

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE OF 6TH JUNE 2000

SHOPMOBILITY SCHEME

Report by the Director of Development Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the work undertaken to date to explore the feasibility of a Shopmobility Scheme based in Kilmarnock and to seek agreement to implement the recommendations contained within this report.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Development Services Committee of the 20th April 1999 considered a report by the Director of Development Services in respect of a feasibility assessment of a Shopmobility Scheme within Kilmarnock.
- 2.2 A small working group was established to enquire into the feasibility of a Shopmobility Scheme membership included representatives of the two Forums on Disability, a representative from the Town Centre Management Committee and officers from the Council's Development Services and Social Work Departments.
- 2.3 Activities undertaken by the group included
- A presentation by Ayr Shopmobility
 - Site visits to Shopmobility Schemes in Ayr and Stirling
 - Contact with the national organisation to enquire into general management and funding arrangements
 - A survey regarding travel and shopping facilities within Kilmarnock Town Centre.

3. SURVEY FINDINGS

- 3.1 A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed by the Social Work Department to Orange Badge Holders / applicants over a two month period. Questionnaires were also distributed by the two Disability Forums.
- 3.2 191 completed questionnaires were returned which highlighted the following :
- 150 people could manage into Kilmarnock Town Centre
 - 147 respondents have travelled by taxi or car at some point in time
 - 166 respondents stated that they would shop in Kilmarnock if there was a Shopmobility Scheme to assist them
 - The main reason for shopping in Kilmarnock was for food (150); clothing (90); other (62)
 - Respondents made regular shopping trips to other locations as follows : Ayr (38), Irvine (17), Glasgow (6), East Kilbride (4) and Cumnock (11).

- 3.3 79 people advised that car parking was adequate for their needs with 57 or 72% of those who commented stating that facilities had improved recently.
- 3.4 The survey also highlighted a number of issues in respect of access to Town Centre shops as well as the internal layout of shops which have implications for access for shopping within Kilmarnock. The following table highlights issues raised

Problems caused by	Number of responses
a) Narrow entrances / aisles	26
b) Steps	14
c) Stairs	12
d) Stacked Goods	12
e) Heavy doors	12
f) Distance (1)	9
g) Steep ramps	4
h) High shelves	1
i) Clothing rails	3
j) Lack of chairs	3
k) Goods too high / low	3
l) High Counter	1
m) Crowds	1
n) Noise	1
o) Outward openings	1
p) Lack of toilet	1

(1) Mainly referred to retail parks

- 3.5 These issues have been forwarded to the Town Centre Manager for consideration by retailers. Overall there is support for a Shopmobility Scheme within Kilmarnock.

4. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT CRITERIA FOR SHOPMOBILITY SCHEMES

- 4.1 The Department of Transport has established criteria for Shopmobility Schemes which include the following :

- Be open to all people with mobility problems, whether temporary or permanent, regardless of their place of residence.
- Provide both manual and powered wheelchairs and powered scooters
- Have car parking available within 40 metres and provide parking for both holders and non holders of orange badges, who use the scheme.
- Operate for a period of at least four hours on normal shopping days, excluding Sundays and Bank Holidays

4.2 Ayr Shopmobility meets all of these criteria and provides one of the most comprehensive range of services available from any scheme all of which are provided free of charge and include the following :

Manual Wheelchairs	In adult and child sizes, some with extended handles
Powered Wheelchairs	Three different models, some with dual control
Powered Scooters	Three and four wheeled, in various sizes
Parking	Reserved parking spaces for use only by Shopmobility clients
Companion Escorts	Escorts can be arranged to push manual chairs and / or assist with shopping
Mini Bus Service	A fully accessible mini bus, which travels throughout Ayrshire, is available to all Shopmobility clients

5. OPERATIONAL ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

5.1 Location is central to the success of any scheme. There are two possible sites which could be used to base a scheme within the Town Centre area i.e. in the bus station waiting room or the Gateway Centre if the building were vacated. These require fuller consideration to determine whether they meet the required criteria.

5.2 The cost of the scheme will be dependent on a number of factors including the following :

- Location : depending on work required to upgrade the building
- Equipment : dependent on the size of the scheme and number of operating hours.
- Staffing : as above
- Mini bus service : if being provided

5.3 Capital and revenue costs will also require to be considered.

5.4 Fuller consideration will be required in respect of the management of such a service. In the main, schemes are either

- Run on a completely voluntary basis – no paid staff
- Operated and staffed by the Local Authority
- Company Limited by Guarantee
- Recognised / Registered Charity
- Commercially owned and operated
- Core funded but not operated by the Local Authority
- Elements of all of the above

5.5 At the time of the original report there was no provision for a Shopmobility Project in either the capital plan or revenue budgets. Applications could be made to a range of funding sources such as the National Lottery Charity Board, Social Inclusion Partnership and the Town Centre Initiative.

5.6 Local retailers are supportive of the scheme but have stated that they are unable to assist with funding.

- 5.7 If good transport links exist between the Town Centre and the satellite retail parks, it is considered that access could be improved for people with a disability by having wheelchairs or seating located throughout retail units.

6. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 6.1 The findings of the working group support the development of a Shopmobility Scheme in Kilmarnock Town centre.
- 6.2 To ensure proper access to the full range of shops for people with a disability, a number of physical access / internal layout issues will require to be addressed by retailers.
- 6.3 Enterprise Ayrshire has been approached with a view to developing a joint brief in respect of a Shopmobility Scheme for Kilmarnock Town Centre. The brief would consider:
- Nature of service
 - Level of service to be provided
 - Management arrangements
 - Funding arrangements (including sourcing funding on a recurring basis)
 - Location of the shopmobility outlet.
- 6.4 The development of the brief will include ongoing consultation with the two Fora on Disability.

7. POLICY CONTEXT

- 7.1 The development of a scheme would be consistent with the Council's Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Strategies.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 It is anticipated that the brief would cost in the region of £4,000. The current cost to the Council would be in match funding Enterprise Ayrshire's contribution in developing a brief. The Council's contribution could be met from existing budgets.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no immediate legal implications.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (i) authorises the Director of Development Services to liaise with Enterprise Ayrshire to prepare a full brief on the development of a Shopmobility Scheme in Kilmarnock Town Centre for consideration by a future Committee.
- (ii) Otherwise note the contents of this report.

S Chorley
Director of Development Services

MF/KO/NP
19 May 2000

List of Background Papers

Nil

For further information on this report contact Keith Orton, Principal Engineer, Development Services on 01563 576310

AGENDA