
ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor David Lyonette,
Transport Portfolio**

Responsible Director - Richard Alty, Director of Place

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Member approval for the award of grant funding for the provision of an accessible community transport service to be managed by eVOLution.

Summary

2. Following the rejection in October 2012 of the bid by Darlington Rural Transport Ltd (DART) for a community transport solution serving Sadberge and rejection of a bid to provide an evening service to Hurworth, further work has been undertaken to develop additional accessible community transport capacity to better meet the needs of local people, providing value for money and achieving sustainability in the longer term.
3. This work has been led by the local ward members, the community leaders and eVOLution. A number of options have been developed providing services to villages in the north east of the Borough (Sadberge, Great Stainton, Little Stainton, Bishopton) as well as Neasham village and residents in Geneva Crescent, Darlington. In addition an evening service to Hurworth has been considered.
4. Prices have been sought by eVOLution from community transport, bus and taxi operators and based on the costs provided, a daytime service can be provided to serve the villages. Value for money will be assessed through a further competitive tender exercise. Longer term sustainability is difficult to evidence due to unknown passenger numbers and unknown fares rates/income. However, as with other schemes supported through the Community Transport and Local Sustainable Transport Funds, the grant awarded will enable the service to be set up with the aim of growing patronage. The local community and eVOLution could also work with the operator to identify further sources of funding if required.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Members support the the award of grant funding to eVOLution to enable it to appoint an accessible community transport service provider to operate a daytime service to Sadberge, Great Stainton. Little Stainton, Bishopton and Neasham, to an agreed timetable and standards of operation. The grant funding to be awarded for up to 2 years using all of the available funding, subject to progress on growing patronage and demonstrating ongoing financial sustainability.

Reasons

6. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) This service would best meet the needs of local people, particularly those in rural areas, as identified through the consultation process, the original bids and ongoing discussions with community leaders. This option also best fits with the Sadberge Travel Club which now operates. The service will be independent of the Council and is community led in line with the original criteria in the bidding guidance.

Richard Alty
Director of Place

Background Papers

- (i) Accessible Community Transport; Cabinet; 9 October 2012
- (ii) Accessible Community Transport Study – Report 1 Key Findings and Option Development
- (iii) Accessible Community Transport – Report 2 Option Development and Appraisal Final

Sue Dobson: Extension 2277

S17 Crime and Disorder	No impact
Health and Well Being	Reducing isolation has positive benefits for wellbeing; providing accessible community transport can have positive benefits to health and wellbeing through access to a wide range of services and opportunities.
Carbon Impact	Providing transport at a community rather than individual level may reduce the carbon impact depending on journey patterns
Diversity	The funding specifically seeks to better meet the transport needs of older and disabled people as well as those living in areas without other transport services (urban and rural)
Wards Affected	Sadberge & Whessoe and Hurworth
Groups Affected	People living in Darlington's rural areas.
Budget and Policy Framework	This fits with the policy framework set out in the

	Local Transport Plan and within the budgets available
Key Decision	Yes
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Supporting the development of accessible community transport contributes to the Perfectly Placed priority.
Efficiency	The recommendations support the effective and efficient use of available resources

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. As part of a successful application for Local Sustainable Transport Funding (LSTF) submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) in April 2011, funding was awarded to support the development of an accessible taxi pilot project. In response to other significant changes in the provision of and demand for transport services, a feasibility study was commissioned from JMP Consultants to consider the broader requirements of accessible community transport to meet identified local community needs. Additional funding was also identified to assist with the implementation.

8. Following the completion of the study, the results and recommendations were shared with partners, local residents and community groups through a series of consultation events. The Council then invited local communities to submit applications for funding to develop accessible community transport services that met the needs of a particular community. Evaluation criteria were sent to groups interested in submitting a bid to ensure that they could meet the requirements of the funding, particularly around community involvement and leadership, sustainability and deliverability.

9. Four bids for grant funding were received and were evaluated by Darlington Borough Council and JMP Consultants. Two were successful and are being implemented, as follows:
 - (a) The West End Bus for the Community “The Pink”; submitted by Darlington CVS t/a eVOLution; granted a total of £43,500.
 - (b) Equal Access to Taxi Services; Unlocking the Potential; submitted by Darlington Association on Disability; granted a total of £87,900.

10. Two further bids were submitted and evaluated but were not successful as they did not meet the key criteria of sustainability and deliverability, as follows:
 - (a) Rural Transport services for the area to the North East of Darlington; submitted by Darlington Rural Transport Ltd (DART); applied for £30,000 capital and £18,000 p.a. ongoing subsidy.
 - (b) Evening Community Transport Service for Hurworth; submitted by Hurworth Parish Council; applied for £16,500 for 2 years.

