

SUBJECT	Chiltern Dial a Ride funding
RELEVANT MEMBER	Councillor L Walsh – Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Martin Holt, Head of Healthy Communities
REPORT AUTHOR	Martin Holt, Head of Healthy Communities
WARD/S AFFECTED	Not ward specific

1. Purpose of Report

To award a grant to Chilterns Dial a Ride for the purchase of a new vehicle

RECOMMENDATION to Council:

- 1. That Cabinet award a grant of £39,378 to Chiltern Dial a Ride for the purchase of a new vehicle.**

2. Executive Summary

Community Transport delivered by the voluntary and community sector provides a valuable contribution to the transport mix in the District. Community Transport ranges from voluntary car schemes, hospital transport initiatives, and transport available for community groups to hire to the provision of dedicated services operating 5 days per week accessible by vulnerable or disabled persons. This includes services provided by Chilterns Dial a Ride.

Chilterns Dial a Ride submitted a large grant application for a replacement vehicle, but due to the demand for the large grants and the need to provide investment in facilities that would benefit children and young people opportunities to develop play this application became ineligible.

The Council however under the Unitary spending protocol can award funding up to £100,000. It is proposed to use £39,378 from General reserves to support the funding application for a new vehicle.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

To enable accessible transport options to vulnerable persons.

4. Content of Report

Chiltern Dial a Ride

4.1 The Chilterns Dial-a-Ride (CDAR) is a registered charity (no 1161606) that plays a very valuable role in helping enable social contact in the community by providing a door to door transport service for people who due to age, illness or disability are not able to use their own or public transport. Not only does this facilitate social contact, but it helps these vulnerable people maintain a level of independence

4.2 Dial a Ride delivers valued community transport services across Chiltern District Council to its 250 vulnerable disabled and infirm clients, enabling access to day trips, hospital, shopping and community venues.

4.3 Over several years the organisation has;

- Increased its profile and improve its branding and image
- Increase its voluntary funding by establishing a vehicle replacement and operational fund
- Diversified its service delivery to include community transport in Wycombe
- Lowered its costs by increasing the proportion of volunteers it employs.
- Increase income through charging higher fares and increases to its membership fees and supporting its NHS customers to access the NHS transport fund when travelling to hospital.
- Increase its capacity to provide journeys to shopping and community facilities and to provide day trips.

4.4 The CDAR uses a fleet of 9 bespoke minibuses, all of which have wheelchair access, with a team of dedicated and caring drivers. All drivers are fully trained. Currently 8 of the drivers are part time paid and 19 are volunteers. Dial a Ride support 250 individuals from the Chiltern area and undertake around 12,000 passenger journeys per annum of which on the last count 5,805 were from Chiltern District residents.

4.5 The Great Get Together on June 21st, organised by CDAR enabled 50 elderly people from Chesham and Amersham to access a day out with entertainment and lunch, with valuable help and support from CDC.

4.6 CDAR aims to acquire an additional vehicle, to expand the Great Get Together and other social outings part of their service enabling coverage across the district. To enable this, the need another larger minibus, with a tail lift and capacity for 12 passengers and access for up to 3 wheelchairs (65% of users are either using wheelchairs or walkers/rollators). The funding will also support the cost of paid and volunteer drivers to operate it.

4.7 Dial a Ride have made provision in their budget for another part time paid driver and are successfully recruiting more volunteer drivers to together provide the driving of the minibus for the 5 day working week and some weekend work too.

4.8 Besides individuals using CDAR, there has been a steady increase in group trips for care homes and local community groups with currently 2 or more a month from Chiltern District. Dial a Ride are delivering initiatives such as "Enabling Social Contact", launched last 2018.

4.9 CDAR calculated that over a 12 months period, volunteers worked for no less than 5,802 hours of their time for CDAR - 4,186 by volunteer drivers and 1,656 by the volunteer Chairman and Treasurer. CDAR sees this is an important factor in assessing the return on grant investment by local government.

4.10 CDAR operates a business model, with a tightly knit team, competent operations personnel and astute financial management but is still dependent on grant support from local government, including the vital contribution from Chiltern District Council.

4.11 CDAR continues to have a good record of raising very necessary additional funds from elsewhere. In the financial year (2018/19) CDAR raised funds for two larger minibuses

4.12 CDAR has embarked on a further fund raising initiative to continue to fund the operation of the new vehicle that would operate in the Chiltern District. The organisation has identified contributions of £17,666 to be used to match fund the purchase of a new vehicle and have approached the Council to award a grant of £30k.

4.13 Members of the Services Overview Committee, reported concerns raised by the public as to the costs of dial a ride. Reports had been received that the membership was £30/month and the journey costs were more expensive than a taxi. It was also reported that large vehicles were being used with only 2 or 3 passengers. Clarification from CDAR has been sought as to its use of vehicles and the journey costs. Appendix 1 details CDAR's reply to these reports.

4.14 Clarification from a second community transport organisation confirms that when carrying wheelchairs, two or three seats have to be removed. This results in a 9 seater vehicle being able to carry 2 wheelchair passengers and their carer's, the vehicle is then carrying 4 or 5 passengers. Similarly a 12 seater may only carry a maximum of 3 wheelchair passengers and their carer's and a small 6 seater vehicle is limited to one wheelchair passenger.

4.15 Clarification has also confirmed that there is an increasing trend to electric wheelchairs and CDAR has confirmed that circa 1/3 of its passengers use such equipment. CDAR has also confirmed that the very frail cannot use ramps or steps and are brought on the vehicle with the aid of the hoist.

4.16 Whilst taxis are recognised to support some persons access transport it is evident that there is still a demand for community transport services that can take very infirm and vulnerable persons to hospital, shopping and social outings, wait for the passengers to complete their activity and then return them safely home.

4.17 A comparison of CDAR charges against those advertised by private hire firms or the calculated Hackney Carriage fares demonstrates the competitive charges being made by CDAR.

FROM	TO	DISTANCE (MILES)	DAR COST (SINGLE/ <u>EACH</u> <u>WAY</u>)	Hackney Carriage (Tariff)	TAXI COST quoted
CDC Offices	Chesham Town Hall	2.76	£5	£7	£7-£8
CDC Offices	Amersham Hospital	1.51	£5	£4.50	£6
CDC Offices	Stoke Mandeville Hospital	14.98	£23	£29	£29
CDC Offices	High Wycombe Hospital	8.89	£14	£18	£20
CDC Offices	Chalfont St Peter Hospital	6.28	£11	£13.20	£13

5. Consultation

Not Applicable

6. Options (if any)

The options available are to award funding or to refuse the application for funding.

7. Corporate Implications

7.1 Financial – the award of funding to CDAR in 2019/20 for the provision of a new vehicle could be met through the allocation of General Reserves which require the approval of Council.

7.2 Legal - the Unitary spending protocol requires that expenditure of £100,000 on any one item should be referred to the S151 officer. The award of funding to CDAR is below this limit and is therefore not required to be approved by the s151 officer.

8. Unitary Implications (if applicable)

8.1 None

9. Links to Council Policy Objectives

Working towards safe and healthier local communities

10. Next Steps

Dial a Ride would be notified of the funding allocation.

Background Papers:	None
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