

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Briefing Note**



**DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE**

Subject: Community Transport & Dial-a-Ride
Head of Service /
Officer Responsible: Head of Community Services

<p>Background and Reason for Briefing Note</p>	<p>The Committee requested an update after 12 months of operation. To ascertain value received for CDC's additional contribution to OCC Dial-a-Ride. To report on the development of Community transport, including the work of Oxfordshire Community Transport Advisory Group (OCTAG).</p>
<p>Head of Service</p>	<p>Background:</p> <p>From 01 April 2012 Oxfordshire County Council took over responsibility for running dial-a-ride services throughout the county.</p> <p>The OCC service provided less capacity than the previous scheme (BCTA - which had cost CDC £187,000 in 2011/12). The council decided on a two-pronged approach to providing and developing extra community transport capacity in the district:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Top-up” the OCC dial-a-ride service • Develop & promote volunteer driver services <p>OCC Dial-a-Ride & CDC’s “Top-Up”</p> <p>Under OCC’s baseline service each district has one bus per day, different parts of the district are served on different days. Because Cherwell had the largest existing client base it was felt that, at least initially, this baseline service would be insufficient. CDC budgeted £30k p.a. for 2012/13 and 2013/14 to top up the service, so that on three days of the week Cherwell is served by two buses rather than one.</p> <p>Group booking (for several people to travel one neighbourhood to a common destination) was a feature of the old BCTA service but did not initially form part of the OCC service. Following customer feedback OCC introduced this service during the “off-peak” period 10.30 to 2.30 day.</p> <p>Following customer feedback, block bookings have also been introduced, making it easier for customers that make the same journey each week. Journeys can be block booked for three months in advance, and once booked there will be no need to call every week.</p> <p>Concessionary bus passes are accepted on OCC dial-a-ride services.</p> <p>Cherwell consistently has the highest passenger numbers in the county. For Cherwell the average number of passengers per month through 2012/2013 was</p>

1,137 (City 638, West 332, Vale 257, South 94). Dial a Ride in Cherwell is currently operating at near full capacity but booking requests are almost always met.
 Cherwell is the only district to “top-up”. The other rural districts do not have unmet demand. Oxford City has identified unmet demand, meaning that scheme members are often denied service.

Volunteer Drivers - Cherwell

In late 2011 CDC tendered for contracts to provide and develop volunteer driver services throughout the district (alongside contracts to increase volunteering and to provide debt and money advice). The winning bidder was Banbury CAB. The contract started on 01 April 2012. CAB also won Cherwell’s contract to increase volunteering in the district. The two contracts work closely together and are branded as “Volunteer Connect”.

Initially the service focussed on directing potential clients to existing volunteer driver services such as those run by Banbury Volunteer Bureau and WRVS. Over the course of year 1, the service began to recruit new volunteer drivers and by the end of June 2013 there were 27 volunteer drivers registered with Volunteer Connect.

Latest figures available are for the first quarter of 2013/14. These show that 364 journeys were provided by Volunteer Connect Drivers and 182 clients were referred to other transport providers.

The majority of drivers and clients are in Banbury, Bicester & Kidlington (plus a significant cluster of drivers in Steeple Aston). The development aim for year two is to increase drivers and clients across rural Cherwell, where public transport is more difficult to access.

OCC Supporting Community Transport Project

In April 2012 OCC received a grant of £514,000 from Central Government to support the development of Community Transport services. £22,000 was allocated to topping up the Dial-a-ride service (£110,000 each in 2012/13 and 2013/14), with the rest for researching, promoting and developing community based transport, including creation of a temporary post to lead the project.

Oxfordshire Community Transport Advisory Group

OCTAG is a liaison group hosted by Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC). Attendees include District & County Officers, provider representatives (from car and community bus schemes) and client representatives (Age UK). The group meets quarterly to share information and best practice and to co-ordinate efforts.

Through OCTAG, CDC and Volunteer Connect liaise with the OCC “Supporting Community Transport” project officer to try to ensure “best value” for Cherwell between the two schemes.

Completed by: Kevin Larnar

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