11. Cabinet also recommended that the Director of Place should explore further with the unsuccessful organisations other models that might resolve local community transport needs. The remaining funding (£40,203) was retained for the purpose of providing or supporting community transport services. This report details the process that has been followed to complete this work and the results from the recommendations.

Process

12. Officers arranged a meeting on 8 November 2012 with the Community Transport Association and representatives from Hurworth and Sadberge Parish Councils, ward councillors and eVOLution to discuss the factors that had led to the failure of the original bids to secure funding for an evening community transport service for Hurworth and a daytime service for Sadberge (and the other villages in the north east of the Borough). In summary the CTA identified the 5 key issues that were discussed at length:
 - (a) Insufficient clarity as to the likely future demand for the proposed service;
 - (b) Consideration of using other operators to deliver the service including bus, community transport and taxi operators;
 - (c) Review the proposed costs as the schemes were very costly because they utilised paid drivers and included the purchase of a new vehicle, rather than exploring the use of volunteer drivers and second hand/leased vehicles;
 - (d) Consideration of options to improve the asset utilisation by identifying ways to spread the costs of operating the service and generate additional income; and
 - (e) Using the spare capacity within the Council's own fleet.
13. Local ward councillors then worked with individuals and families to try and solve problems with access to college and work, particularly through car sharing. DART has set up the Sadberge Travel Club which provides a lifeline for residents in the village without cars, running a twice weekly taxi service (Tuesday and Thursday) in conjunction with Darlington firm 1AB, into the town centre. This is seen as a 'stop gap' solution until something more permanent can be established but equally it could continue to operate in conjunction with any other service.
14. In January 2013 the Council appointed JMP to undertake some further work on developing timetables for various accessible community transport services to meet the needs that were identified in the two unsuccessful bids from DART and Hurworth Parish Council. In addition the withdrawal of Service 20 which had served Neasham Village via Geneva Crescent, Darlington and Hurworth had also had an impact on residents in these areas. Therefore the needs of these residents for a day time service were also added into the requirements. The aim was to achieve some efficiency by linking the discrete routes together into one timetable. As Hurworth already has a daytime service there was a request that Hurworth should be excluded and an alternative route used to serve Neasham. However from an

operational point of view utilising the previous bus service 20 route provides a vital link between Neasham and Hurworth for those residents that actually need to travel to locations in the neighbouring village. It also provides an opportunity to pick up additional passengers which will assist with the viability of the service. These timetable options were discussed with the ward councillors and agreement reached on 4 timetable options. In summary these were:

- (a) Darlington – Sadberge – Little Stainton – Bishopton – Great Stainton – Sadberge – Darlington town centre – Geneva Crescent – Hurworth – Neasham and return to Darlington via the same route (daytime timetable plus evening option for Hurworth/Neasham)
- (b) As (a) but no evening option and reduced number of daytime journeys
- (c) Darlington – Sadberge – Little Stainton – Bishopton – Great Stainton – Sadberge – Darlington town centre (3 journeys per day plus additional outbound/return journeys on College Days)
- (d) Darlington – Sadberge – Little Stainton – Bishopton – Great Stainton – Sadberge – Darlington town centre (2 journeys per day plus additional outbound/return journeys on College Days)

Full details of the timetable options are in **Appendix 1** and a map of the proposed route(s) in **Appendix 2**.

- 15. As the Council had set out at the beginning of this process that any accessible community transport schemes that were to be supported with grant funding had to be community led and no community organisation had come forward to lead this process, the Council approached eVOLution to see if they would take the lead in developing the proposals further. They agreed and they have undertaken a tender process utilising the timetables and operation options agreed with the ward councillors.
- 16. eVOLution sent the documentation to 9 community transport operators (plus Durham County Council and Durham Community Transport Operators Forum for onward distribution within County Durham), 36 taxi operators and 4 bus operators.
- 17. Only one organisation submitted prices. This was Dene Valley Community Transport Ltd, based in Bishop Auckland.
- 18. The original DART bid was also re-submitted by Alistair Mackenzie, Managing Director of Darlington Rural Transport Limited by letter and a request made to reconsider this as an option, though no detail was provided on revised timetables, vehicle specification or operating costs. The original bid was rejected in October 2012 as the proposal was not financially sustainable beyond any initial grant funding and the letter does not specify any changes that address this situation.

