

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation

Subject: Community Transport Review

Date of meeting: 25 January 2018

Report by: Director of Community and Communication

Wards affected: All

1. Requested by Councillor Simon Boshier, Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update following the cessation of the Dial-a-Ride scheme on the review into community transport provision by Age UK Portsmouth and on a separate review by Portsmouth Disability Forum

3. Information Requested

The review into community transport provision and this report were requested by the Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation owing to concerns raised when Dial-A-Ride (DAR) ceased to operate.

It was agreed that an independent review should be undertaken and representative bodies within the voluntary and community sector namely Age UK Portsmouth and Portsmouth Disability Forum (PDF) were asked to undertake this work.

As part of the review a survey was completed with 220 respondents. It was not the intention of this survey to focus on one particular transport method, rather to glean from the responses, trends which may provide information to inform future decisions taken by PCC and other providers.

The review concluded that overall transport provision in the City has improved in terms of accessibility for those individuals who may have historically used community transport. However, there are some areas where the Council may wish to consider working with partners to support training and to promote public transport awareness around things like the impact of parking in bus lanes. In addition the Council may wish to work with partners in health and the voluntary sector to ensure a greater awareness of what is available to those groups and individuals who may benefit the most. The review further concluded that it was more important to promote independence than the dependence which some community transport provision can lead to and that the need for and nature of community transport has significantly changed particularly within a city environment. Schemes such as "good neighbours" (being piloted by our partners in

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health) have been found to be more relevant because they provide a more person-centred response, where the driver often takes on a support role rather than only driving.

4. Transport issues for noting

The following matters came to light during the review.

Buses

- **super low floor buses along with raised kerbs.** Although these provide level access for everyone whether ambulant or in a wheelchair, they cannot always be used because of people parking illegally, so the bus cannot align to the kerb therefore the person cannot get on.

- **a dedicated wheelchair position within the bus.** These have been designed around the standard wheelchair dimensions but cannot accommodate large wheelchairs or pavement scooters. Even though the space is signed as being for wheelchair users, difficult situations can arise when individuals with trolleys or mums with buggies have already claimed it.

- **audio and visual announcements.** Both systems improve travel for hearing and visually impaired people, as well as the general public, but are not on all vehicles.

Taxis

36% of the licensed hackney carriages in Portsmouth are wheelchair accessible and 3% of our licensed private hire vehicles are wheelchair accessible.

The Government have recently commenced provisions contained within the Equality Act 2010 to protect wheelchair users travelling in hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, by conferring powers on the Licensing Authority to enable them to make a list of wheelchair accessible vehicles ("designated vehicles"). When this list is published, the Act then requires the drivers of those vehicles to carry passengers in wheelchairs, provide assistance to those passengers and prohibits them from charging extra.

The Statutory Guidance produced by the Department for Transport makes specific mention about charging a wheelchair user extra and states:

"It is our view that the requirement not to charge a wheelchair user extra means that, in practice, a meter should not be left running whilst the driver performs duties required by the Act, or the passenger enters, leaves or secures their wheelchair within the passenger compartment. We recommend that licensing authority rules for drivers are updated to make clear when a meter can and cannot be left running".

PCC have scheduled to undertake this piece of work in relation to the formation of a list of designated vehicles for wheelchair users for this year.

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- **introduction of a wider range of wheelchair accessible vehicles.** Some have automatic ramps meaning that wheelchair users and those with mobility issues can access them more easily. However it is known that as these vehicles have multiple seats, they can be more profitably used on school runs or for groups socialising rather than for transporting a single disabled person.
- **improved booking facility.** Using mobile technology, the booking systems now can tell you when your vehicle is coming, what type and colour it is and its registration, all of which helps everyone to feel more confident and safe regarding their journey. However this is of no use for people without mobile phones.
- **the requirement by law for guide dogs and assistance dogs to be transported.** This should mean that a person can feel confident that they will be allowed in the car, (subject to some exemption rules) but there are still drivers who try and flout this rule and even try and charge for the dog.

Cars

- **the design and availability of accessible vehicles.** Both have improved. There are now more vehicles that the disabled persons themselves can drive, and there are also more cars in which they can be transported.
- **the Blue Badge system has been reviewed and improved.** This has happened to ensure that there is improved parity as to who and why an individual receives a badge, to improve security of design, to use a centralised database and to improve enforcement to reduce the abuse of the system.

Scooters

- there has been an exponential increase in the number of **private pavement vehicles**, due in part to vehicle prices reducing, but also because it is not necessary to be disabled to get one, or indeed have any requirement placed on you to insure yourself or maintain the vehicle whilst using it.
- **Shopmobility Schemes** locally and nationally have been under pressure as funding is reduced or withdrawn, but all their vehicles are maintained, insured and the drivers trained and checked before they are allowed out on them. Portsmouth City Council have continued to fund this scheme The contract with PDF for the Shopmobility Scheme in Portsmouth has been running since April 2012. From April 2012 - March 2016 the scheme was funded for £25,000 a year; since April 2016 it has been funded for £20,000 a year. Additionally, in 2016/17 a one-off grant of £10,000 was made which enabled nine new vehicles to be purchased.

Trains

- **the improved physical accessibility** of railway stations and the requirement for every station to have a set of ramps readily available, means more freedom of travel to more locations for wheelchair users and people with limited mobility.
- **the improved accessibility of the trains themselves**, spaces for disabled people (assuming that no able bodied person has decided to use them) and on board accessible toilet facilities means a person can travel safely in comfort.

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- **audio and visual announcements.** Both systems improve travel for hearing and visually impaired people, as well as the general public, but are not on all trains or at all stations.

Ferries local and continental

- **improved physical accessibility of landing stages, and access to the boats themselves.** This means passengers have more confidence in travelling than previously. Also, increased on board staff training has given confidence to passengers that their needs can be met.

Good Neighbours and Voluntary Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE)

There are several pilot initiatives taking place at present across PCC with partners in health and the voluntary and community sector looking at a person-centred approach in order to understand and deliver the best outcomes for individuals. One of these pilots is the Good Neighbours scheme. The Good Neighbours scheme is currently being developed in three areas in Portsmouth (North, Central and South) and providing transport will be one of the priorities. The scheme is still being developed so at this stage no transport is being provided but the intention is that it will be in the future. The first scheme will be operational soon after Easter, but it will take time to grow and provision of transport is likely to be on a small scale in the beginning. The scheme would provide transport through a group of volunteers using their own (or purchased share cars) to individuals and where this has been introduced, it has led to a wider befriending and support network helping people to remain independent. This particular scheme has been run successfully in Hampshire and has had some 4000 volunteers supporting it. There is also a scheme (Portsdown Friends) which is up and running and already provides transport albeit within a very small area. Other pilots are reviewing gaps in provision and if transport becomes an identified issue will report back accordingly.

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Signed by (Director)

Appendices: Nil

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
None	