

# EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 9 SEPTEMBER 2004

## REVIEW OF TRANSPORT PROVISION FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY GROUPS

### Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the outcome of the review of the transport provision for Community and Voluntary Groups.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting of 20 May 2004 Social Work Committee agreed to a review of transport arrangements provided to Community and Voluntary Groups.
- 2.2 Work has been undertaken jointly by officers from Social Work and the Transport Section of Resource Support. The remit of the officers concerned was to develop a set of eligibility criteria for transport provision and to identify alternative funding arrangements.

#### 3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- 3.1 For those groups who receive transport it has been necessary to assess whether their activities underpin Social Work functions through the following criteria :-
- providing a service to children and young people in need within the terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995;
  - promoting the welfare of vulnerable children and adults;
  - supporting the core functions of Social Work; and
  - promoting the ethos of social inclusion.
- 3.2 Many of the groups who use Social Work transport have already been assessed corporately by other Council Services and have been awarded grants which may or may not be specified to assist for transport.

#### 4. OPTION APPRAISAL

- 4.1 In 2003/04 the Social Work Services subsidised transport for Community and Voluntary Groups by £73,500. A key consideration of the review was therefore to examine how this significant contribution could be lowered and redirected to statutory services without leaving groups with no viable transport option. The following options were considered in the review.

#### 4.2 **Retain Current Provision and Charging Policy**

This option would retain the status quo and the consequential financial implications. Groups would notice no change to their service provision and would face no increase in the current charge of £9 per hour.

#### 4.3 **Retain Current Provision and Reduce Subsidy Levels**

This option would continue to provide groups with transport at current levels but would result in substantial increase in costs, if the real economic costs were charged to groups. Estimates have indicated that to recover all costs of this service would result in a charge of £37 per hour. It is unlikely that any of the groups concerned would be able to meet this charge.

#### 4.4 **Examine External Funding Streams to Replace Council Subsidies**

Officers examined the potential for attracting external funding to subsidise the current service level. The most attractive option would be for groups to submit a joint bid for transport costs under the Scottish Executive' Rural Transport Initiative. This option would not however provide continual support to groups until any bid had been submitted to and approved by the Scottish Executive. The Council would therefore be required to meet the transport requirements in the short to medium term, resulting in no cost saving.

#### 4.5 **Examine the Potential for External Transport Providers**

Approaches have been made to a number of external transport providers to provide quotes for this service. Under this option groups would continue to receive current levels of transport, however the responses from private sector companies indicated that no cost saving would result from this option.

Most groups from the southern area of the Council currently receive services from the Coalfield transport, and as such any further demand on this supplier may not be met.

#### 4.6 **Provide Buses but Ask Groups to Arrange Independent Drivers**

Council owned buses have previously been used by groups who provide their own drivers. This option would continue to support groups who require transport, providing they can arrange drivers. As driver overtime is the largest single cost of the service this would result in significant savings for the Department.

### 5. **PREFERRED OPTION**

5.1 The Department recognises the need that groups have for access to transport, but is aware of the cost pressures currently being faced. It is with this in mind that option 4.6 (above) is the preferred option. The rationale for this choice is:-

- groups will still receive access to the Council's vehicle fleet at affordable rates;
- groups regularly receive financial support from Local Committees to fund transport which could be used for hiring drivers;

- Council drivers who may lose financially, through loss of overtime, will be available for groups to hire; and
  - the cost savings that will accrue to the service.
- 5.2 If this preferred option is agreed by Committee, the Head of Resource Support will continue to monitor the provision of transport to Community and Voluntary Groups to assess the implications of this decision.

## **6. FINANCIAL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 This service is not a statutory obligation and therefore there are no legal implications.
- 6.2 The Trade Unions have been fully consulted in relation to this proposal and the Department will continue to liaise closely with Union representatives in relation to the implications for drivers.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 Committee is asked to:
- (i) agree to the adoption of the new arrangements as outlined in section 4.6 (above); and
  - (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew  
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services  
19 August 2004  
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### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil

For further information please contact:  
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