

People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Dorset County Council



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| Date of Meeting | 4 July 2018 |
| Officer | Service Director, Economy, Natural and Built Environment |
| Subject of Report | Integrated Transport Review |
| Executive Summary | <p>On 26 July 2017 a report was presented to the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the role of community transport with a reduced public and schools transport budget. The committee requested that the findings in the report be presented on an inquiry day, similar to that of the previous community transport review day in 2014. The inquiry day was later expanded to include all travel to give a holistic view of travel in Dorset.</p> <p>This inquiry day was held on 26 February 2018 and attended by operators, councillors, officers, community groups, charities, community interest companies, transport action groups, health services and market influencers.</p> <p>The day looked at Starting Well with school travel, Living Well with public and community travel, Living Better on how to prepare for later living and finally looking at the Next Steps of integration with health provision. The sessions were followed with questions to gauge the groups desired outcomes from travel, to ensure the approach within the Passenger Transport Strategy and since the last review is correct.</p> |
| Impact Assessment: | <p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>There are no specific EQIA issues arising from the scoping report, but any arising in the future will be addressed.</p> |
| | <p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>The report is based on evidence of previous Scrutiny Committee reports and the Integrated Transport Review Day held on 26 February 2018.</p> |

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| | <p>Budget:</p> <p>No implication</p> <hr/> <p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council’s approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as:</p> <p>Current Risk: LOW Residual Risk LOW</p> <p><i>(i.e. reflecting the recommendations in this report and mitigating actions proposed)</i></p> <hr/> <p>Outcomes:</p> <p>N/A</p> <hr/> <p>Other Implications:</p> <p>None.</p> |
| <p>Recommendation</p> | <p>The committee is asked to consider the report and support the approach taken by Dorset Travel to continue to support the Passenger Transport Strategy.</p> |
| <p>Reason for Recommendation</p> | <p>The changes since 2014 have addressed the holistic transport review needs and Dorset Travel is now progressing the further integration of travel across Dorset.</p> |
| <p>Appendices</p> | <p>None.</p> |
| <p>Background Papers</p> | <p>People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Briefing Note on Community Transport, 26 June 2017</p> |
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1. **Introduction**

- 1.1 On 26 June 2017 the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a briefing report on Community Transport. As a result, the Committee agreed that a review be undertaken by way of an inquiry day. However, at a later meeting between the Lead Member, supporting councillors and officers it was agreed that the inquiry day should be extended to incorporate all modes of transport; not just community transport.
- 1.2 As a result, the Integrated Transport Review Day was held on 26 February 2018. Key stakeholders for transport attended including representatives from parish, town, borough and district councils, Transport Actions Groups, community transport schemes and public transport operators.
- 1.3 The purpose of the review was to look at all aspects of transport services in Dorset, listen to the views of people at the forefront of these services and discuss possible solutions for the future.
- 1.4 The programme was split into four themed sessions:
- **Starting Well** - Mainstream School and Special Educational Needs
 - **Living Well** - Public Transport and Community Transport
 - **Living Better** - Transformation Programme
 - **Next Steps** - Integrated Transport Planning and learning from others

2. **Speaker**

2.1 **Councillor Derek Beer - Chairman**

- People think that bus services are becoming less and less of an option.
- We aren't doing enough to tell people about what bus services are available.
- If usage continues to decline, the remaining services will be lost.
- The aim of today is to explore ways of making services we can be proud of.

2.2 **Claire Fincham - Vale Coaches**

- Vale Coaches have been awarded a seven-year contract for Sturminster Newton High School.
- This One School One Operator (OSOO) model makes communication with schools, students and parents much simpler.
- All route information is online.
- They have built a strong relationship with the school and can deal with issues quickly.

2.3 **Gary Binstead - Senior Manager, Schools and Learning Service, Dorset County Council**

- Education, Health and Care Plans (ECHP) are required for people with Special Educational Needs or a Disability (SEND) up to the age of 25.
- These plans identify education, health and social needs and set out additional support required (including support for travel).
- SEND travel in Dorset is 1.8 times more expensive compared to the national average.
- Reviews have resulted in better solutions for children and financial savings.

- In future parents will have one point of contact and will no longer expect a taxi and a passenger assistant as a default.

2.4 Andrew Wickham - Managing Director, Go South Coast

- Go South Coast have a strong track record of working in partnership with Dorset County Council (a recent example was Service 5 between Weymouth-Crossways and Dorchester)
- They have invested in a new fleet with significantly reduced harmful exhaust emissions.
- They have introduced contactless payments across their fleet.
- Go South Coast would welcome early consultation on roadworks arising on the network as well as early involvement in future planning policies.

2.5 Tim Christian - Dorset Community Transport (DCT)

- Dorset Community Transport operate without grant support.
- Their community transport services do not overlap with commercial services and target unmet public need.
- They help to reduce loneliness and isolation.
- They provide a high level of social value by offering independent living for people - offering access to shopping and other essential services.

2.6 Nigel Hodder - Chair of PING (POPP Interactive NeighbourCar Group) and Co-ordinator of Milton Abbas NeighbourCar

- Milton Abbas NeighbourCar is a sustainable volunteer car scheme that has more than 30 volunteer drivers, supporting 200 clients.
- Their primary aim is to support patients of Milton Abbas surgery.
- In addition, they offer transport for a range of social activities.
- The PING Group enables community scheme representatives to network on an informal basis.
- Barriers to progress are recruitment of drivers and replacement of existing co-ordinators

2.7 Helen Coombes - Interim Transformation Programme Lead, Dorset County Council

Dorset's vision for adult social care is to help people be healthy, happy and safe. Key outcomes are:

- Delivering good health and care - flexible, affordable, accessible.
- Promoting independence by helping people to help themselves.
- Enhancing wellbeing for local communities.
- The aim is to give everyone a personal travel budget and invest in travel training to help people maintain independence.

2.8 Damien Jones - Head of the Transport Co-ordination Service, Devon County Council

- Devon's approach is to integrate transport wherever possible.
- This involves working in partnership with the NHS for non-emergency patient transport.
- They provide a Patient Transport Advice Service (PTAS) that assesses eligibility for patient transport and books appropriate journeys.
- The overall aim is to review services from a patient/client perspective and make financial savings.

2.9 Belinda Ridout - Friends of Gillingham Station (FOGS)

- The Group was set up in 2016 with 12 volunteers who look after Gillingham station.
- They work with South Western Railway and the Blackmore Vale Community Rail Partnership.

3. Group Sessions

3.1 Each session was followed by facilitator-led discussions. The key points raised were as follows:

- The top of people's public transport wish list were:
 - Better integration of all transport
 - Better communication between authorities, operators and the public
 - Reliable services
 - Better accessibility
 - More transport for rural areas
 - More efficient use of shared taxis
 - Closer links between local authorities and the NHS
- Suggestions for Community transport were:
 - Promote via parish councils, local press/newsletters, in medical centres, new branding, social media and online
 - Gain new volunteers by holding public events, word-of-mouth, advertising in community, emergency and medical centres, awards and incentives.
 - We need to change the perceptions of community transport
 - Shared taxis should be considered more

4. Progress since Audit and Scrutiny Committee in November 2014

4.1 The progress made since the Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting on Community Transport held on 25 November 2014 is as follows.

5. Dorset Travel Team

5.1 There was a restructure of Dorset Passenger Transport in July 2015 to form a more integrated transport unit with the rebranding of Dorset Travel.

5.2 A Holistic Transport Officer was appointed in 2015 to oversee the Holistic Transport Review to introduce a more integrated approach to deliver significant efficiencies and improve services for the public. Historically health, education, social care and local bus routes have developed independently and suffer from a lack of coordination.

5.3 Dorset Travel's Holistic Transport Officer is currently seconded to Dorset CCG as their Integrated Transport Programme Manager to establish integrated transport solutions. A North Dorset Integrated Transport Pilot Project held its first meeting in March 2018 involving Dorset Travel, CCG and representatives from GP surgeries in North Dorset. As the first step, the GP surgeries are undertaking accessibility audits to establish the transport needs of their patients.

5.4 Dorset Travel has a Community Engagement and Infrastructure Officer who is available to give support and guidance on community transport to community groups, parish and town councils.

6. **Dorset Passenger Transport Strategy**

6.1 The Dorset Passenger Transport Strategy was published in February 2016 and the following are some references to community transport within the Passenger Transport Strategy:

- Improve accessibility and maximising public and community transport use through a strong partnership with transport providers and other client groups.
- Introduce a wider range of community transport initiatives to provide a more cost-effective solution to conventional subsidised bus services with a lead taken by the local community.
- Proactive community engagement, encourage communities to develop local solutions where subsidised public transport is not a practical or affordable option.
- Expand the role of community transport through joint working with the ‘third’ sector (voluntary groups and charitable organisations) and local communities to clearly define needs and to seek affordable, practical solutions.
- Ensure that up-to-date information on community transport is available to those who need it most, increasingly through the internet.
- Extend partnership working to deliver community transport initiatives through, or in collaboration with partners within the local authorities and third parties such as the NHS, educational establishments and employers.

7. **Public and School Transport Review**

7.1 The consultation for Dorset County Council’s Public and School Transport Review ran for eight weeks between 27 May and 22 July 2016 and sought people’s views on their proposals for the future of subsidised bus services in Dorset.

7.2 The transport review was needed due to increasing pressures on the authority’s budget. As a result, the public transport subsidy was reduced by £1m and school transport services reduced by £850,000.

7.3 It was not possible to retain the existing public bus network within the revised budgets. It was therefore proposed to work closely with community transport operators, community groups and councillors to develop Dorset’s community transport network. The remaining subsidy was prioritised for those core routes that can serve the most people and contribute the most to the economic wellbeing of the county.

7.4 The outcome of this review was implemented in summer 2017. As a result of this Review, some areas of Dorset no longer have access to a public transport service where commercial transport operation is not viable. Community transport brings both innovation and flexibility to fill these gaps in an inclusive way.

8. **Community and Transport Operator Engagement**

- 8.1 Since 2016, officers from Dorset Travel have attended in excess of 60 community engagement meetings across the County involving councillors, parish councils, transport operators, members of the community and other interested stakeholders. These meetings gave the opportunity to discuss the outcome of the 2016 Bus Review, inform of existing community transport schemes and explain possible options for setting up new community transport schemes.
- 8.2 It was highlighted at these meetings that community transport offers practical solutions to communities' needs. It is possible, with the right approach, to positively influence travel behaviour and for people to adapt to using community transport, eg planning and booking transport the day before. Overall, it can be more flexible in terms of timings and destinations and may also be used to link up with public bus routes and trains.
- 8.3 In September 2016, Dorset Travel introduced the initiative of Friends of the Bus Stop or Friends of Bus Service as an approach of allowing the community to take some ownership and pride in their local bus stops or bus service. For example, members of the Western Area Transport Action Group (WATAG) have become Friends of the Bus Stop which involves them reporting any issues relating to bus stops in their area and ensuring that bus timetables are kept up-to-date. All Transport Action Groups have been encouraged to also become Friends of the Bus Stop and have been provided with the tools necessary to access timetable cases.
- 8.4 Meetings have been set up to bring together Chairs of all the Transport Action Groups (TAGs) to ensure that they are kept informed of progress on all transport matters so that this information can be disseminated back to their TAG members. TAGs have the necessary local knowledge and are an invaluable link to support their local communities that may be considering various transport solutions in their area. The TAG Leaders Meetings are held on a six-monthly basis.
- 8.5 Liaison continues between Dorset Travel and the Community Development Worker from POPP (now also incorporates Early Help as well as Older People). POPP Wayfinders and Champions can be utilised to share community transport information. Dorset Travel attends some of the PING (POPP Interactive NeighbourCar Group) meetings as guest speakers.
- 8.6 Regular meetings have been set up by Dorset Travel for community transport operators such as DCT (Dorset Community Transport), NORDCAT and SEDCAT (South East Dorset). This gives them the opportunity to update each other on existing operations and future plans and ensure that they have a cohesive approach to Dorset's community transport network.
- 8.7 Dorset Travel has engaged with all transport operators, not just community transport operators. Community transport was discussed at a pre-procurement Market Engagement Event held for passenger transport operators in October 2016. It was suggested and encouraged that operators who were successful in the 2017 contract tendering process for Mainstream/SEN contracts could consider providing a community transport service during the time slot between morning and afternoon school runs, as DCT is already doing.

- 8.8 The new model for providing travel to senior schools in Dorset has been successful. OSOO (One School One Operator) has been in place since September 2017 and has bedded down with fewer problems than might have been expected. Dorset Travel had some 97% of transport contracts up for renewal in 2017. The OSOO model covers 13 Secondary / Upper Schools with five co-located Middle Schools. The remaining schools transport has been tendered through the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) - this includes all SEN schools, Adult and Child Care. Approximately 450 routes were tendered and awarded through the DPS during Summer 2017. There is more emphasis on operators utilising their fleet, including community transport.
- 8.9 Dorset Travel officers attend a Cross Council Community Transport Meeting that meets six-monthly and involves Council Transport Managers in South of England. This gives Dorset Travel the opportunity to discuss any matters affecting transport both locally and nationally and to share good practice.

9. **Community Transport Toolkit**

- 9.1 In 2016, the Community Engagement Officer produced a Community Transport Toolkit that provides useful help and advice to local volunteers and community organisations about setting up a new community transport scheme. The toolkit can be downloaded at www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/community-transport and 500 booklet copies were printed. Reference copies were sent out to all Town and Parish Councils, libraries, Transport Action Groups and made available at community engagement meetings.
- 9.2 Dorset Travel has committed to supporting community transport and it has produced the toolkit to help communities develop different travel/transport solutions tailored to the needs of residents. The document can inspire groups to set up new ways for local people to get out and about more easily.
- 9.3 The guide includes everything from gathering evidence and creating a business case, meeting the legislation and finding funding, to marketing, publicising and launching a new scheme. By guiding through the process step-by-step, the toolkit helps communities decide which option best suits their needs and understand how schemes can be started and become successful.

10. **Community Transport Grants and Support**

- 10.1 The Community Transport Grant was introduced in October 2016 with up to £5,000 available for capital expenditure ie. vehicle purchase and £2,000 is available for revenue costs such as IT systems, training and marketing, etc. 10 grants have been awarded totalling £17,155. The Grants have been awarded to a variety of groups including schools, community groups, parish and town councils. Dorset County Council also continues to pay for the 'dead mileage' for Beaminster and Maiden Newtown Country Cars. However, some trips require no dead mileage payment as the nearest available driver is allocated to the passenger. Dorset Travel also administrates DBS checks for Country Cars volunteer drivers and covers their public liability insurance.
- 10.2 Existing NeighbourCar schemes had been offered further funding (via POPP) if they expanded their criteria, for example, providing transport for younger people.
- 10.3 Communities can also approach their local businesses, housing associations, parish and town councils for contributions/sponsorship towards their community transport service. This has been a successful tactic for [Bus2Go](#) and has ensured that their service remains viable.

10.4 Dorset Travel offers driver training to community transport drivers, such as driver awareness, emergency first aid, manual handling, safeguarding, customer care, fire and evacuation, driving assessments and full vehicle familiarisation.

11. **Community Transport Directory, dorsetforyou and Communications**

11.1 In conjunction with the 2016 Bus Review, the Community Transport pages on dorsetforyou were updated and an interactive map illustrating where community transport schemes are located across Dorset was developed. Community transport schemes also appear on the 'My Local' facility available on dorsetforyou.

11.2 A Community Transport Directory has been produced by Dorset County Council that is available on dorsetforyou's community transport webpage. The Directory contains details of the established voluntary car schemes, dial-a-rides and other community transport initiatives across Dorset. A page is dedicated to each scheme and provides information such as areas served, eligibility, cost, days of operation and contact details for making enquiries and booking transport. Trial community transport schemes are listed on a separate webpage.

11.3 Condensed versions of the Community Transport Directory containing information only relevant to a particular zone have been produced for distribution at community engagement meetings. There is ongoing communication with the existing community transport schemes to ensure that this information is kept up-to-date.

11.4 Community Transport has regularly featured in Dorset County Council's press releases since 2016. These include for the Community Transport Grant, Toolkit and launch of Southill Community Bus. Articles on Community Transport have also been included in nine consecutive publications of Dorset County Council's countywide quarterly newspaper – Your Dorset. A full two-page feature on Community Transport appeared in the July 2016 edition. The feature included information on the Toolkit and case studies on community transport schemes in the county.

11.5 Dorset Travel has worked with Communications Team colleagues to ensure that there continues to be a steady flow of information provided on community transport. This includes press releases, Facebook ads, Twitter, case studies, articles in Your Dorset and updates on the dorsetforyou webpages. Dorset Travel has publicised car-pooling to appeal to the younger age groups by using fun 'Gifs' on Twitter and Facebook that would catch their attention.

11.6 Area-targeted Facebook ads were used as an aid to recruit new volunteers as Facebook ads can target profiles registered to a particular area. Facebook is also a very cost-effective method of reaching people, especially when it is relevant to a specific geographical area where a scheme is in need of volunteers.

12. **Results**

- 12.1 Due to the introduction of the Community Transport Grant, there has been an increase in community transport schemes trialling throughout Dorset. These range from shared taxis to working directly with local CT operators to have bespoke schemes. The scheme in Southill, Weymouth which uses eight-seater shared taxis on the same three returns per day timetable as the previous bus service has been very successful. The Southill community uses their Community Transport Grant award to make up any shortfall which to date is around £300 used, whereas the previous public transport route would have been in excess of £10k over the same period. The scheme continues to be successful and the community has only used 25% of their grant in the previous nine months. They were also a feature of BBC Spotlight about how communities are adapting.
- 12.2 The area of coverage in Dorset that has access to a community transport scheme has increased from 91% in 2016 to 97% at May 2018. The number of established community transport services has increased from 64 in April 2016 to 89 established schemes in May 2018. The majority of new services are the weekly 'PlusBus' services operated by Dorset Community Transport (DCT). DCT operate a number of Mainstream School/Special Educational Needs (SEN) contracts across Dorset and are keeping their driver and vehicle in those rural areas to provide a community transport service between the morning and afternoon school runs. This keeps costs lower as the driver and vehicle are available and already in the area. This is a model that Dorset County Council would encourage other school transport operators to follow.

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June 2018