

Item

## SHOPMOBILITY SERVICES REVIEW



**To:**

Councillor Kevin Blencowe, Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport

Environment Scrutiny Committee

16 January 2018

**Report by:**

Sean Cleary, Commercial Operations Manager

Tel: 01223 - 458287 Email: sean.cleary@cambridge.gov.uk

**Wards affected:**

Abbey, Arbury, Castle, Cherry Hinton, Coleridge, East Chesterton, King's Hedges, Market, Newnham, Petersfield, Queen Edith's, Romsey,

### Key Decision

#### 1. Executive Summary

1.1 Parking Services currently provides a Shop-mobility service free of charge from offices at the Grand Arcade and Grafton Centre.

1.2 This service comprises of:

- The hire of mobility scooters and mechanical wheelchairs
- Collections from Dial-a-Ride and local bus stops operated by Shop-mobility staff Mon-Fri 10am-5pm
- Escorted shopping service, this is a pre-booked two hour service that assists customers with their shopping trips, operated by Shop-mobility staff Mon-Fri 10am-5pm

1.3 All Shop-mobility customers receive 3 hours free parking

1.4 The full operational running costs of the service is budgeted at £165,000 for the current 2017/18 financial year.

- 1.5 In 2016 Cambridgeshire County Council withdrew their proportion of contribution funding for the Cambridge City Council Shop-mobility services. The value of this was £49,500
- 1.6 The Shop-mobility service has continued to operate using the General Fund to cover the £49,500 shortfall
- 1.7 Options considered to cover the loss of contributions from Cambridgeshire County Council are:
  1. Do nothing whilst maintaining current services and subsidising the full cost of £165,000
  2. Create income of £47,800 from the introduction of an annual membership fee and hire charge for equipment to cover shortfall in funding from County whilst maintaining shopping escorts and bus stop and Dial a Ride collection services – funding requirement from General Fund of a cost of £117,200.

## 2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to consider the following options for the Shop-mobility service:

### 2.1 **Option 1 Do nothing and maintain current services**

The full operational costs of the Shop-mobility Services are £165,000.

### 2.2 **Option 2 Introduction of annual membership fee & hire charge for equipment whilst maintaining the shopping escort and bus stop and Dial a Ride collection services**

The introduction of an annual membership fee and per-use hire charge would bring the Council into line with the vast majority of other Shop-mobility services. The hire charge would be reduced for members who are likely to use the service more regularly. The National Federation of Shop-mobility support this approach as a way of sustaining services, their view is that users would rather pay for the service than lose it.

The full range of Shopmobility services that Cambridge City Council offers includes escorted shopping trips, Dial-a-Ride bus stop pickups and use of mobility scooters and wheelchairs. There are two sites within the city centre which customers can choose from. It is rare for Shopmobility suppliers to provide such a range of services, especially across two sites as Cambridge City Council does as this directly affects the cost of running the service. Therefore the charges that should be applied in order to cover some of this cost, allowing continued support to disabled shoppers.

## **Income projection**

Proposed Charges:

Membership charge	£40 (annual charge)
Members hire charge	£5 (all day use)
Non-members hire charge	£10 (all day use)
Predicted Income from Option	= £47,800

Due to the introduction of charges, there is a minimum forecasted reduction of 20% in usage.

The introduction of a membership fee will necessitate maintaining a membership database with the associated administrative being absorbed into the current parking services team.

An introduction of charges will enable the city council to continue to offer the full range of Shopmobility services.

The service would need to continue to be subsidised by £49,500 from the general fund to cover the contribution from Cambridgeshire County Council should charging for services not be introduced.

Regular users of the service could pay for membership, which will enable them to benefit from discounted hire charges. After 8 visits the discounted rate would enable them to then benefit from a saving.

Shopmobility service usage would be monitored, to understand any effect on numbers using the service.

The Shop-mobility service would continue to be managed at both the Grafton Centre and Grand Arcade. Shop-mobility staff would operate over Monday to Friday which is the peak operating periods of the service. At weekends car park staff would provide the service of the issuing and return of equipment.

## **3. Background**

Parking Services currently provides a Shop-mobility service free of charge from offices at the Grand Arcade and Grafton Centre. Customers of this service also receive 3 hours free parking.

