

By: David Hall, Head of Transport & Development

To: Environment, Highways & Waste Policy Overview Committee – 16 July 2009

Subject: Minibus Application Procedure

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report informs members of the proposed Minibus Application Procedure to be used in response to requests from parish councils and community groups for the procurement, delivery and maintenance of minibuses.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 During the recent past there have been several expressions of interest from parish councils and community groups in the provision of minibuses. In all these cases there has been a presumption on the part of the applicant that Kent County Council would provide funding for the whole of the capital cost and for part of the revenue cost.
- 1.2 In order to ensure a fair and equitable allocation of the limited resources available, the attached Minibus Application Procedure has been prepared. This sets out a clear application process, and establishes defined criteria, which would need to be met in order for a minibus application to be favourably considered.

2. Public Transport Policy

- 2.1 Kent County Council supports some 200 local bus services across the County which would not otherwise operate without public funding. This represents about 20% of the network across Kent. Many of these services link rural communities and cater for people wishing to travel at evenings or weekends.
- 2.2 Some rural communities are relatively well served with links on most days of the week to amenities offered by a nearby town. Many are also served by Kent Karrier 'dial-a-ride/fixed route' services which cater for disabled people or those living more than 500m from a scheduled bus service.
- 2.3 This procedure is aimed at helping communities to work together to maintain local bus services and, where there may be few or no alternative travel options by public transport, to provide guidance on developing a business case for a community minibus.

3. Community Transport Provision

- 3.1 The Minibus Application Procedure is attached as Appendix 1. This would, if approved, become the standard procedure to be followed by parish councils and community groups seeking funding for the procurement, delivery and (for the first six years) maintenance, insurance, MOT, tax and driver training costs associated with minibus purchase.

- 3.2 This report also recommends the allocation of sufficient funding for community transport schemes, which would contribute to the support of existing minibus operations such as Meopham Community Transport and Wealden Wheels where they meet the criteria set out in the new procedures.
- 3.3 The provision of this community transport funding would emphasise the important service offered to often isolated communities by these various forms of transport scheme, and would incorporate the present ad hoc arrangements for the funding of new minibuses.

4. Funding

- 4.1 The total funding requirement, comprising both revenue and capital, would be £100,000pa. This would ensure appropriate provision for up to four applications for minibus funding each year, and for on-going support for existing community transport schemes.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Community transport is an important element of public transport provision in the county. However, it is critical that any application for minibus funding meets strict criteria, and is seen not to undermine the existing commercial and supported bus network in Kent. The approval of the proposed Minibus Application Procedure, together with funding for this and for on-going support of existing community transport schemes, would ensure an equitable allocation of limited resources to the provision of this community service.

6. Recommendations:

- 6.1 Subject to the views of this Committee it is proposed to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste that:
- (i) the process for minibus funding set out in the Minibus Application Procedure ([Appendix 1](#) to this report) is approved;
 - (ii) funding of £100,000pa for minibus funding and for on-going support of existing community transport schemes is approved.

Background Documents:

None

Contact Officer: Stephen Gasche
Public Transport Team Leader (East Kent)
✉ stephen.gasche@kent.gov.uk
☎ 01622 221995

MINIBUS APPLICATION PROCEDURE

KCC PUBLIC TRANSPORT POLICY

Supporting local bus services and developing a business case for a community minibus

Kent County Council supports some 200 local bus services across the County which would not otherwise operate without public funding. This represents about 20% of the network across Kent. Many of these services link rural communities and cater for people wishing to travel at evenings or weekends.

Some rural communities are relatively well served with links on most days of the week to amenities offered by a nearby town. Many are also served by Kent Karrier 'dial-a-ride/fixed route' services which cater for disabled people or those living more than 500m from a scheduled bus service.

This procedure is aimed at helping communities to work together to maintain local bus services and, where there may be few or no alternative travel options by public transport, to provide guidance on developing a business case for a community minibus.

