

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Director of Community Health & Care Partnership

Community Health & Care Partnership Committee: May 2013

Subject: Implementing the West Dunbartonshire Social Transport Support Scheme

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present to the Committee the planned actions to implement the approved West Dunbartonshire Social Transport Support Scheme.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the implementation plan set out at 4.7 below.

3. Background

- 3.1 At its February 2013 meeting, the CHCP Committee agreed to replace historical arrangements for social care transport with an equitable social transport grant programme; and that the CHCP make arrangements to establish this as an explicit enhancement to the Council's Community Chest grant scheme.
- 3.2 At that meeting, the Committee highlighted the importance of the transition to the new arrangements being managed smoothly and clearly. So the Committee stated that its approval for the new scheme was conditional on its being implemented in a phased manner through the first half of 2013/14; and requested that actions necessary to enable an orderly implementation be brought to its May 2013 meeting to provide reassurance and clarity.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1 As Committee will recall, social transport demand has consistently increased across all Scottish local authorities in the last decade. West Dunbartonshire has not been alone in seeking to review and improve its social transport provision. A number of local authorities across the UK have been engaged in some form of review process – for many this spans their transport systems in general and expands to transport for the individual. In common with West Dunbartonshire, these authorities state the need for review as the:

- Need to ensure equalities needs are being met.
- Need to ensure maximisation of existing resources.
- Need to streamline processes to clarify systems and communication.

- 4.2** Audit Scotland in its review of transport practices highlighted the need for all local authorities to review their arrangements and practices. At the core of that thinking is the need to recognise that *social transport services are not a service in their own right – instead they must be viewed as a means of accessing services or support of benefit to the individual.*
- 4.3** The independent review commissioned by the CHCP found that the historical arrangements that have developed in West Dunbartonshire operate in isolation from other West Dunbartonshire Council support measures, including (but not limited to) the Community Chest Grant Scheme. This works against the principle of targeted support leaving many most at need unaware of the potential service and raises the possibility of double funding for some activities and organisations. Many of those recipients who participated in the review were unclear as to the reason why they were eligible to access the service on the basis that they ‘just always had’. The varying numbers of recipients within individual organisations may also mean that resources are not always being efficiently applied. Similarly, the current issue of restricted day time use may mean that some potential beneficiaries cannot access social transport at a time which meet their needs and therefore do not engage. As the Council’s historical arrangements had not been subject to significant review for a period of time, the changing nature of transport options for some user groups is likely not to have been taken into consideration in planning for future services. The broadening of access to free travel passes, increased mobility of older residents and the increase in provision of volunteer driver availability should all be considered when determining how best to maximise community benefit from the service. Several small community transport initiatives and volunteer driver schemes are operational in the West Dunbartonshire area and well supported by community residents.
- 4.4** The Committee agreed that in considering the review as a whole then it was clear that the historical arrangements within West Dunbartonshire (while valued by its many varied recipients):
- Had evolved into – and been utilised as - a service in their own right instead of consistently providing a means of fairly accessing services or support.
 - Did not meet the Audit Scotland’s reasonable expectations “*that eligibility criteria are clearly defined and understood by everyone using transport services and by the staff who refer them*”.
 - Were at risk of not fulfilling the requirements of the Equalities legislation.
- 4.5** Having established such a negative equality impact through this independent review then, the Committee agreed that the Council should seek to materially revise its local arrangements so as to explicitly comply with – and avoid potential challenge on – the requirements of the legislation. For those reasons the social transport grant scheme recommended was approved by Committee as the optimal arrangement to be established, as it would both represent an explicitly positive response to meeting the needs of vulnerable groups in relation to the Equalities legislation; and provide a best practice model for community transport in relation to community benefits and transparency of allocation based on need.

- 4.6** Establishing this new Social Transport Support Scheme was confirmed as conferring the following clear benefits:
- Greatly increase awareness of eligibility, improving equality of provision.
 - Broaden the range of organisations gaining a benefit from access to transport not previously enjoyed.
 - Broaden the range of options for groups, allowing meetings and services to take place at differing times.
 - Make better use of resources by ensuring provision of service in a more responsive, flexible manner.
 - Allow for more effective and transparent resource management.
 - Link transport provision with other local authority grant schemes - most notably the local Community Chest - to ensure connectivity and reduce duplication of both assessment and funding distribution.
 - Make better use of resources by ensuring maximum benefit is achieved for the level resource investment.

4.7 Following then the positive reception to the independent report by and the thoughtful discussion by the Committee at its February 2013 meeting, the CHCP has worked with colleagues from West Dunbartonshire CVS and the Council Housing, Environment & Economic Development (HEED) Department to plan for the smooth and phased implementation of the new Scheme. The main actions to manage the transition are as follows:

- The CHCP will write out to all those on the current list of eligible recipients for the out-going scheme during the week of the 20th May 2013. This letter will:
 - Confirm that as of the 1st September 2013 the current arrangements will be replaced by a new Social Transport Support Scheme administered by West Dunbartonshire CVS
 - Explain that as part of a phased transition, the CHCP will continue to provide transport under the current arrangements for those on the existing list until 31st August 2013 but that any such booking requests must be made by the 28th June 2013.
 - Explain that from the 17th June 2013 they and any other local group will now be able to apply to West Dunbartonshire CVS to be considered for social transport support sought from 1st September 2013 and onwards.
 - Include a copy of an application (appendix 1) for the new Social Transport Support Scheme and a copy of the eligibility checklist (appendix 2).
- The CHCP will ensure that anyone on the current list of eligible recipients for the out-going scheme who contact the CHCP HQ seeking social transport will be made aware of the points set out within the letter referred to above, and their request processed or signposted to CVS accordingly (with the CHCP happy to send them a copy of the necessary application paperwork for the new Scheme if they require it).
- The CHCP will ensure that anyone who is not on the current list of eligible recipients for the out-going scheme who contacts the CHCP HQ seeking social transport will be made aware of the new Scheme and signposted to CVS (with the CHCP happy to send them a copy of the necessary application paperwork if they require it).

- The CVS and the CHCP will work together to publicise/highlight the new Scheme across through a variety of means (e.g. websites; local groups – e.g. the CHCP PPF).
 - The CVS will ensure that the new Social Transport Support Scheme is publicised/highlighted alongside the other funding schemes if either signposts or administrates (e.g. the Community Chest).
- 4.8** It should be noted that any requests for social transport under the current arrangements that have already (i.e. at the time of this Committee meeting) been committed to for after the 31st August 2013 will still be fulfilled.
- 4.9** West Dunbartonshire CVS have developed a Social Transport Support Process Plan (appendix 3) alongside an applicant scoring form (appendix 4) to provide clarity and reassurance that the new scheme will conform to the best practice principles and approach agreed by the CHCP Committee previously.
- 4.10** As an enhancement to the proposal previously recommended to and agreed by the Committee at its last meeting, Council HEED colleagues have pro-actively identified an opportunity for synergy between the transition to the new Social Transport Support Scheme and a commitment within the local Transport Strategy, to build community resilience and capacity to self help. The HEED Fleet Section have committed to develop a programme of community driver training to ensure any potential group who will provide their own transport solution has their “own” suitably qualified and competent drivers – and this increase the self reliance of individual groups. Once developed, this community driver training programme will be publicised by HEED and CVS, particularly promoted to those applying to the new Social Transport Support Scheme.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** As confirmed at the February 2013 Committee meeting, there are no implications for any Council staff in regards to their substantive contracts of their terms and conditions. The implementation plan presented and this Committee paper has been prepared in conjunction with Council HEED senior management, who have confirmed their support for the recommendation made here.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1** As per the Committee’s decision at the February 2013 meeting, in implementing the new scheme the full recurrent budget (i.e. £136k) for social transport will be transferred to CVS to be utilised for the new Social Transport Support Scheme. The staff time “released” as a result of the replacement of the existing arrangements with the new Scheme within Council HEED have provided the capacity to enable the development of the new community driver training programme (4.10) – which is an additional positive consequence for local community groups as a result of the aforementioned Committee decision.

6.2 In line with the intention to ensure that the governance for this new scheme corresponds to that for other Council grant schemes - most notably the local Community Chest to which it will become an enhancement - responsibility for oversight of the scheme and budget reporting would transfer from the CHCP Committee to the Council's Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 As accepted by Committee at its February 2013 meeting, the main risks of not implementing the social transport grant scheme subsequently agreed were in relation to not acting in compliance with the Equalities Act (Scotland) 2010; and in not delivering best value.

8 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 Committee considered and accepted the full equality impact assessment that was detailed within the report presented at its February 2013 meeting.

8.2 As accepted by the Committee, the current historical arrangements within West Dunbartonshire (while valued by its many varied recipients) are at risk of not fulfilling the requirements of the Equalities legislation; and the new scheme approved represents an explicitly positive response to meeting the needs of vulnerable groups in relation to the Equalities legislation; and provides a best practice model for community transport in relation to community benefits and transparency of allocation based on need.

9. Consultation

9.1 As Committee will recall, consultation with service recipients was a key element of the independent review. The findings had been presented to and positively received by the CHCP PPF (as members will recall from the draft PPF minute presented at the November 2012 CHCP Committee). As above, the CVS and the CHCP will work together to engage with community groups to publicise/highlight the new Scheme.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 The positive implementation of the new social transport grant scheme will support the Council's strategic priority to "improve the wellbeing of communities and protect the welfare of vulnerable people".

Person to Contact: Mr Soumen Sengupta
Head of Strategy, Planning and Health Improvement.
West Dunbartonshire Community Health & Care
Partnership, West Dunbartonshire CHCP HQ, West
Dunbartonshire Council, Garshake Road, Dumbarton,
G82 3PU.
E-mail: soumen.sengupta@ggc.scot.nhs.uk
Telephone: 01389 737321

Appendices: Appendix 1 - West Dunbartonshire Social Transport
Support Scheme Application Form

Appendix 2 – West Dunbartonshire Social Transport
Support Scheme Eligibility Checklist

Appendix 3 - West Dunbartonshire Social Transport
Support Process Plan

Appendix 4 - West Dunbartonshire Social Transport
Support Scheme Applicant Scoring Form

Background Papers: CHCP Committee Report (February 2013) - West
Dunbartonshire Social Transport Service Review
& Equality Impact Assessment

Wards Affected: All.