

By: Gary Cooke, Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services  
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To: Selection and Member Services Committee –22 May 2015

Subject: County Car Service – Discussion paper on the present condition of the existing fleet

Summary: This report invites the Committee to note the current position with regard to the County Council’s car fleet and to comment on options for replacing the fleet at an appropriate stage in the future, together with an offer to supply a car for the Chairman’s use during the 2015/16 Municipal Year.

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## **1. Introduction**

- (1) Kent County Council has operated cars for Members’ use since the 1960s. The service is available for all 84 Members but is provided primarily for the civic duties of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council and for the work of the Leader, Deputy Leader, Leader of the Opposition and Cabinet Members. Over the years, the County Council has used different methods of procurement for its vehicles, i.e. both lease and direct purchase, and has reduced the cost of the service down to the absolute minimum. Continuing efforts are being made to reduce costs wherever possible and to make the best use of what is an invaluable and value-for-money service.
- (2) At its meeting on 13 July 2011, this Committee endorsed the principle of providing a car service on the grounds that it is an efficient means of travel and, in many cases, cheaper than public transport and taxis, given the demands on Members’ and senior officers’ time. It is particularly efficient and effective given size of the County Council’s area; the ability for senior Members to undertake confidential work whilst travelling to meetings; and the value for money achieved when two or three Members share a car to travel to and from the same meeting, as is quite often the case. The service is also available for any Member who may be temporarily incapacitated and unable to drive their own car, perhaps as a result of medical treatment

## **2. The existing car fleet**

- (3) The Council’s existing fleet comprises three 10-year old Volvo S80s and an 18-year old Volvo Estate. The three Volvo S80s were originally leased by to the Council over a four year period from 2005 but were purchased by the County Council at the end of the lease period in 2009 at a total cost of £20,620. The current valuations and mileages of the fleet are as follows:

Car	Current mileage (May 2015)	Current Estimated Value (online valuation)	Comments
Volvo Estate P678 LKN	159,000	£100	Is rarely used. *
Volvo S80 1XKT	190,000	£740	
Volvo S80 GJ55 FWF	151,000	£920	
Volvo S80 GJ55 FWD	145,000	£930	Gearbox replaced in April 2015

*(\*the fixed costs of this vehicle (insurance, tax, MOT and servicing) total £1,200 per annum.*

- (4) The total cost of providing the Members' car service in the last three financial years is as follows:

Category of spend	2014/15 £	2013/14 £	2012/13 £
Vehicle repairs and maintenance	4,066	4,248	7,436
Fuel	4,997	5,588	6,786
Congestion Charges	529	472	933
Driver/Administrator – 45% of costs	12,520	13,921	14,558
Driver employment costs	16,870	19,364	22,362
Less driver recharges	(140)		(490)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38,842</b>	<b>43,593</b>	<b>51,585</b>

- (5) At its meeting on 11 May 2012, this Committee agreed that the existing cars would be renewed by way of leasing an appropriate number of vehicles depending on usage. At that time, it was expected to be 2015 at the earliest that the renewals would be made depending on the condition and serviceability of the vehicles. The Committee also said at the time that it expected each of its cars to do a minimum of 250,000 miles before being replaced. Some Members may recall that the Committee also agreed in 2012 to establish a repairs and renewals fund for Member transportation in the sum of £15,000 per annum. Provision has been made within a reserve and currently stands at £45k.
- (6) An analysis undertaken in 2012, showed that, on average, the 4 Volvos are used for 44% of the time between 06:00 and midnight each working day. This analysis of usage is currently being repeated in respect of the last complete financial year 2014/15 and this information will be key in order to inform the Cabinet Member on the number of replacement vehicles the Council requires going forward. The Committee is also asked to note that the Head of Democratic Services will work with the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services to develop an appropriate specification for the vehicles themselves and the service generally in the future prior to a procurement process being undertaken. The Cabinet Member will report back to this Committee at appropriate stages of the procurement process.

### **3. Proposed Civic Car**

- (7) The Committee is advised that the Barretts car dealership based in Canterbury has offered to provide a civic car for Kent County Council for the 2015/16 Municipal Year only on the following basis:
- (i) A car would be made available on loan to KCC for the use only by the 2015/16 Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council for civic and ceremonial events, with additional limited use allowed by senior managers, but no other elected Members. At the end of the year, the car would be returned to Barretts.
  - (ii) The car is likely to be a Jaguar XE saloon
  - (iii) The mileage for the car is limited to 12,000 miles during the loan period
  - (iv) KCC would be responsible for fully insuring the vehicle for the period of the loan\* and be responsible for any damage that may occur during that time.
  - (v) Some very discreet Barretts branding on the vehicle is requested, e.g. a number plate or bumper sticker.

(\* insurance is estimated to cost £600 for a full year)

- (8) Canterbury City Council has benefited from an identical arrangement for a number of years and Barretts regard the provision of a car in these circumstances as an important part of their civic responsibility. The reason that Barretts have stipulated that no other elected Members can use the car apart from the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the County Council is because they do not wish to be seen as providing a service solely for the benefit of a particular political group.
- (9) Should the Committee agree to accept this offer from Barretts, the cost of insuring the vehicle would be met from the Democratic Services revenue budget.

### **4. Recommendations:**

The Committee's instructions are requested.

Background Documents –Previous reports to the Selection and Member Services Committee in 2011 and 2012, as indicated in the report.

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