The National Federation for Shop-mobility (NFSM) confirms that only 14 of the 140 members provide the service free of charge or on a donation basis.

Both sites are open Monday to Saturday from 10am until 5pm with the Grafton Centre service open additionally on Sundays between 11am and 4pm. Shopping escorts, bus stop and Dial-a-Ride collections are not provided over weekends.

Over the period June 2016 to May 2017 the service was used by 1,524 people making over 7,700 visits. Only 36% of these were Cambridge City residents.

Both sites are popular with the Grand Arcade edging the higher use with the preferred piece of equipment being the electric scooter.

Shopping escorts and collections from Dial-a-Ride and local bus stops are delivered free of charge.

The escorted shopping service is a pre-booked two hour service that assists customers with their shopping trips. These services are only operated Monday-Friday 10am-5pm reflecting the current working hours of the Shop-mobility staff.

The Shop-mobility shopping escort service was used between the periods of June 2016 to June 2017 by a total of 8 customers 37 times. Using the usage data and the cost of the service this equates as an average of £919 per use or at a cost of £4,998 per customer.

The shopping escorts do have elements of social care attributed to them with many of the Shop-mobility users likely to be in receipt of either Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP). DLA is a tax-free benefit for disabled people who need help with mobility or care. PIP is a benefit that helps with the extra costs of a long-term health condition or disability for people aged 16 to 64 and is gradually replacing DLA. Both benefits are designed to support individual's independence for both care and mobility. In the case of shopping escorts this could be for payment of carers to provide this support.

Dial-a-Ride has a £10 annual membership with each journey costing £6. These service users can use their Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Council taxi card vouchers against Dial-A-Ride fares. These give:

1. Cambridge City Council Taxi Card scheme - 100 vouchers per year at a value of £3.40 per voucher
2. Cambridgeshire County Council Taxi Card scheme – 40 vouchers per year at a value of £2.50 per voucher

This service as provided by the City Council is in essence subsidising those customers both in the use of the Dial-a-Ride service and by offering a free Dial-a-Ride collection

Dial-a-Ride receives core funding through fares and fees from members and through recurring grants from Cambridge City, Cambridgeshire County Councils, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridgeshire NHS Primary Care Trust. Cambridge City Councils contribution is £39,000 in the current financial year.

Currently the Shop-mobility service is provided by two permanent members of staff working 56 hours per week and one volunteer working up to 2 half days a week. Staff from Parking Services provide back-up assistance over seven days and run the service completely at weekends.

The peak operating times of the Shopmobility service are Monday to Friday which increases in use during the summer months, particularly July and August.

## **4. Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

Cambridge City Council continues to fund the £49,530 as a result of the withdrawal of funding from Cambridgeshire County Council. Option 1 is the status quo. In order that the cost of the scheme is reduced the following alternative options are being considered

- 1. Option 2 Introduction of an annual membership fee & hire charge for equipment whilst maintaining the shopping escort and bus stop and Dial-a-Ride collection services. Saving of £47,800 with a net cost of the service of £117k**

Detail of this is included in the body of the report

### **(b) Staffing Implications**

None

### **(c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

Yes. See EQIA

### **(d) Environmental Implications**

N/A

### **(e) Procurement Implications**

N/A

### **(f) Community Safety Implications**

N/A

## **5. Consultation and communication considerations**

In consultation with the governing body of the service, Shop-mobility Federation, we have been have advised of the issues affecting how Shop-mobility services run across the country. They are positively encouraging the introduction of charges and a membership to ensure longevity of service. They have also advised that many disabled people work and would be happy to pay to access the service rather than lose it.

Parking services will design a leaflet laying out how they see the service operating in the future. This will encourage service users to respond and provide their feedback. Other channels will be available such as survey monkey, web and social media to include Facebook and Twitter.

Parking and Shopmobility officers will support this process by spending time with users to encourage or assist with completion of the survey.

## **6. Background papers**

(a) Equalities Impact Assessment.

## **8. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Sean Cleary, Commercial Operations Manager, tel: 01223 - 458287, email: [sean.cleary@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:sean.cleary@cambridge.gov.uk).