

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEETING

3 April 2012

Report of the Strategic Director – Environmental Services

**PROPOSED GRANT FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY TRANSPORT
FOR 2012/13 (HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT)**

Introductory Summary Community Transport fulfils an important role in meeting the needs of people who are unable to use or do not have access to public transport. Eight schemes operate in Derbyshire (two of which have recently merged) and they each receive substantial grant funding from the County Council.

A recent consultancy study has led to the identification of proposals for the further development of the community and voluntary transport sector, including pilot schemes; marketing and publicity; and a review of dial-a-bus services. These proposals have been discussed with representatives of the community and voluntary transport sector and it is proposed that the Cabinet Member - Highways and Transport should be authorised to consider these matters in more detail as they are developed.

The report recommends that in 2012/13 funding for each scheme should continue at its current level of £186,347 per scheme. The report also recommends some minor changes to the grant funding conditions and that a grant of £25,000 should be made to support the Ways to Work/Wheels to Work project that helps people who would otherwise have difficulty getting to work or training.

(1) **Purpose of the Report** To update Cabinet on developments affecting Community Transport and to agree the provision of grant funding for Community Transport in 2012/13.

(2) **Information and Analysis**

Background

Community Transport plays a vital role in meeting Derbyshire's transport needs and has received financial support from the County Council for over 25 years. The eight schemes currently receive grant funding of £186,347 per scheme, a

total of some £1.491m. They provide a range of services for people unable to use or who do not have access to public transport including Dial-a-Bus, Group Travel and aCTive travel (access to healthcare). All are pre-bookable, door-to-door services operating on flexible routes.

The schemes operate around 120 fully accessible vehicles of various sizes ranging from smaller people carriers to 32 seat buses. The Council owns or part-owns 26 of these vehicles which have been provided by Local Transport Plan capital funding. The schemes use a mix of both volunteer and paid drivers, but all are trained to a high standard to meet the varying needs of their passengers.

The County Council has recognised the importance of Community Transport in providing access to essential services and, over the years, it has been able to increase the total funding allocation to the sector. As such it has been largely protected from the financial pressures that have affected other areas of transport spending. Indeed the only significant change directly affecting Community Transport was the introduction in August 2011, of a flat fare (£1 per single journey) for Dial-a-Bus users.

Future Development of Community Transport Schemes

While Community Transport is well-established in Derbyshire, there is scope to further develop its contribution to meeting local needs. Accordingly, at its meeting on 2 August 2011, Cabinet agreed a draft brief for a consultancy study to support the development of community and voluntary sector transport in Derbyshire. The consultants' findings have been discussed with representatives of Community Transport, voluntary car schemes and the Ways to Work/Wheels to Work project (moped and cycle loan) and it is now proposed to develop initiatives in a number of areas including:

- Support for pilot schemes (for example, projects to address rural transport needs, help with transport for children participating in after school activities, access to work and assistance with hospital visiting).
- Marketing and public relations to raise awareness of the services, to make the services attractive to a wider cross-section of the community and to attract and retain volunteers.
- Helping Community Transport and voluntary car schemes develop a training programme to meet their changing and individual needs.
- Reviewing the provision of Dial-a-Bus services to ensure the most efficient use of vehicles and drivers.

These initiatives are still at an early stage of development and it is anticipated that it will be the schemes themselves, with support from the County Council, who will take the lead in developing these proposals. It was reported, to the 2 August 2011 Cabinet meeting, that the Department for Transport (DfT) had made available Rural Sustainable transport funding of £223,291. Since then, a

second tranche of funding of the same amount has become available making a total of £446,582. This can be used to support a range on initiatives but the Government does not expect it to be used to replace existing local authority funding.

The DfT funding provides an opportunity to fund pilot schemes and other measures that can bring about significant changes and improvements in the provision of community and voluntary sector transport. The evaluation of any projects will therefore give priority to those schemes that are most effective in meeting users' needs, offer the prospect of reducing grant dependency or demonstrate a collaborative approach to improving services (for example, two or more organisations working together to introduce a new or expanded service). It is recommended that the Cabinet Member – Highways and Transport be authorised to approve more detailed proposals for developing these initiatives.

Funding Provision for 2012/13

It is proposed that annual payments to the eight Community Transport schemes should be unchanged from the current level of spending and proposed payments for 2012/13 are shown in the table below. It should be noted that Amber Valley and Chesterfield Community Transport have merged into a single scheme known as CT4TC. Payments to CT4TC are therefore double the amounts shown.

Grant payment of £151,347 for the operation of Dial-a-Bus services (home to town, home to shops) and £20,000 per scheme for aCTive travel that provides access to healthcare (jointly funded by Derbyshire County Council and the Primary Care Trust (PCT))	£171,347
Payment for participation in flat fare Dial-a-Bus scheme	£15,000
Total payment per scheme	£186,347

On this basis, the total cost of grant payments to the Community Transport schemes in 2012/13 will be £1,490,776 (including a contribution of £80,000 from the PCT).

