

# **South Somerset Community Accessible Transport - Annual Report 2015/16**

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## **Purpose of the report**

The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress made over the last year. There are no financial implications for the council in this report.

## **Recommendation**

That AEC members note the contents of the report.

## **Report Detail**

The core business of the company is a successful demand-responsive door-to-door 'Ring and Ride' Service; this uses fully accessible minibuses to provide transport for people in the operating area of South Somerset who are unable to use public transport due to mobility difficulties, or because the service provided is inadequate. Local community groups hire minibuses for social outings and trips in a wider geographical area. The company also operates a busy Social Car Scheme using volunteer drivers in their own cars to provide transport for hospital appointments further afield. This is an expanding, highly valued service due to the reduction in provision of hospital transport by the PCT.

It has been another very busy year for the service, with increased demand for both the ring and ride service, and the social car scheme. Although there are few County contracts available in this area, we have been successful recently in winning three, which will be a welcome addition to our funding. The scheme continues to transport people to a day centre at Wincanton Community Hospital once a week. Transport for community groups fluctuates with very high demand during the summer and in the months leading up to Christmas.

The big achievement of the past year has been the replacement of our two oldest minibuses. The first was replaced from our own funds and grants received from local organisations, such as SSDC. The other was from a Government initiative which had provided funds, for which CT groups could bid. We were successful, and the vehicle was supplied last November. We have since submitted another successful bid and a 3<sup>rd</sup> vehicle will be supplied in September. Our fleet will then consist of virtually all new vehicles which will reduce maintenance costs considerably.

Individual membership of the scheme has continued to grow this year with registered members at over 1,900. Three new community groups have also registered with the scheme over the last year. We have recruited four more volunteer drivers, although three did retire due to ill health and personal circumstances, we still need more.

The 5 year grant from the Big Lottery fund has now ended, which will leave a significant gap in our funding so the challenge of the forthcoming year is to submit another bid, whilst at the same time looking for other areas in which to diversify. We are, with the help of SSDC officers, currently working with local secondary schools to ascertain the transport needs of their students, with aim allowing those students who live some distance from the school to

stay behind for after school activities. Other questions will be asked in the survey to identify other areas where we may be able to help, such as weekends and evenings.

We have healthy reserves which we have built up during our fourteen years of operation. The reserves are primarily for vehicle replacement, but due to recent initiatives in this area, some of the money can now be used as revenue whilst we await the outcome of the next Lottery bid.

From an operational perspective there has been little progress with the South Somerset Together initiative to develop Wincanton as a hub for transport since the installation of the new bus shelter along with more user friendly timetables. It has been difficult to encourage statutory organizations such as the Job Centre or Yeovil College to provide services locally, to which we could transport people. Nevertheless, we understand that the County Council [SCC] has been working behind the scenes following on from their Total Transport bid. This work will hopefully lead to further information improvements and more flexible ticket options, which could ease travel for younger people and those seeking work. Nigel Collins the SSDC Transport Strategy Officer has had more contact with his colleagues in SCC and can update you further on this initiative, in his accompanying report.

#### **Statistics April 2015 – Mar 2016**

<b>Total mileage</b>	<b>62,552</b>
<b>Single passenger journeys</b>	<b>17,372</b>
<b>Group journeys</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Social car single passenger journeys</b>	<b>1,320</b>