



Environment and Community Panel
Tuesday, 6th September, 2022 at 4.30 pm
**in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market
Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

**Reports marked to follow on the Agenda and/or Supplementary
Documents**

- a) Update Reports from Councillors on Outside Bodies - West Norfolk
Community Transport Project - Councillor Nockolds (Page 2)

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West Norfolk Community Transport Project Limited

Dial-a-Bus

WNCT continue to operate 21 minibuses including 2 Volkswagen Caddy smaller vehicles. In addition, they now have the fully electric wheelchair accessible Nissan Envoy. The majority of the funding for this was provided from the Community Infrastructure Levy. It is used on the King's Lynn Dial-a-Bus (DAB) service and is a very conspicuous, environmentally friendly addition to the fleet.

The DAB operation has experienced consistent economic pressures over recent years as operating costs have risen inexorably whilst grant funding levels have been static. In addition, the impact of Covid has had a huge impact on passenger numbers. The number of passenger trips between April 2021 and March 2022 was 10,604 compared to 21,686 for 2019-2020 – a reduction of 52%. At the moment numbers are running about 40% down on King's Lynn DAB and 60% down on rural whereas the scheduled GTT services are only about 20% down. It does seem that the older passengers who use our DAB services are more reluctant to travel particularly in the rural areas.

The average age of the fleet is 11 years with 7 buses over 15 years old which is a matter of concern.

WNCT have a new team running this operation now and we are looking at ways of regaining the lost passenger base as well exploring new business opportunities. They are planning to refresh the livery in order to make the vehicles more visible as well as increasing the marketing and promotional activity.

Shopmobility

Shopmobility activity follows a similar pattern to Dial-a-Bus albeit at an even more depressed level. Hire figures in 2019/2020 were 1,852 for the year compared to 549 for 2021/2022 - a reduction of 70%. This has recovered slightly to around 50% reduction.

Volunteer Car Drivers

Volunteer car activity has held up surprisingly well and is now in line with historical figures. In fact, having lost some drivers over the Covid period they are finding that they could do with 5 to 10 more, they are recruiting

Summary

Much of the cost of running the DAB operation is met by very welcome grant support including around £65,000 from King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council. In addition, they receive £99,000 from Norfolk County Council and £26,000 from the CCG. Fare income equates to around £65,000 per annum. However, the sum of these grants and fare income is less than just the £285,000 annual drivers wage bill let alone the addition of vehicle running costs, office staff costs and overheads etc.

WNCT cover the difference by bidding for school and other contracts, where we can use the vehicles morning and afternoon whilst leaving the buses available for DAB work during the day.

WNCT also receive a grant from the Borough Council of £25,000 to support the Shopmobility operation. Annual scooter hire income is around £12,000. Annual staff costs are around £25,000 and they pay rent and service charge for the premises to the Borough Council. This does not leave a great deal for scooter maintenance and overheads but this operation just about washes its face for the time being.

Thank you to Peter Brown, Director, for the report.

Elizabeth Nockolds