

## TRANSPORT DECISIONS COMMITTEE – 11 FEBRUARY 2010

### REVIEW OF FUNDING FOR EXTERNAL TRANSPORT POSTS

#### Report by Head of Transport

#### Introduction

1. This report follows on from a report to the Cabinet Member for Transport on 27 March 2008 (endorsed by the decision of a further meeting on 26 March 2009) and invites the Committee to formally approve funding for a further year to support the employment of three externally-based posts based at Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC), each with a complementary remit to advise, assist and encourage the provision of transport in various ways by the community and voluntary sector. Further consideration of funding for these posts takes place in the light of the decisions made by the various district councils in Oxfordshire.
2. These posts are long-established, having been introduced progressively since 1984 (Community Transport Advisor), 1988 (Disability Transport Advisor / Trainer {originally as Oxfordshire Transport Co-ordinator}) and 1999 (OCTAP Officer {originally as Rural Transport Partnership Officer}).
3. These posts are jointly funded by the various district councils and Oxford City Council, and are managed through OCTAP, the Oxfordshire Community Transport and Accessibility Partnership.
4. On 27 March 2008 the Cabinet Member for Transport agreed, inter alia “to fund the continuation of the external transport posts...for a period of four years, subject to annual review and to the continuation of appropriate levels of funding from district councils”. The amount of funding agreed was £86,290 per annum, with annual increases for inflation.
5. On 26 March 2009, accordingly, officers reported to the Cabinet Member for Transport a first annual review of the funding for these posts. On that occasion the Cabinet Member for Transport agreed:
  - (a) To confirm funding of the external transport posts in the amount of £86,290 for the financial year 2009/10, subject to the continuation of appropriate levels of funding from district councils;
  - (b) To pay a grant for this provision to ORCC to provide these posts for 2009/10 and to review continuation of this grant funding towards the end of that period; and
  - (c) To agree that funding for the ORCC proposal for offering enhanced support to the community transport sector is not supported at present

but to continue dialogue on the benefits that this might bring in the future.

6. The funding structure agreed in 2008 has allowed ORCC to employ three FTE posts, one of which has been filled until recently with a job-share arrangement. A report from ORCC summarising the responsibilities and work-streams of the members of the transport team is attached at Annex 1.
7. As will be apparent, the ORCC transport team has provided a wide range of advice and support to community transport groups, parish councils, Oxfordshire district councils, Oxfordshire County Council and, through RASP (the South East England Development Agency's "Rural Access to Services Programme"), has been able to support a number of local initiatives.

### **Financial and staff implications**

8. ORCC have indicated that the costs (based on their established policy of Full Cost Recovery) of providing the work-streams based on three full-time equivalents would continue to amount to some £153,750 for 2010/11 (i.e. there would once again be no requirement for an inflationary increase for the forthcoming year).
9. As discussed above, these posts are jointly funded. Each district council will be making its own decision on further funding.
10. West Oxfordshire District Council is understood to be expecting to continue grant funding for the ORCC transport team at the present level (i.e. without any inflationary increase), subject to the outcome of its overall budget-setting process. However, this funding commitment is likely to be dependent on the level of contributions made by the other funding councils.
11. Vale of White Horse District Council is consulting on a proposal to reduce its rural transport funding grant to ORCC by £8,000. The consultation finishes on 21 January and the council's budget will then be approved at a meeting on 15 February. It is understood that ORCC have been formally advised of this likely budget reduction, but have been told that Vale of White Horse District Council would not object if ORCC wished to reallocate some of the funding, that the Vale provides for other ORCC services, in order to maintain its rural transport services. There may, subject to ORCC's decision, therefore be no impact on Vale's funding for the transport team with which this report is concerned.
12. Cherwell District Council's budget will not be finalised until the end of February, but County Council officers are advised that current working papers allow for the same level of contribution to ORCC as in the current financial year.
13. South Oxfordshire District Council's Cabinet has approved that Authority's grant to ORCC at the same level as the current financial year, but this

decision must be endorsed by a full council meeting on 18 February before it takes effect.

