

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:

- That following Cabinet consideration, a grant of £39,378 be awarded 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. This report was considered by the Services Overview Committee on 26 November where the recommendation was supported, following initial consideration by Cabinet on 15 October.

4. Content of Report

Background

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 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.

4.6 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.

4.7 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

4.8 The Great Get Together (GGT) on June 21st, organised by CDAR enabled over 40 elderly people from Chesham and Amersham to access a day out with entertainment and lunch, with valuable help and support from CDC. The GGT newsletter is detailed in Appendix 1

Request for Funding

4.9 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, they 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).

4.10 CDAR advise that the minibus with the specification detailed in Appendix 2 *will play a key role in meeting increased demand for group transport, not only for care homes and day centres, but also from other entities like the Chiltern MS Centre, Stroke Groups, Camaraderie, Contact The Elderly, Bucks Old People Action Group, Prevention Matters, Your Voice, Make Music Make Change, Amersham Museum. Whilst CDAR is known to most of these entities, feedback from many of them (most recently, this October, in Amersham at the Older Persons Day, the Community Grants Workshop and Social Prescribing Project workshop) is that transport is a big issue for them with a role for CDAR. CDAR intends to develop to meet this need, with the help of the new minibus.*

4.11 CDAR target in the first year from the commissioning of the new minibus, and attributable to it, is to achieve 800 passenger journeys, including existing users and up to 80 new users. Of these passenger journeys, about 80% will be fare paying passengers and the balance of 20% from subsidised social outings (reference The Great Get Together last June, but on a smaller scale). The build-up will be gradual. Our aim, for example, is that "Social outings" (some subsidised) would be initially one a month building up to 2-3.

4.12 CDAR has embarked on a fund raising initiative 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 £39,378.

4.13 The project will require a part time paid driver to enable booked commitments to be met and are successfully recruiting more volunteer drivers to enable the minibus to be operated 5 days/week plus the option of some weekend work.

Expenditure	£
New vehicle	36578
Livery	600
Insurance	1200
Maintenance	1000
Staffing, marketing, publicity	17, 666
Total	£57,044
Income	

CDC Grant	£39,378
Additional Grant	10,000
Fare income and other grant funding	7,666

Clarification of the Dial a ride charges and the numbers of person carried

4.14 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 3 details CDAR's reply to these reports.

4.15 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)	CDAR COST (SINGLE/ EACH WAY)	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

4.16 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.

4.17 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.

4.18 Whilst taxis are recognised to support some access transport, they are unable to carry motorised scooters, and unless specially adapted cannot carry a person seated in a wheelchair. It is evident that there is still a need for specialist

community transport services that can take very infirm and vulnerable persons to hospital, shopping and social outings, and wait for the passengers to complete their activity and then return them safely home.

Electric Vehicles

4.19 A request was made to consider if the vehicle could be all electric assisting the Councils commitment to Climate Change. Research by CDAR Appendix 4 has advised that a fully electric vehicle meeting CDAR's needs is not available for use at the current time. A 13 seater hybrid van has been launched but this does not have passenger carrying Type Approval at the current time.

5. Consultation

5.1 members requested that consultation occur with users and organisations supporting the very vulnerable. The results of that survey are detailed in appendix 5.

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:	Information provided by Dial a Ride detailed in appendix
---------------------------	--