

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Environment and Community Panel		
DATE:	1 May 2018		
TITLE:	Community Car Schemes		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Update		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Culture, Heritage and Health		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Lorraine Gore / Sarah Dennis		
OPEN/EXEMPT		WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	Yes/No

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:

In March 1999 the Borough Council received Countryside Agency funding to assist local communities in the set-up of Rural Transport Partnerships (RTP's). The purpose of these RTP's was to reduce social isolation caused by the rurality of the borough, using an action plan designed by each RTP.

A Rural Transport Officer was employed to facilitate this process and she was instrumental in the set-up of the six car schemes that are still funded today. The Countryside Agency funding ceased several years ago, and the Borough Council has continued to fund these schemes, to the sum of approximately £7,600 per annum.

Currently the six schemes the Council funds are:

Middleton
 Castle Acre
 Great Massingham
 Northwold
 Burnham Market
 Heacham **

** Heacham has not received funding since 2012.

Schemes are funded slightly differently. Three schemes receive an annual grant; three schemes receive payments on a quarterly basis. Schemes paid quarterly are also subject to drivers claims checks. Schemes receiving payments annually must demonstrate financial need each year, and they do so by providing an income and expenditure account for verification. A summary of each scheme and how it is funded is provided at **Appendix 1**.

A member of the public has recently raised concerns regarding the governance of a car scheme operating in West Norfolk, although not one funded by the Borough Council. Given the historical nature of the funding arrangements for community car schemes this seemed an opportune time to conduct a review.

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the review findings and to seek views on how schemes should be funded in the future.

KEY ISSUES:

To ascertain how well used car schemes were in the Borough a questionnaire was sent to all 101 parishes. A copy of this questionnaire is at **Appendix 2**.

A brief summary of responses is as follows:

- From 101 parishes, 53 responded - a response rate of 52%
- Of these 53 parishes, 36 had no car scheme operating in their area, and none of these requested that one ought to be set up
- Of the 17 parishes with a car scheme operating in their area, 14 parish councils contributed something to that scheme
- Journey types included medical trips (to local GPs as well as to Papworth and Addenbrookes)
- Those parishes that knew of the Scheme in their area were very supportive of the service.

It should be noted at this stage that the review undertaken did not consider any particular routes that car schemes covered. Full details of the parish responses can be found at **Appendix 3**. All schemes funded by the Borough Council were also requested to submit their governance arrangements.

Advice was also sought from the Passenger Transport Manager at Norfolk County Council around how schemes should be charging customers and the issue of minimum charging. Some key points raised by him were as follows:

- All car schemes use volunteers who are reimbursed mileage. This is usually around 45 pence per mile
- The reimbursement of mileage can include 'dead' miles. This is the mileage between the driver's starting location and passenger pick up location
- Norfolk County Council fund a number of schemes across the county, including some covering West Norfolk
- The schemes generally do a very good job of taking people on essential journeys that they cannot do, due to disability, a lack of buses or a lack of an alternative
- Some schemes make a charge on top of the mileage to cover costs, such as administration, personnel etc. This charge, which is sometimes part of a minimum charge, cannot be passed on to the driver if it exceeds his mileage, but can be used towards scheme funds to run the service. It is not permissible to pass these extra funds for administration onto the driver if he has not completed the miles to warrant it
- There is a limit of miles that volunteer drivers can do annually, before this must be declared to HMRC
- NCC has service level agreements in place with those that they fund, and the main basis of all of these agreements is that the schemes are to supplement local transport and not compete with it.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

The Panel are requested to consider if they wish to continue to support community car schemes in West Norfolk. If this is the case then consideration could also be given to:

- a) Any eligibility criteria Members may wish to put in place for individuals
- b) Potentially to only support certain types of journeys, for e.g. medical trips only.

Members are requested to consider the three options for delivery below:

- 1. Continue to fund all six existing car schemes, subject to the criteria and governance set out below**

All existing schemes continue to receive funding at their current levels, subject to:

- One annual payment made to all schemes, pending receipt of the previous year's income and expenditure statement
- The Borough Council to cease quarterly payments and checking of claims and move to an annual payment.