14. Oxford City Council's position is not known at the time of completing this report. It does, however, make a smaller contribution to the funding of the transport team than the other authorities. Details of the City Council's decision will be reported to the Committee orally, if known by the time of the meeting.
15. For the current financial year the funding from each source has been:
 

Oxfordshire County Council	£86,290
Oxford City Council	£ 5,000
Cherwell District Council	£15,615
South Oxfordshire District Council	£15,615
Vale of White Horse District Council	£15,615
West Oxfordshire District Council	<u>£15,615</u>
Total required funding	£153,750
16. As discussed above, no district council's funding for 2010/11 is formally known at the time of writing this report. Details of known commitments, and any variance from the expected position, will be reported orally to the meeting. This may require a change to the decision to be taken by this Committee. If this proves to be the case then I will make my revised recommendation orally in the light of the decisions of the district councils.
17. In addition to the County Council's share of the costs of supporting the transport posts shown above, there is also a further £8,500 already agreed to be provided as a delegated fund to cover the costs of training provision for the drivers of community transport services. In 2008/09 this fund was not fully utilised, just £4,250 having been drawn from it. In the current 2009/10 financial year it is anticipated that the same will occur. On this basis, the total annual expenditure by Oxfordshire County Council is therefore currently £90,540.00.
18. Funding is available within the Public Transport Policy budget which could be used to cover the required sum to maintain the existing level of ORCC provision.

### **How the project supports LTP2 objectives**

19. The work-streams of the ORCC transport team contribute to the LTP2 objective of "Delivering Accessibility". The extra transport opportunities encouraged and facilitated by the external transport team improve access to community facilities and therefore contribute to improving the quality of life for some people, minimising the risk of social exclusion.
20. The work of the external transport team supports the development and continuation of community transport schemes throughout Oxfordshire, providing an independent source of advice and practical assistance to the volunteer sector. Community transport projects enable local communities to

support their own transport needs in a targeted, cost-effective way. Where the County Council provides direct financial support to community transport schemes it is often at a much lower subsidy cost per passenger journey than 'mainstream' provision of equivalent services in rural areas through the Council's bus subsidy budget.

21. Such support and advice is at least as important as the availability of finance in providing community transport services. The external transport team works to identify transport needs, promote community transport and directly help local people to organise, establish and run community transport schemes. In addition, ORCC issues guides and advice publications (in the past year these have included a Directory of Community Transport; a Guide to Best Practice in Oxfordshire Community Transport; a Volunteer Drivers' Handbook; and a Parish Transport Representatives' Handbook).

### **RECOMMENDATION**

22. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) to confirm funding of the external transport posts in the amount of £86,290 for the financial year 2010/11, subject to the continuation of appropriate levels of funding from district councils; and**
- (b) to pay a grant for this provision to ORCC to provide these posts for 2010/11 and to review continuation of this grant funding towards the end of that period.**

STEVE HOWELL  
Head of Transport

Background papers: Correspondence with ORCC and minutes of OCTAP meetings  
(refer to contact officer)

Contact Officer: Neil Timberlake. Tel: Oxford 815585

November 2009

### ORCC Transport Team Report 2009 - 2010

**1. Introduction.** The team is managed by Meryl Smith, Deputy Chief Executive ORCC and led by Philip Newbould, OCTAP Officer.

Last year the post of Community Transport Adviser operated as a job share between Alix Michaelis and Emily Lewis. The resignation of Alix in December 2009 was off-set by Emily moving onto a full time basis. Current staff is:

- OCTAP Officer - Philip Newbould
- Community Transport Adviser - Emily Lewis
- Disability Transport Adviser/Trainer - Gwyn Huish

**2. Overview.** Team working has resulted in the publication of two new documents which will help volunteers in Oxfordshire

- Parish Transport Representatives' Handbook – produced in conjunction with OCC and OALC sets out clear information to help PTR's understand their role and how they can obtain help and information. All PTR's have been provided with a copy and Parish Councils that do not have a PTR have been sent a copy with a further encouragement to appoint one.
- Volunteer Drivers' Handbook – primarily aimed at private car drivers, the handbook gives general information and advice to drivers using their own cars to facilitate access to services for those unable to travel by other means.

We have already received very positive feedback from recipients.

In addition the Directory of Community Transport in Oxfordshire has been updated and reissued. This document is always well-received and heavily used by a range of different statutory and voluntary agencies around the county.

