Authority in providing a range of transport services. It also supports schemes to develop and build their operations. Worcestershire CT is involved in transport reviews and delivers local bus, Adult Social Care, Learning Disability and education contracts. In all circumstances where a local bus is considered for withdrawal, CT will be involved in looking at alternatives and providing a solution.

Total Transport

7. The Council was awarded funding from the Department for Transport's (DfT) 'Total Transport Fund' to initiate ways of working with partners to deliver more integrated transport planning and operations. The Authority arranged meetings with numerous Health Providers and CT schemes to devise two pilot initiatives. These commenced in September 2017 and are still running – until the end of June 2018: **'Transport to Health'** provides residents of Wyre Forest and north Malvern Hills Districts with a central point of contact and transport to healthcare appointments.
8. These are provided by three partner CT schemes working together; **'Connections to Health'** covers Redditch, Wychavon and Worcester City, with five partner CT schemes providing journeys for passengers needing to travel to the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch and Worcestershire Royal Hospital in Worcester. Both initiatives are gathering information about patients' transport issues as well as providing eligible passengers with Community Transport.
9. An interim summary report has been produced by the Council and this will be the subject of a press release in early May. It will also be the subject of a meeting that month of relevant Health representatives. The recommendations include the funding of a single contact point for transport to healthcare with signposting to appropriate travel opportunities and also a new leaflet giving all the necessary information for patients and visitors who need to get to appointments and hospitals.

Pending Changes in Operating Legislation

10. WCC and the CT Sector are participating in the **DfT's Consultation** on the use of Permits for Road Passenger Transport in the UK. This will have a crucial impact on CT Countrywide as the DfT seeks to clarify the relevant amendments to the Transport Act 1880 relating to not-for-profit transport schemes operating under Section 19 and Section 22 Permits. The Consultation closes on 4 May 2018 and a summary proposal document will be due out later this year. As this is likely to affect the sort of services CT can provide and their ability to bid for contracts, it will be necessary to work with the sector to adapt and implement changes to avoid the (realistic) possibility of some closing down.

Trends and Opportunities

11. The WCTC keeps a close eye on trends in and opportunities for CT in order to be responsive and flexible to meet changing needs. The Consortium is initiating research into the changing needs of passengers who use its members' services in Worcestershire and also implementing appropriate training and practices to adapt to these.

Some Information about Individual Schemes

12. **Wyre Forest Dial-a-Ride (WFDaR)** has just taken on two new local bus and one Adult Social Care contracts resulting from the recent round of reviews by WCC. The organisation, which runs 4 minibuses, will continue to run its existing two registered bus routes – the 7A and 12 in Kidderminster – as well as its Adult Social Care contract to the Odell Centre. WFDaR has worked closely with the Authority to deliver these and a **Total Transport Pilot Project**, 'Transport to Health' (see below, and is a

very active participant in CT development. Their Manager is also the current Chair of the CT Consortium. One of WFDaR's happy customers recently said: "I would like to say how pleased we have been with the service you provide. The last year would have been quite difficult without you. Will you pass on our thanks to the drivers for their friendliness and help."

13. **Tenbury Transport Trust (TTT)** operate two minibuses, both of which are leased from the Authority via the 'Vehicles for CT' leasing scheme which helps support the not-for-profit operators to have access to suitable vehicles to develop their services. The Trust has recently negotiated with the Omiston Academy in Tenbury to provide a transport contract to get pupils to the school from various locations in north-west Worcestershire. The school is very pleased with how this is going and is in discussion about a second service. TTT also run an extensive voluntary car scheme – with, perhaps, the longest distances to travel, particularly in getting their customers to healthcare.

14. **Droitwich Community Transport** - a new Community Bus - CB5 - has just started following the withdrawal of a registered route at the end of last year. Several residents and local Councillors expressed concern that the Cockshute Hill area of the town would be disadvantaged as a result, so discussions started with Droitwich Spa Rural CVS which runs the local CT scheme, resulting in the CB5 which commenced in March. It is a pre-bookable service which will respond to passengers' individual needs - picking them up and dropping them off at convenient pre-agreed locations in their fully accessible minibus.

15. Droitwich CVS also run the second Total Transport Pilot Project, 'Connections to Health'

16. **Community Action Malvern and District (CAMD)** - this organisation, which covers the whole of the south Malvern Hills District, has successfully bid for the Council contract to continue to provide transport in the form of two Community Bus services, CB1 and CB2, for residents of the very rural area to the south of Malvern where there are no other bus services. It also has worked closely with **Malvern Dial-a-Ride** to devise and deliver the CB3 Community Bus route which caters for passengers who lost the 360 bus operated by First. Both CT schemes work together to provide this much needed link between Malvern and Upton and keep their communities informed. Local Councillors have been involved in this and Malvern Hills District Council has helped produce publicity. Community Action also operate a large voluntary car scheme.

17. **Community Transport Wyre Forest (CTWF)** runs three accessible MPVs and a car scheme throughout the Wyre Forest district. In March, Royal Voluntary Service ceased their community car scheme, Rural Rides, in Bromsgrove and Redditch and CTWF stepped in to take over this significant operation, signing-up existing drivers and ensuring there was a seamless transition for Rural Rides several hundred customers.

18. In addition **Redditch Dial-a-Ride** has undertaken a review of its service which includes recommendations to work alongside an enhanced voluntary car scheme for single-passenger journeys – maintaining its minibuses for numerous passengers travelling together. CTWF will work with them to deliver this. The Total Transport project, 'Connections to Health', will also be involved.

19. **Worcester Wheels** has recently moved premises to a location from which it can park and operate its three minibuses and two MPVs. A new Business Manager has recently been appointed. They operate four WCC contracts and a busy car and DaR service throughout the city and neighbouring villages.

20. **Broadway Nomads** now offers its Community Bus to 7 local organisations whose main aim is to combat loneliness and rural isolation. Transport can play a key role in this.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

21. The proposed clarification of the operation under Section 19 and 22 permits by the DfT will have significant implications for the CT sector – in Worcestershire and nationally. It is likely to affect any minibus operation by not-for-profit operators and will include how and whether CT can bid for contracts. CT plays a significant role in providing transport in rural areas and for those who may be isolated due to lack of suitable transport services: it assists WCC in delivering its statutory responsibility to provide 'socially necessary' transport.

Privacy Impact Assessment

22. None.

Equality and Diversity Implications

23. Community Transport delivers a significant number of journeys to Worcestershire residents, particularly to those who have mobility limitations and have no access to public transport services. The Sector, therefore, is a prime provider of transport to vulnerable groups – helping to combat isolation and loneliness, maintain independence and enabling access to essential services.

Purpose of the Meeting

24. Following the discussion, the Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- consider and comment on the information provided
- determine whether any further information or scrutiny is required at this stage
- agree any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Member/s.

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

If you have any questions about Community Transport please contact Madeleine Sumner, County Council Community Transport Officer on 01905 846838

Email: msumner@worcestershire.gov.uk

Specific Contact Points for this Report

Emma James / Jo Weston, Overview and Scrutiny Officers, Tel: 01905 844964 / 844965

Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk