



To Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)

Date 21st September 2016

Subject – Providing transport for an ageing population

1 Purpose of the Note

To provide Scrutiny Board 3 with a brief guide to the transport solutions to support the mobility and independence of an ageing population, to inform a future select committee meeting.

2 Recommendations

Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board are recommended:

- (i) To note the contents of the report;
- (ii) To identify and agree topic areas which require further scrutiny at a future select committee.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 In 2015 Coventry's population was estimated to be 345,000 of which 14.3% were aged over 65. Whilst this percentage is lower than the regional and national averages, it still represents 49,000 citizens. It is projected that by 2039 the number of over 65's in Coventry will have increased by nearly 50% to number 73,000. On the one hand this is a positive indicator of improved health and rising life expectancies. On the other hand however it presents significant fiscal and policy challenges for local authorities in determining the most viable and cost effective transport solutions to support the mobility and quality of life of an ageing population.
- 3.2 In addition to the increasing number of older people, in 2015, 17.7% of all residents within Coventry were also living with a long term health problem or disability. Based on this figure the number of over 65's with a long term health problem or disability in 2015 was over 8,500 and by 2039 this is likely to increase to 13,000 without interventions. Given the link between increased age and health, the actual figures are likely to be higher.
- 3.3 To assist Scrutiny Board identify the topics for further scrutiny at a future Select Committee, the following is a list of transport solutions that are currently provided in Coventry for older people including those with mobility impairment:

3.3.1 Concessionary Travel Scheme – Provides elderly and disabled people with free travel by bus anywhere in England during off-peak times. Residents in Coventry along with the wider West Midlands are also entitled to free train and Metro travel during off-peak times, which is an additional non-statutory service. In 2015/16 the concessionary fares scheme for senior citizens and the disabled cost £55m across the whole West Midlands region and was administered by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM).

3.3.2 Accessible Public Transport – There is a comprehensive bus network available within Coventry which through TfWM policies encourage the use of low floor and wheelchair accessible buses designed for easy access by people with mobility issues including the elderly. Within the West Midlands about 90% of all buses are low floor and wheelchair accessible, more than any other metropolitan area outside London. All stops and shelters also have timetables and there are maps in key locations. At Pool Meadow bus station and adjacent to many stops along main routes, real-time passenger information is provided on electronic information displays, which provide details of the next buses to call at the stop including the service number, destination and the time that the bus will arrive. For passengers who are blind or partially sighted, RNIB key fobs are available which can be used to activate an audio voice message which provides the exact same information.

3.3.3 Community Transport (including Ring and Ride) – Consists of local passenger transport provision which is organised on a non-profit basis by voluntary organisations, community groups and other non-statutory bodies. Co-operation with local authorities is an important source of funding for many non-profit making transport providers and the Department for Transport encourages this model of working.

In line with this, TfWM provides a grant to Ring and Ride West Midlands Ltd for the provision of services in Coventry and the wider West Midlands for all people who find it physically difficult or impossible to use conventional public transport. Ring and Ride provides an on-call service to people meeting this criteria, transporting them to local amenities. The service is operated by Ring and Ride West Midlands Ltd, a charitable company limited by guarantee. Part of the grant is used to fund the purchase of the special purpose Ring and Ride Vehicles. In 2015/16 the special needs service grant administered by TfWM was £8.5m across the whole West Midlands region.

3.3.4 Passenger Transport Services – Delivered by the Council providing transport for over 500 passengers per day amounting to more than a quarter of a million trips each year. The service allows people to access education and learning, social care, health, employment and take an active part in everyday activities. The services include social care transport for adults with learning difficulties and older people to day care and other opportunities. Also “Routedirect” which provides flexible and personalised transport for people on mobility disability living allowance residing in the city.

The in-house transport provision is delivered via standard and accessible minibuses with 27 routes servicing four special schools, 7 college runs, and 14 routes supporting six centres for people with learning disabilities, and older people. The cost of providing this element of the service is in the region £3m per year. Further provision is provided by external providers on 36 routes costing a further £2m per year and a number of taxis are also deployed costing just under £1m per year. The majority of the in-house minibuses are utilised during the morning and in the afternoon which means that during the middle of the day they could potentially be utilised on other activities. A service review is currently underway.

3.3.5 Taxis and private hire vehicles – In Coventry there are over 850 taxis and nearly 200 private hire vehicles currently licensed helping to provide an important additional transport

option for elderly and disabled people as they can be booked in advance to provide a “door to door” service. All taxis in Coventry are also wheelchair accessible helping to increase the mobility of disabled citizens.

- 3.3.6 **Blue Badge Scheme** – Aims to help residents with severe mobility problems to access goods, services and other local amenities by allowing them to park close to their destination. In Coventry City Centre alone there are over 400 on-street parking spaces which offer free parking for blue badge holders, including over 40 dedicated disabled bays.
- 3.3.7 **Shop Mobility** – Aims to provide independence for people with reduced mobility to access shopping centres and other local amenities. The scheme in Coventry is based in Barracks car park and provides for the hire of mobility scooters and other equipment for mobility impaired shoppers and visitors to the city centre. The service is provided by Mobility Pathways on behalf of the Council at a cost of around £85,000 per year.
- 3.4 In addition to the services that we currently provide, technological advances in the future will also offer a range of other potential transport solutions for older people and those with mobility impairment including within the emerging concept of “Mobility as a Service”:
 - 3.4.1 **Mobility as a Service (MaaS)** – Supported by TfWM this new concept considers a traveller’s journey from end to end rather than between individual modes. It puts the traveler at the core of transport services, offering them tailor-made mobility solutions based on their individual needs. This means that, for the first time, easy access to the most appropriate transport mode or service will be included in a bundle of flexible travel service options for individual users. In short, MaaS will provide transport via a real-time personalised service that integrates all types of mobility choices and presents them to the customer in a completely integrated manner to get them from A to B as easily as possible.

In addition to conventional transport modes linked to MaaS, it may also encompass technological improvements that could assist older people when retiring from ‘conventional driving’, by providing mobility solutions that are consumed as a service. For example the use of assisted technology in cars and driverless vehicles will enable older people and those with mobility impairment to continue driving safely for longer. Other linked future services may include ride-sharing, e-hailing services, bike and car sharing programmes as well as on-demand “pop-up” bus services to assist in people’s mobility.

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