Evaluation

19. The pricing schedule set out 24 different timetable/operational options and Dene Valley Community Transport provided costs to operate each option. The vehicle would be registered as a Section 22 permit which would enable the service to operate like a local bus service, utilising bus stops and accepting concessionary bus travel passes.
20. Annualised costs for some options were as much as £90,000. The following options were within the current budget of £40,203:

Table 1

Option	Timetable option and operational option	Service summary
A	Timetable 1; Monday-Friday; journeys 2,3,7,8 Darlington – Sadberge & villages – Darlington – Geneva Crescent - Neasham – Darlington	2 journeys per day; 5 days per week - Monday to Friday
B	Timetable 1; Monday, Wednesday & Friday; journeys 2,3,7,8 Darlington – Sadberge & villages – Darlington – Geneva Crescent - Neasham – Darlington	2 journeys per day; 3 days per week –Monday, Wednesday and Friday
C	Timetable 1; Friday & Saturday; journeys 11-15 Darlington – Hurworth – Neasham – Hurworth – Darlington	5 journeys per evening; 2 evenings per week
D	Timetable 2; Monday, Wednesday & Friday; off peak journeys Darlington – Sadberge & villages – Darlington – Geneva Crescent - Neasham – Darlington	3 journeys per day; 3 days per week –Monday, Wednesday and Friday ¹
E	Timetable 3; Monday, Wednesday & Friday; off peak journeys Darlington – Sadberge & villages – Darlington	3 journeys per day; 3 days per week –Monday, Wednesday and Friday ²
F	Timetable 4; Monday, Wednesday & Friday; off peak journeys	2 journeys per day; 3 days per week –Monday, Wednesday and Friday ²

¹ Excludes greyed out journeys in timetable 2 in **Appendix 1**

² Does not include CDO (College Day Only) journeys as detailed in timetables 3 and 4 in **Appendix 1**

Option	Timetable option and operational option	Service summary
	Darlington – Sadberge & villages – Darlington	

21. The original DART bid proposed two different timetables, one to operate during college term time (40 weeks of the year), 3 or 4 trips per day, Monday-Friday and a second timetable to operate during college holidays (12 weeks of the year) operating Monday, Thursday and Friday. This proposal required £30,000 capital funding to purchase a vehicle and £18,000 p.a. ongoing subsidy to operate the service. The revised DART proposal included the following modifications:-
- (a) “We would not buy a minibus, so we would not ask for the £30,000 capital grant. This would, however, mean that there would be an increase in the annual operating deficit.
 - (b) We would review whether there is a need for the peak hours service during college term times, as it appears that the college students have made other travel arrangements since the bus service stopped. It may be better to restrict the operation to the "college holidays" timetable, as this would reduce the annual deficit and enable us to keep the service going for longer.”
22. The original bid from Hurworth for an evening community transport service was to operate 3 journeys per evening, 6 evenings per week and the bid was for £16,500 for two years.
23. eVOLution have agreed to receive any grant and award a contract for the operation of any service and administer the contract on an ongoing basis. They would require a financial contribution for this service of between 5-10% of the contract value.
24. The costs quoted do not take into account any income from the operation of the service as these are gross cost contracts. Estimates of fare income have not been calculated, but these would reduce the overall costs of the services. Previously Darlington’s bus service contracts were operated on a net subsidy basis with the operator keeping the fare income. This reduced the cost of the contract to the Council, negated cost variations for improved budget management and encouraged the operator to maximise passenger numbers.
25. If the service is registered as a local bus service then the operator would have to accept concessionary bus passes. This would enable people with a bus pass to travel for free on the service. The costs of travel would be borne by the Council as part of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme as per all concessionary travel.

