

REVIEW OF TAXICARD AND TRANSPORT INITIATIVES

To:

Councillor Katie Thornburrow, Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport
Planning & Transport Scrutiny Committee [11/01/2022]

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

A report making recommendations in relation to Transport Initiatives funded by Cambridge City Council and the Taxicard Scheme was presented to Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 29 June 2021.

A further report was to be presented to this Committee in January following a review and feedback on the agreed changes to the Taxicard Scheme implemented in October 2021.

This report now outlines the findings of that review and long-term recommendations for the Scheme from 1 April 2022.

At the June meeting, the Executive Councillor also approved the undertaking of review work in relation to the Council's Transport Initiatives, working with

the Council's partners including the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP). This would include the City Council's Taxicard Scheme, Cambridge City Bus Subsidies and Cambridge Dial-a-Ride. This report updates and makes recommendations in relation to this work.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

1. Approve the proposed changes to the Taxicard scheme for Taxicard members to be implemented from 1 April 2022 – see 3.1.1.
2. Stop the provision of the City Council's subsidy for the Citi 1 Night Bus Service from 1 April 2022 – see 3.2.1
3. Continue to fund Cambridge Dial-a-Ride with a Grant Agreement for the 2022/23 financial year to the value of £40k - see 3.3.1.
4. Note future joined up working with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and the GCP regarding existing City bus subsidies linked with the Bus Service Improvement Plan and City Access projects – see 3.4.1
5. Continue to approve the Head of Human Resources' delegated authority, in liaison with the Executive Councillor for Planning and Transport, and consultation with the Chair and Spokesperson for Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee, to make any changes that may be necessary to support the transport initiatives and schemes going forward, until such time as a wider decision around the policy and strategy decisions is agreed.

3. Background

3.1 Taxicard

A review of Cambridge City Council's Taxicard scheme has recently been carried out with the aim of increasing usage by its members, within the remit of providing a more flexible Taxicard Scheme.

The changes made on 1 October were aimed to improve access to the scheme and make the scheme easier to use so encouraging existing members to use it more, and to help new members join the scheme by widening the eligibility criteria. Responses to the survey show that 6 people joined the scheme on or after 1 October 2021 as a result of the changes made to the eligibility criteria on the application form.

The changes were made in keeping with the Council's budget for the scheme. This meant that the number of vouchers issued, and the total voucher value available for members reduced.

All existing Taxicard members were written to in November and sent a questionnaire to complete providing feedback on the changes introduced to the scheme and to obtain some general information around how the Taxicard vouchers are used, and to help shape any future changes. An on-line version of the survey was also made available on the Taxicard pages of the website for existing members to complete. (See Appendix A).

Prior to the questionnaire being sent, we also received comments from existing Taxicard members who had questions around the changes that had been implemented – both positive and negative and this feedback has also been considered in the recommendations.

A total of 125 responses were received out of a possible 350 (35%). A summary of those responses is attached at Appendix B.

Having reviewed the responses we are now recommending long-term changes to the scheme to be implemented from 1 April 2022.

Usage from April 2021 – September 2022

Data was also captured on the usage of vouchers by Taxicard members from 1 April to 30 September 2021 when the scheme was amended to include the use of 1 or 2 vouchers per trip as opposed to the former 1 voucher.

From that it showed;

- 3,876 Journeys were made
- Of those journeys 3,166 single vouchers had been used per trip
- Of those journeys 710 had consisted of 2 vouchers per trip
- Membership numbers increased from 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021, so an average over those 6 months would be 325 members
- At the end of April there were 304 members compared to 340 at the end of September 2021.

- From April to September, if all 340 members received 50 vouchers this would equate to 17,000 vouchers each at £3.80 totalling £64,600.
- From the records for this period, we can see that only 4,589 of the estimated 17,000 vouchers were used, equivalent to 27% totalling £17,438.20.

Responses from the survey issued in November also provide feedback on how members are currently using their vouchers. See Appendix B.

Usage from October 21 – November 21

The invoices received for October show;

- 631 Journeys were made
- Of those journeys, 386 single vouchers had been used per trip
- Of those journeys, 245 had consisted of between 2 and 10 vouchers per trip with the vouchers being used (subsidy) totalling between £2 and £18 per trip
- Total vouchers used in October totalled 1080

The invoices received for November show;

- 508 Journeys were made
- Of those journeys, 304 single vouchers had been used per trip
- Of those journeys, 204 had consisted of between 2 and 10 vouchers per trip with the vouchers being used (subsidy) totalling between £2 and £17 per trip
- Total vouchers used in November totalled 895

The total number of Taxicard members in the scheme in December 2021 is 360.