Two training and networking events were held with all CT schemes in Oxfordshire invited. The first event was particularly notable with an invited speaker from Oxfordshire PCT presenting on the possible effects of a flu pandemic. This coincided with the first outbreaks in the UK and was extremely useful with schemes volunteering to act as 'flu buddies' for those who would otherwise have had no assistance.

There is no other available means of presenting to and networking with representatives of CT schemes and the ORCC's contacts with schemes is a key resource. The training and networking events along with the Newsletter enable ORCC to monitor and advise on issues arising either by legislative changes or local problems encountered. Typically in the year these have included the requirements of the Independent Safeguarding Authority and the resolution of some of the parking issues at the Oxford hospitals. Currently we are discussing with Oxfordshire PCT the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme and how it might operate in a more 'user friendly' manner. We also continue attempts to engage the PCT in providing financial support for the schemes and have recently conducted a 3 month long survey of usage. The results of this survey are currently being analysed.

It has previously been noted that the northern part of Oxfordshire has few community transport schemes and in conjunction with Cherwell District Council a study has been completed of all parishes. This identified levels of awareness and interest in volunteering as drivers as well as interest in establishing schemes. This was linked by ORCC with the new Good Neighbours Scheme initiative developed by Health and Social Care with OCVA. As a result two new transport schemes are being established in Cherwell District with other enquiries being developed.

This networking and contact with Parish Transport Representatives alerted ORCC to requests from West Oxfordshire parishes for improved evening and weekend services to and from Witney. This has led to an adaptation of the pre-area review survey for the Witney Review in 2010 and encouraging parishes to look at possibly forming a Community Bus service. Initially a group of parishes led by Long Hanborough are looking at a private hire service to determine demand.

Some individual activities are noted below.

**3. OCTAP Officer.** The post can be divided into two parts

- Facilitation of partnership working with other statutory and voluntary bodies
- Administration of RASP providing grants to improve access to services

Partnership working has taken place with individual bodies particularly

- LTP3 team including focus group meeting.
- Public Transport at OCC on a number of issues including area reviews and developing bids for financial support from voluntary schemes.
- Children Young People and Families at OCC on Barriers to Positive Activities for Young People
- Health and Wellbeing Partnership and its Ageing Successfully project
- Oxfordshire PCT on support for the voluntary sector.
- Health and Social Care at OCC on the Oxfordshire change initiative for older people with higher support needs.
- West Oxfordshire DC and OCC Public Transport on issues surrounding access to Witney.
- Faringdon Area Plan group on access issues arising from their Healthcheck.
- Wantage, Grove and District on transport and access issues from their Healthcheck.
- Octabus Dial-a-Ride Consortium.
- Concessionary Fares Group. Continued to act as chair of the county wide officers group and looking towards the changes proposed to administration of the national scheme.
- RASP has continued to allocate grants as agreed by partners at about £100,000 p.a.

**4. Community Transport Adviser.** As stated this one post was held by two people on a Job Share basis but is now solely filled by Emily Lewis. The post is designed to help new and existing voluntary schemes and to support parishes in identifying unmet transport needs. During this review period the following work has been carried out

- In conjunction with Public Transport Area Reviews parishes are offered support in carrying out transport needs surveys. In the Bicester review 8 surveys were completed and 1 in the Abingdon review. These surveys are time critical to fit the overall schedule and took an estimated 100 days of officer time.
- In view of the interest from parishes in access to Witney we are developing an extended survey to look closely at the problems and act as evidence in the review consultation. This is requiring us to bring forward our communication with parishes and surveys will commence shortly.
- Continued to administer the Octabadge scheme which allows volunteer drivers unlimited free parking at the hospitals. The scheme this year has been extended to Churchill Hospital and the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre.
- Working with Watlington to set up a new voluntary car scheme.
- Reviewed with parishes in Cherwell the need for more CT Schemes.
- Working with Good Neighbour Schemes in Bodicote and Beckley to establish driving in the schemes.
- 3 Newsletters produced and distributed to voluntary schemes and Parish Transport representatives.
- Administered Public Liability Insurance arrangements for voluntary car schemes.
- Attended AGMs of Volunteer Link-up, Witney and Faringdon Community Bus.