Options

26. The Council has a number of options to choose from that can be funded from within the available budget of £40,203:-
- (a) Do nothing and award no funding. This would leave residents in Sadberge, Little Stainton, Great Stainton, Neasham, and Geneva Crescent, Darlington with no public transport service. (N.B. Bishopton has a bus service to Stockton but with any service provided in this area Bishopton would be served due to the nature of the road network). The funding could be 'saved' and used for other purposes, though this would not meet the intended purpose of the Community Transport Funding from the Department for Transport and would potentially leave Sadberge without any benefit intended from the land receipt for the Sadberge School site housing development.
 - (b) Fund a Sadberge and villages service. This would leave Neasham with no transport service (Options E and F in Table 1);
 - (c) Fund a Sadberge and villages and Neasham service for 2 journeys for 5 days (Option A);
 - (d) Fund a Sadberge and villages and Neasham service for 2 journeys per day for 3 days (Option B);
 - (e) Fund a Sadberge and villages and Neasham service for 3 journeys per day for 3 days (Option D);
 - (f) Fund a Hurworth and Neasham evening service for two evenings a week. This would leave Sadberge and the villages and Neasham with no day time service (Option C);
 - (g) Fund the revised DART proposal which would provide 3 trips per day, 3 days per week to Sadberge and villages. This would cost in excess of £18k p.a. (no revised costs provided) but would leave Neasham with no transport service.
27. Within the existing budget it is not possible to fund a Sadberge and villages and Neasham daytime service for a year plus fund a Hurworth and Neasham evening service.
28. At this stage it is not possible to determine whether the services are financially sustainable. Much will depend on the patronage and therefore the income generated.
29. Therefore a single option should be selected and a competitive tender process undertaken to achieve maximum value for money. The option to fund a Sadberge and villages and Neasham service for a year for 3 journeys per day for 3 days best fits the proposals that were submitted last August. This is the option that is recommended.

30. The first tender round that eVOLution undertook only received one response. Therefore it is proposed that they undertake a competitive tendering process to verify that this is a value for money option. Gross cost contract prices will be sought. It will be difficult to request net cost contracts as fares information is not available.
31. It is proposed that all the funding is awarded to eVOLution to enable the service to achieve full financial sustainability by the end of 2 years in line with the other accessible community transport services, subject to achieving progress on growing patronage and associated income.

Financial Implications

32. The total amount of funding available is £40,203 comprising:

DBC Commissioning	£978
Community Transport funding (provided by Department for Transport)	£9,225
Land Receipt – Former Sadberge School development site	£30,000

33. The proposed allocation of funding is as follows:

eVOLution 2013/14	£31,350
eVOLution 2014/15	£8,853

34. This provides eVOLution with a management fee in year 1 to set up the contracts in partnership with the community leaders from Neasham and Sadberge and the villages. This will cover the cost of providing the service based on prices already received. It is anticipated that these costs may be reduced further through a further competitive tendering process and does not include the income that will be generated.
35. The original aim was for all community transport schemes to be self financing after two years, after which the Council will have no obligations to provide any further funding. The grant funding will be limited by legal contract and any further requirements for financial support will be the responsibility of the relevant community organisation and/or operator.
36. £30,000 received from development in Sadberge for supporting enhanced bus services in the village will need to be used to support the community transport scheme. It is considered appropriate to redirect this resource into the community transport scheme that is seeking to address some of the gaps created by the loss of supported bus services to Sadberge.

Legal Implications

37. There are no significant legal risks for the Council as the scheme is generated, owned and managed by the community. An appropriate grant offer will need to be

put in place to ensure the grant funding is used to meet the required outcomes in line with the content of this Report.

Equalities Considerations

38. An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out on the original proposal to award grant funding to accessible community transport services in October 2012 and has been updated in February 2013 in light of the changes which have occurred since. The original EQI concluded that the target groups for accessible community transport were those that live in rural/urban areas that no longer have a bus service and disabled people across the Borough.
39. The bid pro-forma and assessment criteria required the bidders to identify those people who would need to use accessible transport within the bid area and those people would be positively affected by the implementation of any accessible community transport.
40. The revised EQI produced in February 2013 following the award of funding in October 2012 recognises that the transport needs of disabled people and those that live in some urban areas that no longer have a bus service were affected in a positive way as the successful bids for funding are/will provide new accessible community transport services for those target groups. Those living in some rural and urban areas still have the negative impacts of no bus services.
41. Awarding funding to support an accessible community transport to serve Sadberge, Great Stainton, Little Stainton, Bishopton, Geneva Crescent (Darlington) and Neasham will have positive impacts for residents in these areas, particular those in the target groups of living in rural/urban areas that no longer have a bus service (including disabled people in those areas).

Consultation

42. Extensive consultation was undertaken as part of the original bid process and this has been re-used in the development of these proposals. This included specific workshops for older and disabled people; those living in rural areas and community transport providers in order to develop options and public consultation events in May 2012 to discuss the options. Additional evidence collection and consultation was carried out by the community groups that submitted bids.

