



## **Provision of Joint Dial-a-Ride Service**

### **Report by the Executive Head Planning, Regeneration and Wellbeing**

#### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the tender process to secure a joint Dial a Ride service across Adur and Worthing and recommends that the bid by Worthing's Southern Services be pursued with additional s106 funding being made available to help deliver the new service. The report also recommends that consideration is given to providing Adur Community Transport funding previously held back in an attempt to encourage the provision of a joint service.

#### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Members will recall that both Councils have been encouraging the provision of a joint Dial a Ride service for a number of years. In 2009 both Councils commissioned Consultants, Community Transport Association (CTA) to undertake a feasibility study into the provision of a joint service. The study identified a number of benefits in setting up a new company to run a combined Dial a Ride service across Adur and Worthing. In particular, the report identified the scope to generate additional income through greater diversification and operational efficiencies. At its meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010, the Joint Strategic Committee considered the feasibility study undertaken by CTA and endorsed its conclusions that there would be considerable benefits to setting up a joint Dial a Ride service and the Committee encouraged both organisations to set up a joint booking system as quickly as possible.
- 2.2 At that stage it was hoped that a joint service might have been in place by November 2010. This was not possible partly due to the fact that a new charity was being set up to run Worthing's Dial a Ride Service – Southern Services from April 2010. Once the new Southern Services Board was in place discussions took place with ACT in terms of a possible joint service. In August 2010 both Boards agreed, in principle, to set up a joint booking system for Adur and Worthing Dial a Ride customers. It was not considered, at that stage that both organisations would be in a position to start the joint booking system until December as it would be necessary to recruit a new joint staff member to deal with all bookings. Further negotiations also continued in relation to income split and where best to base the new joint booking system.
- 2.3 At its meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010 a further report was presented updating the Committee on progress towards the provision of a joint service. The Committee resolved that:-

- (i) it noted the current situation and encouraged both organisations to set up the joint booking system as quickly as possible;
  - (ii) agreed that financial support be provided for the Adur Dial a Ride service until the end of the financial year provided that the joint booking system is in place as per (i) above (final decision to be taken by the relevant Cabinet Member); and,
  - (iii) agreed to review the funding for 2011/12 once the joint booking system is in place and to pursue Section 106 funding to assist the set up costs for a joint service.
- 2.4 As the Joint booking system was not set up funding for the last quarter of 2010/11 was withheld (£6,000) and this was carried forward to 2011/12. In view of the further delays in setting up the joint booking system funding for ACT was also withheld for 2011/12 (amounting to £24,000). ACT has continued to run the Dial a Ride service but this has been on the basis that it has been subsidised by the Community Transport side of its operation.
- 2.5 Southern Services submitted a proposal to run a joint service with ACT in June 2011; however, no further progress was made. As a result Southern Services resolved on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 2012 that it would be prepared to run a joint service with or without ACT. Two options were considered by Southern Services one in partnership with ACT and the other with Southern Services just providing a service across Adur and Worthing
- 2.6 In view of the lack of progress towards a joint service at its meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2012 the Joint Strategic Committee resolved to invite both organisations to bid for the delivery of a joint service as soon as possible and for the Council to enter into a 3 year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the successful bidder. Regarding funding for ACT for 2012/13 it was resolved that subject to receiving adequate supporting evidence and in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health, Safety and Wellbeing, funding should continue at existing levels until a contract is let for the new joint service.

### **3.0 Current Situation**

- 3.1 Following a request to submit bids for the delivery of a joint service (including scope for a joint bid) only Worthing's Southern Services has submitted a formal proposal. At its Board meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013 Southern Services agreed to extend its service to cover Adur and the attached expression of interest has recently been received.
- 3.2 Southern Services has indicated that it would initially aim to have 4,000 trips per annum which is higher than ACT currently achieve (approximately 3,000) and introduce an improved booking system allowing bookings between 9.30 am and 11.00 am with a minimum of 24 hours notice. To extend its current operation to Adur, Southern Services has requested the remaining s106 agreement funding from the Tesco development at Durrington (£30,000) to purchase a new bus and to help pay the various set up costs. Whilst, this funding was originally restricted to improve the Dial a Ride service to the Tesco store, the Company subsequently agreed that this funding could be used to 'support' the Dial a Ride service.

Members will recall that £25,000 has already been paid to Southern Services to purchase a new bus to improve the service in Worthing.