**6. Disability Transport Adviser/Trainer.** This post falls into two parts

- Disability advice and training
- Stewardship of Transport For All

Advice and training has involved 150 candidates this period similar to 2008/2009. The training embraces minibus, MPV and cars but also includes Passenger Assistant and Disability Awareness training to a wide variety of organisations including

- Community Bus Operators - Faringdon, Stanford-in-the-Vale, Villager and Richard Wellesley (Buckland)
- Social Organisations - Henley Handibus
- Hospice and Mental Health Organisations – Styleacre, Response, Helen and Douglas House, Oxfordshire MIND, Family & Children Enterprises, Restore
- Other Organisations - Barnardos (Launton), British Red Cross, NOMAD

Often there have been follow up meetings discussing legal requirements, good practice and vehicle purchase and adaptation.

Transport For All has expanded with the membership now over 100 individuals either acting for themselves or representing organisations or groups. Main activities have been

- Regular group and sub-group meetings.
- Regular liaison with Access Groups.
- Regular meetings and liaison with major bus operators - Stagecoach and Oxford Bus.
- Meetings of Oxfordshire Learning Disability Partnership Board
- Responding to consultations

The DTAT has Chaired TFA for a number of years but has advised the group that he will be resigning from the post this year. He will continue to attend meetings and support TFA fully but this move will make TFA more independent.

## **Outcomes**

It can be seen that the above activity has contributed or will contribute to the achievement of the following outcomes, which have been identified for work of the Transport Team

- Policy makers and transport providers are more aware of local access needs and issues, the advantages of community transport and other community initiatives and the need to support them
- More supportive policies and strategies are adopted by the relevant agency/ies
- Transport and other services are designed to be better suited to meeting community needs
- More measures are introduced which benefit community transport schemes
- More agencies involved in service and transport provision explore opportunities for resource sharing and co-ordination of policy and provision
- People in rural, and other marginalised/isolated, communities benefit from improved or extended provision achieved through joint working by service providers and/or improved use of existing resources
- Service providers and members of communities are more aware of opportunities available and examples of good practice
- Community transport schemes themselves are helped to continue and be stronger and more effective
- More/improved and accessible transport provision is achieved to meet local needs and, where possible, to contribute to a reduction in energy consumption
- More people in communities have access to external services



**7. Future Activity.** It is hoped to continue to provide similar services to those shown in this report. Subject to work capacity we welcome the opportunity to provide more support to voluntary schemes and parishes through the PTR network. In the current economic climate it can be anticipated that the demand for volunteers and transport will increase but it may also provide an opportunity to extend the voluntary schemes. The ORCC Transport Team will endeavour to meet these demands and support the implementation of Manifesto Pledges.

By helping to fund the work of the ORCC's Community Transport Team, in conjunction with the District Councils, the Council is supporting the implementation of the current administration's manifesto pledges in the following ways:

*'We will make it easier to get around Oxfordshire'*

We are promoting and supporting community transport provision which complements the public transport services for which the Council is responsible, particularly in the rural areas where more conventional provision is more difficult to deliver.

*'We will promote safer and greener communities'*

The Council wishes to promote self-help in the community and to encourage volunteers to support their local community. This is the main focus of our community transport work and it is clear from discussion at a recent networking event for CT schemes that there is a growing need and desire to recruit more volunteer organisers and drivers, which we will be developing and supporting in the coming year.

*'We will improve opportunities for young people'*

*'We will improve services for older people'*

The transport needs of these two sections of the community are regularly raised at a strategic level by the OCTAPO, who is advocating a joined-up approach to organising and delivering transport services by the range of different statutory and voluntary agencies who are currently addressing particular needs in isolation. His membership of a number of key inter-agency working groups looking at particular needs offers opportunities to promote partnership working within and across groups, in order to explore means of improving provision within existing resources.

Community transport schemes are a key means of improving the quality of life and access to services of older people, especially in the rural areas, where there is a greater proportion of older people and an increased risk of isolation.

*Focussing on localities*

Support for the work of the ORCC enables the Council to help to address locality needs in the communities outside the identified high priority areas of the county towns and Oxford City.

**Oxfordshire Rural Community Council  
January 2010**