

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**SAFER, GREENER AND CLEANER PLACES
CABINET MEMBER**

**HUMBER AND WOLDS RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL:
VOLUNTARY CAR SERVICE**

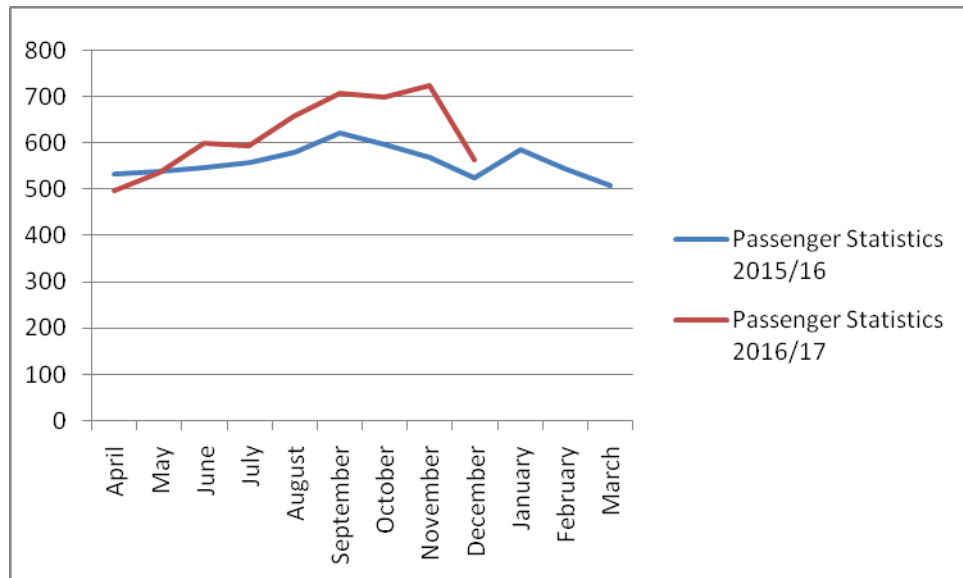
1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To approve a grant of £15,000 for Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council (HWRCC) as an ongoing commitment to the voluntary sector.
- 1.2 This will ensure that a voluntary car service continues to run in North Lincolnshire for people who need to make essential journeys but have no transport of their own and who cannot use buses or trains.
- 1.3 Funding is available in the planned budget for 2017/18.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 HWRCC provides a voluntary car service (VCS) for elderly, lonely, isolated or disabled people who need to make essential journeys but cannot use public transport and have no car of their own or anyone who can take them. The service arranges for volunteers to provide journeys using their own cars. The user pays the driver's expenses for the trip, usually a sum between the bus fare and a taxi fare.
- 2.2 The service is based in Barton upon Humber. It helps people living mainly in the rural parts of North Lincolnshire. The scheme is available to all residents in North Lincolnshire. HWRCC also works with Age UK North Lincolnshire to provide access to wheelchair friendly transport therefore extending the capacity of the scheme without increased costs.
- 2.3 It provides journeys within the area and to outside destinations such as hospitals or taking carers to visit their relatives in residential care. It is highly valued by users as evidenced by passenger feedback.
- 2.4 During 2016, a recruitment campaign was undertaken to recruit more volunteer drivers. An article was also included in our News Direct magazine to raise awareness. The graph below shows the increase in

users since the campaign. The target is 8,000 journeys per annum. Up until the end of December there were 5,574 journeys. Whilst we will not reach the target because of the performance in the first quarter, there has been a 10% increase in journeys compared to last year. If this continues, this year will be amongst the busiest since the scheme was first supported by the council.



- 2.5 There has been an increase in the number of new passengers who are registering to use the service. Currently the scheme is registering an average of four new passengers per week. Usage has not been affected by the introduction of CallConnect. People access the voluntary car scheme for a number of reasons:
- Bookings to health, social care and community activities appointments that are within and outside of North Lincolnshire
 - More complex passenger requirements either in the journeys required or their abilities and support requirements.
 - Bookings with a regular driver that are known to the individual
- 2.6 There has also been an increase in volunteer drivers from 26 to 33. More women are volunteering and HWRCC continue to recruit on a continuous basis.
- 2.7 HWRCC has recently invested in an electronic allocation system called Flexiroute. This is in response to the increased demand. This will enable the scheme to grow at no additional cost to the council.
- 2.8 North East Lincolnshire Council has commissioned HWRCC to develop a co-ordinated voluntary car scheme and community transport forum in their area.

- 2.9 The council has grant-aided this service for 19 years. The payment of £15,000 in 2017/18 would mean that the grant paid has not risen for a number of years. The money does not go to the users or the volunteer drivers (with the exception of driver recruitment, training and development) but covers the cost of a paid staff member. She acts as a broker between the clients who ring up to request transport and the volunteers who provide it. The funding also covers telephone charges and a share of accommodation expenses.
- 2.10 All volunteers are cleared by the Disclosure and Barring service to work with vulnerable adults. The clearance is renewed every three years. HWRCC also checks driving licences, MOTs and insurance annually of voluntary drivers and their vehicles.
- 2.11 HWRCC also has a contract with the council to arrange and provide volunteer drivers for the Universal Prevention Service that sits within the People directorate. The council pays them a separate grant for this work.
- 2.12 The council wishes to encourage volunteers to provide services for the community. The VCS has done this for many years and is an important element in the community transport mix in North Lincolnshire.
- 2.13 If the grant is approved, we shall prepare a simple service level agreement with HWRCC to set out the service they will provide in return.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Option 1: Provide grant aid to continue the VCS.
- 3.2 Option 2: Provide no grant in 2017/18 and subsequent years.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 If we provide grant aid, the service will continue and is predicted to increase. It helps people who are otherwise unable to travel. It also supports thousands of hours of volunteer drivers' time.
- 4.2 If we withdraw grant aid, the service is likely to cease. Experience shows that it is not possible to run the service without paid staff at the core. The end of the service will bring hardship for users because they will find it much more difficult to access health and social care services and community activities.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 Financial

A grant will enable the service to continue and cover all of North Lincolnshire. The average subsidy per passenger was £2.39 in

December 2015 and is now £1.73. This gives an average of the previous 12 months of £2.08 but the increased numbers demonstrates that the value for money position is improving. The threshold as set out in the bus strategy is £3.80. There is funding allocated in the subsidised bus services budget to fund the VCS for a further year.

5.2 There are no other resource implications to highlight.

6. **OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

6.1 The assessment highlights the service's benefits to older people and people with disabilities who live across North Lincolnshire and particularly in the rural communities. If it ends, they will be unable to make essential journeys.

7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

7.1 We have discussed the future of the VCS with HWRCC. They will be unable to provide the service without a grant from the council.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 To approve a grant of £15,000 in 2017/18 to HWRCC to support the Voluntary Car Service.

8.2 That regular monitoring of passenger numbers and scheme impact on the community, health and social care services and individuals continues to be carried out.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Civic Centre
Ashby Rd
Scunthorpe
DN18 1AB
Author: Helen Reek
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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Humber and Wolds file