2. Current funding arrangements cease and all parishes with a scheme can request funding up to a maximum award of £500

All current funding arrangements cease and any parish with a car scheme has the ability to apply for funding of £500 towards their scheme. This would be subject to evidence that a car scheme exists in their parish. The current budget (£7,600) would be able to fund 15 schemes in this way.

3. The Council budget of £7,600 per annum be given to Norfolk County Council to fund West Norfolk transport schemes

The budget be given to Norfolk County with the provision that it is to be used to fund community car schemes in West Norfolk only.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Panel are recommended to agree to continue to support the valuable community car schemes in West Norfolk and to maintain the budget at the current levels. Subject to continued discussions with the Transport Manager at Norfolk County Council, it is recommended that community car schemes are administered by Norfolk County Council, as part of their Total Transport Plan, where more detail regarding routes can be considered. This recommendation is subject to any criteria regarding eligibility and journey types that Members may wish to put in place. Any changes to take place from 1st April 2019.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

So that car schemes can continue to provide a transport service to those most affected by the rurality of the borough.

Appendix 1 – Summary of Car Schemes Currently Funded

Car Scheme	Grant (per annum)	Payable	Method of Payment	Grant paid to date 2017/18
Burnham Market	£2,080	Annually	If financial need can be demonstrated (*)	£2,080
Castle Acre (grant paid to West Norfolk Community Transport project)	Approx. £200	Quarterly, on receipt of drivers journey sheets and a quarterly claim form	Originally the Borough Council and Parish Council funded 50% each (**)	£228
Great Massingham	£2,080	Annually	If financial need can be demonstrated (*)	£2,080
Heacham and District	£2,040	Annually	If financial need can be demonstrated (*)	NIL
Middleton	Approx. £220	Quarterly, on receipt of drivers journey sheets and a quarterly claim form	Borough Council and Parish Council fund 50% each (**)	£263
Northwold	Approx. £1,000	Quarterly, on receipt of drivers journey sheets and a quarterly claim form	Borough Council and Parish Council fund 50% each. (**)	£983
TOTALS	Approx. £7,620			£5,634

* Financial need is assessed by considering a Scheme's income and expenditure account. If a Scheme holds more than one year's running costs in reserves there is deemed to be no financial need. Heacham have not been able to demonstrate financial need since 2012.

** The original agreement stipulated that the Borough and relevant Parish Council funded 50% of the cost each. However, on receipt of information for each Scheme, this would appear to no longer be the case for the schemes originally funded in this way. See **Appendix 3** for details of each individual Scheme.

Appendix 2

Please ask for: Sarah Dennis

Direct dial: (01553) 616795

E-mail: sarah.dennis@west-norfolk.gov.uk

Borough Council of
**King's Lynn &
West Norfolk**



Clerk to the Parish Council

Community Car Schemes

The Borough Council is trying to collate a list of all community car schemes currently operating in West Norfolk, and establishing how these schemes are funded.

Please could you complete the template attached to this letter with as much information as you can in order that we can gather as much information as possible. It would be really helpful if you could complete this as soon as you can and in any event no later than **Friday 2nd March 2018**. You can return the template via email or by post.

In the meantime, if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me using the details at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Dennis
Partnerships and Funding Officer
Finance Services

Parish Name	
Name of Car Scheme operating in your Parish	
Name of Car Scheme Administrator	
Email Address of Scheme / Scheme Administrator	
Postal Address of Scheme / Scheme Administrator	
Does your Parish Council contribute to any Car Scheme? If so, which one? (This may be a Scheme that operates in a different parish)	
How much does your Parish Council contribute to this/ these Car Scheme(s)?	
What is the scope of the journeys made by the Car Scheme operating in your parish? For e.g. medical journeys, shopping trips, trips to the vets etc.	
Is there any other information you would like to tell us, that may inform this review?	