Usage with Cambridge Dial-a-Ride

The use of Taxicard vouchers on Cambridge Dial-a-Ride during October showed;

- 11 Journeys had been made
- Of those journeys, 4 single vouchers had been used (4 x £5)

- Of those journeys, 7 had consisted of between 2 and 4 vouchers per trip with the vouchers being used (subsidy) totalling between £2 and £7

The usage of Taxicard vouchers on Cambridge Dial-a-Ride during November showed;

- 15 Journeys had been made
- Of those journeys, 6 single vouchers had been used (1 x £1 and 5 x £5 vouchers)
- Of those journeys, 9 had consisted of between 2 and 3 vouchers per trip with the vouchers being used (subsidy) totalling between £2 and £7

According to Cambridge Dial-a-Ride, it would appear that only existing members have submitted Taxicard vouchers, so there is no evidence that new members have joined because of this change. However responses received to the survey show that 6 Taxicard members have joined Cambridge Dial-a-Ride since 1 October, although they may not have yet travelled using their Taxicard vouchers.

3.1.1 Proposals with effect from 1 April 2022

As a result of the work carried out to date with the Review of Taxicard, the following changes are proposed;

- 1) To continue to allow the use of more than one Taxicard voucher per journey.
- 2) To continue to provide books of mixed value vouchers of £5 and £1
- 3) From 1 April 2022 and ongoing, to issue a book of vouchers at a total value of £150.
- 4) To increase the total value of a book of vouchers by £5 per year, until reviewed or ceased.
- 5) To agree to the issue of replacement lost or damaged books, at the Council's discretion.
- 6) No additional book of vouchers to be issued in the same financial year for those who use all their vouchers.
- 7) To continue to allow the use of Taxicard vouchers on Cambridge Dial-a-Ride.

- 8) To continue to ensure Taxi companies provide invoices within 2 months of the previous financial year and to include the vouchers when submitting invoices.
- 9) If approved, changes would be implemented from 1 April 2022.
- 10) To review the usage of the Taxicard scheme in 2023, comparing with usage prior to the review to identify the impact of the changes made and / or pandemic.

3.2 Bus Subsidies

The City Council currently subsidise 4 buses. The Citi 1, Citi 2, Citi 3 and 114 (Saturday) service. The total cost of these services is approximately £120k pa.

Citi 1 (Stagecoach)

(to note this service has now ceased to operate)

The Route: Arbury – City Centre – Rail Station – Addenbrookes Hospital – Cherry Hinton – Fulbourn

Days / Times of Operation: Fridays and Saturdays 0040 hrs – 0247hrs

Citi 2 (Stagecoach)

The Route: Addenbrooke's / Sainsbury's / City Centre / Chesterton / Cambridge North Station

Days / Times of Operation: Monday – Saturday: 1918 – 2332 hrs /
/ Return - Monday to Saturday: 1903 – 1046 hrs

Citi 3 (Stagecoach)

The Route: Thorpe Way - Fison Road – City Centre – Rail Station –
Cherry Hinton Tesco

Days / Times of Operation: Monday – Saturday: 1950 – 1032 hrs /
Return – Monday to Saturday: 2010 – 2246 hrs

114 Star Cabs (formerly Big Green Bus Company)

This service is made up of 2 separate contracts;

Contract 1: Monday to Friday journeys, subsidised by the CPCA (not addressed in this report)

Contract 2: Saturday service, subsidised by Cambridge City Council.

The Route: Cambridge City Centre – The Grafton Centre – The Beehive Site (Coldhams Lane), Addenbrookes Hospital

Days / Times of Operation: Saturday 1010 – 1425 hrs / Return – Saturday 0930 – 1345hrs

Of the services supported throughout the pandemic one service has ceased to operate and we have no estimated restart date - the Citi 1 Nightbus service. The other bus services are currently operational as per pre-covid timetables.

The Citi1 Nightbus hasn't restarted because bus usage is still suppressed at 70% of pre-Covid levels and the industry is suffering from driver shortages leading to current bus service levels being only 90% of previous levels. In this operating environment the Nightbus is not seen as a priority to provide. We do not have information on users or the impact of it being withdrawn, but there do not appear to have been requests for it to be reinstated.