Local Bus and Community Transport Services

Details of local bus services can be obtained on line at

www.kent.gov.uk/publictransport

or via the national Traveline service on:

0871 200 2233

or by contacting the Council's Transport Integration team on:

01622 605095

For enquiries regarding membership of Kent Karrier please contact:

01622 605349

A number of communities in Kent run car sharing, good neighbour and wheels to work schemes. Information about these can be obtained from:

'Action with Communities in Rural Kent' at The Old Granary, Penstock Hall Farm, Canterbury Road, East Brabourne, Kent, TN25 5LL or by phone:

01303 813790

Maintaining the local bus network

The more people who use local bus services the greater the likelihood that these services will be able to be sustained in the longer term.

Local communities can play a key part in marketing and promotion of local services. To assist this the County Council is always appreciative of suggestions for improvements to local bus services, although if additional funding is necessary this may be difficult to secure. Suggestions should be made, with the support of a parish council, in writing to the Council's Transport Integration team at:

Transport Integration, KCC Commercial Services, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4QG.

Considering a local community minibus

Before considering an application for a community minibus it is essential that every reasonable step is taken to make people aware of existing local bus services and for these to be used. It is often the case that such local bus services have been withdrawn precisely because they have not been used by local people.

Parish councils in particular have an important role to play in securing space on parish notice boards and in parish halls, etc for bus timetables, which will always be supplied on request from the Council's Transport Integration team. Applicants should also note that concessionary bus passes and KCC Freedom Passes are not valid on community transport services.

In locations where there are very infrequent or no scheduled bus services, the following procedure should be used when parish councils or other community groups wish to apply for funding for the capital cost of procuring a minibus. In the event of a successful application, the organisation will be responsible for arranging all of the following and for invoicing the costs to KCC, which Kent County Council is committed to paying for the first six years of operation:

- Insurance and breakdown cover
- Annual taxation
- Annual service, including tail-lift
- Annual MOT and annual tail-lift certificate (LOLA)
- 1 x KCC Minibus Training Course per driver (including tail-lift)
- 1 x annual membership of Community Transport Association
- Thirteen-weekly vehicle safety checks
- Livery/branding of vehicle
- Any other fair wear and tear (i.e. tyres clutch etc)

Please note that, with the exception of these items for the first six years of operation, there is no other provision for on-going revenue funding of such vehicles by Kent County Council, and that all other operating costs would need to be met in their entirety by the organisation making the application.

THE APPLICATION PROCEDURE

This application procedure is aimed at assisting local groups in developing a business case to justify and support a minibus. Through this, the Council can respond equitably to requests for capital funding from parish councils, community groups and voluntary associations for minibus procurement.

Kent Karrier Service – An Explanatory Note

The Kent Karrier service is operated on behalf of Kent County Council and provides a bespoke travel service for those whose mobility is impaired, regardless of how far they live from a normal scheduled bus service. Passengers without disabilities are also entitled to use this service if they live more than 500 metres from a recognised bus stop. Full information about the Kent Karrier service is available at: www.kent.gov.uk/publictransport or by telephone at: 01622 605349.

Applications for Funding

Applications for funding the capital cost of procuring a minibus should meet the following criteria:

Criteria

1. No access to education, employment, health facilities and essential food shopping by any form of public transport.
2. No access to Kent Karrier services as explained above.
3. No access to an existing minibus resource through a brokerage scheme and having exhausted all other possible community transport based options (e.g. a shared car scheme, good neighbour scheme, wheels to work scheme, etc).
4. Ability to provide a sustainable and viable business plan for a period of six years, showing how the minibus will be maintained after the first five years of operation, and how it will be operated, licensed, revenue funded and managed from the start of operation.

Process

1. Completion of a business plan (**Part 1**) (overleaf) which must encompass the elements in criterion 4 (above) and expand upon them to demonstrate that the applicant has the ability, skills, knowledge and funding to fulfil the business plan's requirements.
2. Completion of a questionnaire (**Part 2**) to test the ability of the applicant to meet the above criteria.
3. Submission of both documents to the Sustainable Transport Team at:

Application for Minibus Funding, Sustainable Transport Team, Kent County Council, Invicta House, MAIDSTONE, Kent, ME14 1XX

4. On receipt, the application will be evaluated in accordance with the quality of the business plan submission provided in **Part 1**, and the scoring mechanism for **Part 2**.
5. A written response will be provided within 20 working days. Further clarification may be sought.
6. If the application is successful and sufficient funding is available, procurement of a suitable vehicle is likely to take 6 to 8 weeks.