APPENDIX 1

Timetable 1

Sadberge and Neasham

	1	2	3	4	5					
Darlington town centre		0935	1235	1635	1755					
Whinbush Way, Asda		0946	1246	1646	1806					
Sadberge		0952	1252	1652	1812					
Little Stainton	0757	0957	1257	R	R					
Bishopton	0801	1001	1301	R	R					
Great Stainton	0807	1007	1307	R	R					
Sadberge	0814	1014	1314							
Whinbush Way, Asda	0821	1021	1321							
Darlington town centre	0831	1031	1331							
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Darlington town centre	0835	1035	1335	1535	1730	1845	1945	2045	2145	2245
Geneva Crescent	0844	1044	1344	1544			Via Croft Road			
Hurworth	0850	1050	1350	1550		1900	2000	2100	2200	2300
Neasham arr	0854	1054	1354	1554	1742	1904	2004	2104	2204	2304
Neasham dep	0855	1055	1355	1555	1745	1905	2005	2105	2205	
Hurworth	0859	1059	1359	1559		1909	2009	2109	2209	
Geneva Crescent	0905	1105	1405	1605			Via Croft Road			
Darlington town centre	0915	1115	1415	1615	1755	1921	2021	2121	2221	

Prices to be given for the following options:

Monday to Saturday journeys 1-10

Monday to Friday journeys 1-10

Monday to Saturday journeys 1-4, 6-9

Monday to Friday journeys 1-4, 6-9

Monday to Saturday journeys

2,3,7,8

Monday to Friday journeys 2,3,7,8

Mon, Wed, Fri journeys 2,3,7,8

Friday & Saturday journeys 11-15

Timetable 2

Sadberge and Neasham

Darlington town centre		0925	1125	1425	1645
Whinbush Way, Asda		0936	1136	1436	1656
Sadberge		0942	1142	1442	1702
Little Stainton	0757	0947	1147	1447	1707
Bishopton	0801	0951	1151	1451	1711
Great Stainton	0807	0957	1157	1457	1717
Sadberge	0814	1004	1204	1504	
Whinbush Way, Asda	0821	1011	1211	1511	
Darlington town centre	0831	1021	1221	1521	

Darlington town centre	0835	1035	1235	1335	1535
Geneva Crescent	0844	1044	1244	1344	1544
Hurworth	0850	1050	1250	1350	1550
Neasham arr	0854	1054	1254	1354	1554
Neasham dep	0855	1055	1255	1355	1555
Hurworth	0859	1059	1259	1359	1559
Geneva Crescent	0905	1105	1305	1405	1605
Darlington town centre	0915	1115	1315	1415	1615

CDO = Runs college days only

Prices to be given for the following options:

Full timetable (all journeys) as shown Monday to Saturday

Full timetable (all journeys) as shown Monday to Friday

Off-peak journeys (0925 - 1521) on Monday to Saturday, plus shaded journeys operating on college days

Off-peak journeys (0925 - 1521) only Monday to Saturday

Off-peak journeys (0925 - 1521) only Monday to Friday

Off-peak journeys (0925 - 1521) only Monday, Wednesday & Friday

Timetable 3

Sadberge - Darlington

	CDO		CDO	
Darlington town centre	0925	1225	1425	1645
Whinbush Way, Asda	0936	1236	1436	1656
Sadberge	0942	1242	1442	1702
Little Stainton	0757	0947	1247	1707
Bishopton	0801	0951	1251	1711
Great Stainton	0807	0957	1257	1717
Sadberge	0814	1004	1304	1504
Whinbush Way, Asda	0821	1011	1311	1511
Darlington town centre	0831	1021	1321	1521

CDO = College days only

Prices to be given for the following options:

Full timetable (all journeys) as shown Monday to Saturday

Full timetable (all journeys) as shown Monday to Friday

Off-peak journeys (0925 - 1521) on Monday to Saturday

Off-peak journeys (0925 - 1521) only Monday to Friday

Off-peak journeys (0925 - 1521) only Monday, Wednesday & Friday

Timetable 4

Sadberge - Darlington

	CDO		CDO	
Darlington town centre	0925	1225	1645	
Whinbush Way, Asda	0936	1236	1656	
Sadberge	0942	1242	1702	
Little Stainton	0757	0947	1247	1707
Bishopton	0801	0951	1251	1711
Great Stainton	0807	0957	1257	1717
Sadberge	0814	1004	1304	
Whinbush Way, Asda	0821	1011	1311	
Darlington town centre	0831	1021	1321	

CDO = College days only

Prices to be given for the following options:

Full timetable (all journeys) as shown Monday to Saturday

Full timetable (all journeys) as shown Monday to Friday

Off-peak journeys (0925 - 1321) on Monday to Saturday

Off-peak journeys (0925 - 1321) only Monday to Friday

Off-peak journeys (0925 - 1321) only Monday, Wednesday & Friday