- 3.3 In December 2012 ACT wrote to the Council indicating that it did not consider that it was feasible to run a service across Adur and Worthing. This matter had been considered at its Board meeting in October and the following concerns were highlighted:

*'This view can only be accentuated over the last two months with the major delays occurring on the A27. The considerable problems we have encountered getting across the district emphasises one of the main reasons for this. This is something Worthing DAR has never experienced because:*

- a) *They never leave the town boundaries.*
- b) *There are no natural barriers.*

*I would like to again point out that there are only two crossing points over the River Adur. We also believe that the amount of grant available should be divided between the two organisations. This is also mentioned in the minutes.*

*With regard to the outstanding funding, we have continued to run our DAR service (as requested by ADC at the outset) we have provided a set of accounts for DAR up until year ending 31.3.2012 and are at a loss as to what clearer evidence is needed. The same criteria applies to the details of the level of service DAR has provided.*

*I would also like to point out that since the total withdrawal of funding for ACT (DAR parent organisation) and half of DAR own funding, we have lost three valuable members of staff so providing any further information is not an option. Furthermore since this withdrawal of funding, ACT has managed to finance DAR at considerable cost to itself, providing a much needed and appreciated service to those residents of Adur who need it. It seems a pity your council is unable to acknowledge this.'*

- 3.4 In discussions with ACT it is apparent that it has concerns that its customers would not receive the same level of service that ACT has provided and it feels that there has been 'undue bias' towards Worthing's Dial a Ride service. ACT also considers that many of its customers who are not registered disabled will not qualify to travel with Southern Services. In response, Southern Services has confirmed that it would take vulnerable customers and ideally it would like ACT to assist by providing details of its existing customers. Regarding the criticism of bias your Officers do not accept this is the case and the background section of this report highlights the efforts undertaken to encourage both organisations to work together to deliver a joint service.
- 3.5 The request for a 3 year Service Level Agreement (SLA) at the current funding levels for both services is in line with the Committee's previous thoughts and would provide the new service some funding certainty. There are clearly some risks associated with Southern Services extending its service across to Adur and the access issues across the River are accepted by Southern Services. However, the potential benefits to Adur residents in terms of an improved service and a more transparent operation in terms of funding and monitoring arrangements would justify entering into a SLA with Southern Services.

- 3.6 There is a need to work with Southern Services to develop the SLA and to agree more detailed aspects in relation to future performance management and monitoring. However, the attached expression of interest forms a good basis for these talks and your Officers would like to try and see if the service could start at the start of the new financial year (2013/14).

#### **4.0 Outstanding Funding for ACT**

- 4.1 It is disappointing that holding back funding from ACT did not encourage closer working between ACT and Southern Services to deliver a joint service. Agreement was reached to provide a joint booking service but this did not materialise and ACT appears to be concerned that Southern Services would just compete with its community transport operations if it operated across Adur District. Whilst, Southern Services does subsidise its operation with School contracts and community transport this is in line with the recommendations of transport Consultants, CTA and it is hoped that new contracts would be pursued possibly with the Hospital Trusts. However, Southern Services has no desire to compete with ACT's existing community transport provision.
- 4.2 Although, holding back ACT funding did not achieve the original objective of a joint service between the two operators, the Dial a Ride service has continued to be operated by ACT. In the circumstances it would be reasonable to provide retrospective funding to help the funding of this service which has been subsidised completely by the community transport side of its operation. Details of the number of customer trips has been provided and it is recommended that the level of retrospective funding should be determined by the Cabinet Member for Health, Safety and Wellbeing following a further meeting with ACT.

#### **5.0 Legal**

- 5.1 An open process for both organisations to bid for the delivery of a joint service would comply with standing orders as these are the only existing Dial a Ride operators across Adur and Worthing. An appropriate Service Level Agreement for any joint service in the future would be beneficial for the Council as well as the service provider.
- 5.2 Section 106 of the Transport Act, 1985 allows the councils to make, in such cases and subject to such terms and conditions as it or they may think fit, grants to any other person towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred by that person in providing, maintaining or improving
- (1) any vehicle, equipment or other facilities provided wholly or mainly for the purpose of facilitating travel by members of the public who are disabled<sup>7</sup>; or
  - (2) any equipment or other facilities specially designed or adapted for that purpose which are incorporated in any vehicle, equipment or other facilities not provided wholly or mainly for that purpose.
- 5.3 Any such authority, or any two or more such authorities acting jointly, may make, in such cases and subject to such terms and conditions as it or they may think fit, grants to any person providing public passenger transport services towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred by that person for the purpose of:

- (a) maintaining or improving facilities for public passenger transport, other than facilities provided wholly or mainly for use for the purpose of or in connection with excepted services; or
- (b) facilitating or improving the operation of public passenger transport services, other than excepted services,

in the area of that authority or, as the case may be, in the area comprising the areas of both or all those authorities

## **6.0 Financial implications**

6.1 Funding was provided to Southern Services for 2012/13 (£35,360) and the £24,000 funding for ACT to deliver a Dial a Ride service remains in the Adur grants budget for 2012/13. Funding for 2011/12, previously held back from ACT to encourage the provision of a joint service was carried forward to this year (£24,000).

## **7.0 Recommendation**

7.1 Joint Strategic Committee is recommended to:

- i) note the current situation and to agree, in principle, to enter into a 3 year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Dial a Ride Southern Services to deliver an extended service covering Worthing Borough and Adur Districts;
- ii) that the precise details of the SLA to be agreed, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Wellbeing;
- iii) the remaining s106 funding from Tesco be provided to Southern Services to deliver the joint service; and,
- iii) that retrospective funding be provided to ACT for the delivery of the Dial a Ride service with the precise amount to be agreed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health, Safety and Wellbeing.

## **Local Government Act 1972**

### **Background Papers:**

Community Transport Association Feasibility Report in connection with the provision of Joint Dial a Ride Service 2009

Expression of Interest by Dial a Ride Southern Services dated 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013

### **Contact Officer:**

James Appleton

Executive Head of Planning, Regeneration and Wellbeing.

[james.appleton@adur-worthing.gov.uk](mailto:james.appleton@adur-worthing.gov.uk)

## **Schedule of Other Matters**

### **1.0 Council Priority**

- 1.1 - Protecting front line services
- Promoting a clean, green and sustainable environment
- Working in partnerships to promote health and well being in our communities
- Ensuring value for money and low Council Tax

### **2.0 Specific Action Plans**

- 2.1 i) Extend the range of services delivered through partnership with other agencies including both the voluntary and third sector.
- ii) Reduce energy and water costs, and adopt more sustainable ways of delivering services.
- iii) Work with partners to reduce deprivation and inequalities
- iv) Continue to develop and improve procurement.

### **3.0 Sustainability Issues**

- 3.1 A larger service covering both Worthing and Adur would be more sustainable in terms of critical mass ensuring that there are additional vehicles and drivers able to deliver the Dial a Ride service.

### **4.0 Equality Issues**

- 4.1 An enhanced service would provide better access to services for the elderly, disabled and vulnerable Members of the community and improve equality for disadvantaged groups.

### **5.0 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)**

- 5.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

### **6.0 Human Rights Issues**

- 6.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

### **7.0 Reputation**

- 7.1 It would be important to communicate the potential benefits of the service to Adur residents as ACT will be concerned about the loss of future funding to deliver its Dial a Ride service, albeit that ACT would be able to concentrate on its community transport operations and could assist Southern Services provide an enhanced Dial a Ride service.

### **8.0 Consultations**

- 8.1 Internal consultation with Cabinet Members and other Senior Officers.

**9.0 Risk Assessment**

9.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

**10.0 Health & Safety Issues**

10.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

**11.0 Procurement Strategy**

11.1 The report complies with the Procurement Strategy as both organisations able to run a Dial a Ride service have been provided with an opportunity to bid to deliver a joint service.

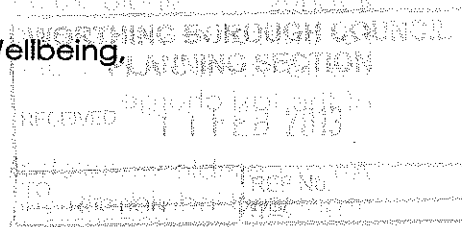
**12.0 Partnership Working**

12.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

# Dial A Ride Southern Services

WRVS Building, Gordon Road, Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1DB  
Charity no. 1136961 Company no. 07203500

Mr James Appleton,  
Executive Head of Planning, Regeneration & Wellbeing,  
Adur & Worthing Councils,  
Civic Centre,  
Ham Road,  
Shoreham,  
BN43 6PR



6th February 2013

Dear James,

## Dial-a-Ride scheme covering Worthing and Adur

Following our meeting of the 20 December 2012 Dial-a-Ride Southern Services ("DARSS") is prepared to extend its area of operation to cover qualifying individuals in the district of Adur. This paper excludes any grants that DARSS receives from Worthing Borough Council. The service would commence at a mutually agreed date as near to the 1 April 2013 as possible bearing in mind the short time scale subject to:-

- the completion of an acceptable SLA between the Council and DARSS confirming revenue grants for a 3 year period.
- immediate payment of £30,000 from the Section 106 money which will be utilised by DARSS to enable the purchase of an accessible wheelchair minibus and to cover start up costs of the agreed Adur District service.