From March 2020, and continuing currently until April 6 2022, all bus companies have received a package of support from various quarters. DfT have directly funded support for operator's commercial services and at the same time asked local authorities to continue paying for contracted services and reimburse operators for concessionary travel at pre-Covid levels. The services funded by Cambridge City Council have not therefore received direct DfT funding as they are contracted and not operated commercially, the funding has come via local authorities by continuing to pay for the contract. At the present time Stagecoach would not be able to claim support from DfT as it is not a commercial service and all DfT support is due to end on 6 April 2022.

We contacted the CPCA who confirmed it would be very difficult to reclaim money that has already been paid as part of a package of measures to support the bus industry when payments have previously been authorised.

The continued provision of these subsidies will be considered in discussion with the CPCA and GCP linking in with the City Access Programme and Bus Service Improvement Plan.

The City's future support to the bus subsidies will continue to be discussed with the Executive Councillor and Opposition Spokesperson for Planning and Transport.

3.2.1 Proposals for Bus Subsidies

As a result of the work carried out to date with conversations held with the GCP and CPCA, the following is proposed;

- 1) To cease subsidising the Citi 1 (Nightbus) from 1 April 2022
- 2) To continue to subsidise the Citi 2, 3 and 114 services for the 2022/23 financial year
- 3) Agree that these services and subsidies should be considered as part of the wider City Access Programme and Bus Service Improvement Plan being managed by the GCP and CPCA.
- 4) The future provision of these services to be agreed in discussion and consultation with the Executive Councillor and Opposition Spokesperson for Planning and Transport.

3.3 Dial-a-Ride

The minutes of the Planning and Transport Committee from 29 June 2021 indicated there should be a review of the Dial-a-Ride service.

Cambridge Dial-a-Ride is a private charity organisation, and as such Cambridge City Council are not able to review the service.

The Council continue to be involved with Cambridge Dial-a-Ride but need to consider the future funding of the annual Grant Agreement.

There will be a review of the level of funding for future years which will involve discussions with the Executive Councillor and Opposition Spokesperson for Planning and Transport.

Quarterly 'Fundings Meetings' are held with Cambridge Dial-a-Ride and attended by the Corporate Business & Executive Support Manager, along with representatives from other partner authorities. It may be helpful for a City Councillor to attend future meetings.

3.3.1 Proposals for Cambridge Dial-a-Ride

Following conversations held with the Executive Councillor for Planning and Transport and The Leader of the Council, the following is proposed;

- 1) To continue to support Cambridge Dial-a-Ride through Grant Funding to the value of £40k for the 2022/23 financial year.
- 2) To approve a review of the level of funding for future years.
- 3) A City Councillor is in attendance at future quarterly 'Fundings' Meetings' held by Cambridge Dial-a-Ride

3.4 Transport Review

It is no longer felt a 'Transport Review' is required in the same way it was when presented to Committee in June. Discussions have been held with representatives of the GCP and CPCA, and these will continue in relation to the City Council bus subsidies as noted earlier in this report.

The review of Taxicard has been completed, and it is proposed will be reviewed once the new arrangements from 1 April 2022 have been in place for a year.

In relation to Cambridge Dial-a-Ride it is proposed to review the level of funding and the nature of the grant agreement. Proposals for this service have been identified in 3.3.1.

3.4.1 Proposals for Transport Review

- 1) Agree that discussions remain ongoing as part of the wider City Access Programme and Bus Service Improvement Plan being managed by the GCP and CPCA in relation to the City Bus Subsidies.
- 2) The future provision of these services to be agreed in discussion and consultation with the Executive Councillor and Opposition Spokesperson for Planning and Transport.

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

Taxicard Scheme: The operational changes implemented to the Taxicard scheme from 1 October 2021 and those proposed from 1 April 2022 will be met from the existing Taxicard budget.

Bus Subsidies: Savings may be identified looking at links with wider transport plans for Cambridgeshire being managed by the CPCA and the GCP.

Dial-a-Ride: Budget provision to be reviewed for the 2023/24 financial year.

b) Staffing Implications

The work carried out to date on these initiatives has been provided through existing resources within the Business Support Team, Human Resources. As the wider review of Taxicard nears completion, and the decisions around the future support to Cambridge Dial-a-Ride and Bus Subsidies can be reviewed and agreed in discussion with Executive and Opposition Spokesperson for Planning and Transport, there are no staffing implications currently proposed or known about.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

The Taxicard Scheme should be accessible to all City residents who are eligible. An updated Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. Please see Appendix C.

d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Taxicard: Low Negative Impact.

The council is transitioning the taxi fleet to an ultra-low emission taxi fleet. The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy – July 2021, refers.