While there may be scope to broaden the scope of Community Transport to serve a wider section of the community, there are, in addition, other transport providers who help to plug the gap where neither conventional public transport nor Community Transport offers an appropriate solution. One of these is the Ways to Work/Wheels to Work project that helps people who find it difficult to get to work or training (e.g. young people living in rural areas or shift workers who do not have the use of a car or do not have convenient access to public transport). The support offered includes moped loan, provision of a

(refurbished) bicycle and help with bus fares. The underlying aim is to help people get started in a job and those benefiting from the scheme are encouraged to take responsibility for their own travel arrangements in the longer term.

The Ways to Work/Wheels to Work project previously received funding from the County Council via the Local Accessibility Partnerships but the available funding has now come to an end. There are other sources of funding that support the project, however, these are limited in their scope and coverage. For example, funding from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust is no longer available to support access to training and is only available in the former coalfield areas, while the Working Neighbourhoods Fund is only available in Bolsover District. In the absence of any other source of funding, from April 2012 it will no longer be possible to offer a Ways to Work/Wheels to Work service in large areas of Derbyshire including the whole of the High Peak and Derbyshire Dales areas.

In the circumstances, it is proposed to make a grant of £25,000 to support the Ways to Work/Wheels to Work project in 2012/13. This funding will complement the proposed provision of £45,000 in the Local Transport Plan capital programme for 2012/13 and will enable the continued operation of the scheme throughout Derbyshire.

Grant Conditions

The payments to the Community Transport schemes are subject to a grant agreement setting out the expectations of both parties. It is not proposed to amend the current conditions of funding except for two minor amendments. The first is an addition of a requirement that a County Council Officer should be invited to attend meetings of the Board of Trustees and the second is a requirement that the monthly report on Community Transport services should be supplied to the County Council by the 14th day of the following month. The schemes will be made aware that failure to comply with these conditions may mean that funding may be delayed or withheld.

(3) Financial Considerations The proposed funding allocations of £1,490,776 to the Community Transport schemes and £25,000 to the Wheels to Work project can be met from the 2012/13 Transport Services budget for Community Transport.

(4) Legal Considerations Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to give financial assistance to any person (which includes an organisation) to improve the social well-being of the Council's area, or part of it, for all or any of its residents.

Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 also enables the Council to incur expenditure in making contributions to the funds of anybody which

provides any public service, either to the public at large or to any section of the public, in the United Kingdom otherwise than for gain.

The receiving organisation must provide the local authority with a written statement, usually in the form of an annual report and accounts, of the use to which the assistance has been put. It will be a requirement that each scheme provides regular reports throughout the year on the use of the funding in addition to the annual report and accounts.

(5) **Equality and Diversity Considerations** Community Transport services are available to anyone who is unable to use public transport or who does not have access to public transport. The schemes are particularly valuable in providing access to essential services for people with mobility difficulties and all of the vehicles are accessible by wheelchair users. In further developing Community Transport services, an important aim is to encourage use of the services by a broader cross-section of the community.

The Wheels to Work project is a moped loan and cycle scheme that aims to help people get to work or training. It is used particularly by people following a period of unemployment or by people getting to their first job. It is especially valuable for people living in rural areas where public transport may be limited or people who have to start or finish work at times when public transport is not available.

(6) **Environmental, Health and Transport Considerations** Community Transport schemes provide an alternative means of accessing essential services for people who do not have the use of a car or who cannot use public transport. The aCTive travel project is a scheme specifically designed to improve access to a wide range of healthcare facilities including GP's surgeries, hospital appointments, exercise classes and other health-related activities.

(7) **Property Considerations** There are no property considerations associated with this report.

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder and human resources considerations.

(8) **Key Decision** Yes.

(9) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(10) **Background Papers** Reports to Cabinet dated 20 April 2010 (Minute No 155/10 refers) and 2 August 2011 (Minute No 240/11 refers).

Reports to Cabinet Member – Highways and Transport dated 28 June 2011 (Minute No 121/11 refers) and 23 August 2011 (Minute No 169/11 refers). County Council Grant Funding Agreement. Officer contact details - Steve Cannon, extension 38148.

(11) OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS That Cabinet:

- 11.1 Approves the proposed allocation of grant to the Community Transport schemes and Wheels to Work project, as outlined in this report.
- 11.2 Approves the proposed minor modifications to the Grant Funding Agreement, as outlined in the report.
- 11.3 Authorises the Cabinet Member – Highways and Transport to consider proposals for the future development of Community and Voluntary Sector Transport in Derbyshire.

Ian Stephenson
Strategic Director – Environmental Services