This extension to the service of DARSS will be referred to as "Adur DAR" for SLA purposes only, and its operation can be summarised as follows:-

- Name: Adur DAR
- Operational:
- Operate Monday to Friday between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm.
  - Booking of journeys between 9.30 am and 11.00 am Monday to Friday through the DARSS existing telephone booking line.
  - Bookings can be made at a minimum of 24 hours notice in advance of travel.
  - Travel within the boundaries of Adur District and Worthing Borough, the areas covered by the funders.

Customers: Individuals must register with DARSS as a user prior to being able to book trips on the DAR service to comply with the various statutory regulations under which we operate. Individuals who can register include:-

- Anyone who has to travel in a wheelchair.



- Anyone who is registered disabled.
- Anyone who is deemed to be vulnerable by DARSS.

Fares: Individuals will be charged a fare on a zone basis. The fares are likely to be as follows:-

1 zone	single	£3.50	return	£5.50
2 zones	single	£4.00	return	£7.00
3 zones	single	£4.50	return	£8.50
4 zones	single	£5.50	return	£9.50

For indicative purposes a trip from Lancing to Worthing central would cover 3 zones, and the fare is currently approximately half of the taxi charge.

Vehicles: An accessible wheelchair minibus will be utilised to transport the registered individuals.

### SLA between the Council and DARSS

It is understood that the existing DAR in the Adur District receives an annual revenue grant of £24,000 and that the existing operator was providing around 4,000 passenger trips per annum. DARSS is prepared to have an outcome target for the Adur District written into the SLA and initially suggests a 3 year SLA as follows:-

Year	Annual Grant	Passenger Trips
2013/14	£24,000	4,000 p.a.
2014/15	£24,000	4,250 p.a.
2015/16	£24,000	4,500 p.a.

DARSS will build up the DAR business and finance the increasing passenger trips through other activities it undertakes such as SEN school contracts and Group Hire. DARSS will present the Council with quarterly statistics related to passenger trips, bookings refused etc. and suggests half yearly meetings between both parties.

DARSS will accept the option of a 6 month notice of termination by the Council at the end of the 3 year agreement if the passenger trip targets are not being attained.

### Section 106 funds

As previously mentioned an immediate payment of £30,000 from the Section 106 money held by the Council is requested to be paid to DARSS. These funds will be paid on an unrestricted basis to enable the purchase of an accessible wheelchair minibus to increase the DARSS fleet to enable it to be able to provide accessible minibus(es) to operate in the Adur District. It is envisage that between £20,000 and £25,000 will be spent on a suitable fairly new second hand vehicle together with insurance, tax etc. The remainder of the monies will be utilised towards the set up costs for Adur which, amongst others will include an IT upgrade, advertising and marketing costs, etc.

If you are in agreement with the concept and structure of DARSS to include Adur District, we shall be pleased to discuss the finer points towards the various agreements.

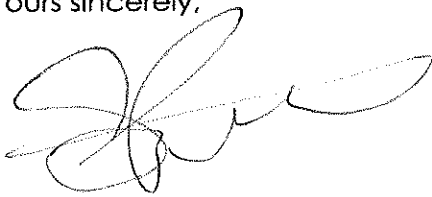
While this paper currently excludes anything DARSS receives from Worthing Borough Council, DARSS will be prepared to commence discussion about combining the grants with a joint SLA in future years.

Finally we want to make it clear that the scope of this proposal is restricted to DARSS undertaking to provide a DAR service in Adur District, and that we understand other operators will continue to provide their services, such as Community Transport, Group Hire, SEN contracts etc., within the area.

DARSS will communicate the new Adur coverage as an extension of the DARSS service, and not as a separate Adur DAR.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Plumb', written in a cursive style.

Steve Plumb

DARSS Chairman.