PART 1 - PREPARATION OF A BUSINESS PLAN

A business plan should be prepared setting out the principal elements in support of the minibus application. Please give as full and descriptive an account as possible.

Administration

Address at which minibus operation is registered, including times service can be booked and full contact details

Accounts

Procedure for annual accounts to be prepared and name of organisation or parish council to which minibus operation is accountable

Bank Account

Details of bank account and procedure for purchases and banking

Membership

Indicate number of prospective passengers from location who have registered an interest in using the service

Fares

Income from fares will need to cover all the operating costs, including fuel, licence fees, vehicles excise duty, insurance, MOT certificate (as required), servicing, tyres and other maintenance; any costs not covered by income from fares must be met by the organisation responsible for the vehicle

Additional Income

Any additional income generated by the hiring of the minibus to other organisations, provided that all the appropriate legal requirements concerning drivers and numbers of passengers carried are met, may be retained by the association or parish council which owns the vehicle

Routes and Drivers

Indicate routes planned and destinations to be served, demonstrating from local surveys from where this usage comes; and ensure sufficient number of drivers, including relief drivers, will need to be available, trained and licensed, with costs of this covered by fares revenue

Licences and Permits

Indicate legislative basis for minibus operation, i.e. section 19 licence or section 22 licence (see VOSA website: www.vosa.org.uk)

PART 2 - QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1: State the principal town / village / hamlet / other location that the proposed minibus will serve:

Q2: Describe the total number of public transport journeys in all directions and by all types of public transport serving the location (stated in Q1) on a daily basis:

Monday to Friday (please tick one)

0	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 or more	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Please state the type and split of public transport (Please tick all that apply and write)

Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____
Train	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____
Ferry	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____

Saturday (please tick one)

0	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 or more	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Please state the type and split of public transport (Please tick all that apply and write)

Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____
Train	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____
Ferry	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____

Sunday (please tick one)

0	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 or more	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Please state the type and split of public transport (Please tick all that apply and write)

Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____
Train	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____
Ferry	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	number of journeys	_____

Q3: What, if any, access by public transport is there to the following from the location stated in Q1?

a) Education (Please state in a maximum of 100 words)

b) Employment (Please state in a maximum of 100 words)

c) Health Facilities (Please state in a maximum of 100 words)

d) Essential Food Shopping (Please state a maximum of 100 words)

Q4: Which specific locations do you wish to access through the procurement of a minibus through this application?

(Please state in a maximum of 500 words)

Q5: Please state if the location stated in Q1 is served by the Kent Karrier service (Please tick one)

Yes No

If 'Yes' please state which service this is and the frequency that it operates in the location stated in Q1 (Please state in a maximum of 200 words)

Q6: Please can you now state the level of Community Transport provision (other than Kent Karrier) that exists in or close to the location stated in Q1: (Please tick all that apply and write)

- Good Neighbour Scheme Name and Area _____
- Shared Car Scheme Name and Area _____
- Community Minibus Name and Area _____
- None of the above

Q7: Please can you indicate if a local school or college, in or close to the location stated in Q1, has a minibus which may be available for use outside of the schools core hours and / or during the day:

(Please complete in a maximum of 100 words)

Q8: If applicable please state if the school or college noted above has been approached with the view to using the minibus for the benefit of the community:

(Please complete in a maximum of 100 words)

Q9: How many people would benefit from a new minibus service in your locality? (Please tick one box)

- | | | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| 1-20 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 61-100 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 201 – 300 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21-40 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 101-150 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 301 – 500 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 41-60 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 151-200 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 501 – 1000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | | | 1000+ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q10: Which members of the local community will specifically benefit from this new minibus resource? (Please tick all those that apply)

- Anyone without daytime access to a car / private transport
- Young people in / attending Education
- Adults in / attending Education
- Job Seekers
- Anyone over the age of 60 years
- Anyone with mobility impairments
- Wheelchair Users
- People not in walking distance of their nearest bus / train service
- Anyone needing transport during the evening or at night
- Any member of the public or any reason and at any time

Q11: How do you intend to promote the minibus service and ensure its on-going use?

(Please complete in a maximum of 100 words)