The council requires all new saloon vehicles which wish to be licensed taxis (Hackney Carriage vehicles and private hire vehicles) registered in Cambridge to be Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) (plug-in hybrid or extended range electric vehicles (E-Rev) with CO2 emissions less than 75g per km) or zero emissions vehicles from 2020 (zero emission

– those that emit no emissions during their operation. These include battery electric vehicles, hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, and electric vehicles), and all taxis to be ULEVs or zero emissions vehicles by 2028.

Since the taxi licensing policy was implemented in April 2020, as of September 2021 there were 42 fully electric and 6 Ultra Low Emission taxi vehicles out of a total of approximately 430 licenced taxi vehicles in Cambridge (11%). Numbers of electric taxis are fluctuating but tend to be on the increase.

Bus Subsidies: Low Positive effect. The bus subsidies help to provide a better alternative for those travelling around the City, than single car use.

Cambridge Dial-a-Ride: No Impact.

e) Procurement Implications

Taxicard: The current suppliers of the Taxicard vouchers are contracted until 31 March 2022. Procurement for the provision of this service from 1 April 2022 for a period of 2-3 years is underway in line with the relevant procurement regulations.

Bus Subsidies: Any contract renewals to be prepared by the CPCA who manage the contracts on behalf of the City Council.

Cambridge Dial-a-Ride: Annual Grant Agreement for 2022/23.

f) Community Safety Implications

Taxicard: To ensure those with disabilities are supported to move around the City safely.

Bus Subsidies: If existing services are not provided by Cambridge City and those routes change, the economy may be affected as the routes support shops, the city centre and the rail station.

Cambridge Dial-a-Ride: Drivers are CRB checked and trained to work with those with disabilities.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

5.1 Consultation and communication since the June Committee meeting has included;

Taxicard

- A news release was issued in July following recommendations approved at Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee in June
- The City Council's Taxi Forum was attended in September, when drivers and operators were made aware of the changes being implemented to the Scheme from 1 October.
- All existing Taxicard members were written to explaining the changes being made to the scheme from 1 October when their books of vouchers were issued in September.
- The City Council's Website was updated to include changes to the Taxicard scheme from 1 October
- The details of the changes being introduced from 1 October were shared with representatives from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Healthwatch, Disability Cambridge and Camsight
- Conversations were had with Cambridge Dial-a-Ride to confirm arrangements for taking the vouchers from 1 October
- All existing members were written to at the end of November to confirm the changes, and the reasons behind the changes that had been made. They were also issued with a questionnaire to complete and return at the same time and encouraged to respond.
- A copy of the questionnaire was made available on the City Council's Website under the Taxicard pages and consultations.
- A note was issued to all Taxi Drivers / Operators regarding invoicing for Taxicard vouchers taken and a sample invoice template for the same was created and provided in early December

The following groups will be notified of the decisions made at this meeting, and confirmation of how the scheme will operate from 1 April 2022;

- Existing Taxicard members
- Cambridge Dial-a-Ride
- Taxi Drivers and Operators
- Representatives from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Healthwatch, Disability Cambridge and Camsight

Cambridge Dial-a-Ride

- Further conversations to be had within the Council, with other partner organisations regarding the provision of the existing Grant Agreement.

Bus Subsidies

- Ongoing dialogue with the Executive Councillor for Planning and Transport with regards to the future provision of these services
- Continued communication with the CPCA and GCP to discuss existing arrangements and any future proposals for change

Review of Transport Initiatives

Meetings have been held with various City officers and officers from partner organisations to discuss various aspects of the existing initiatives and any future arrangements / considerations with regard to carrying out a review and the support available to conduct that piece of work. These officers have included;

- Head of Corporate Strategy - Cambridge City Council
- Public Transport Manager – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
- Assistant Director, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth – Greater Cambridge Partnership
- Executive Councillor, Planning and Transport – Cambridge City Council
- Executive Councillor for Communities, Deputy Leader – Cambridge City Council
- Disability and Access Lead for Cambridge City Council and Chair of Planning and Transport, Cambridge City Council

6. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

- Report on 'Review of Taxicard and Transport Initiatives' previously submitted to Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 29 June 2021.
- Responses to questionnaire sent to all existing Taxicard members which ran from 18 November to 3 December 2021

7. Appendices

- Appendix A: Letter and questionnaire sent to existing Taxicard members
- Appendix B: Summary of responses to questionnaire (anonymized)
- Appendix C: Equality Impact Assessment

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Sharon Line, Corporate Business & Executive Support Manager, tel: 01223 - 457570, email: sharon.line@cambridge.gov.uk or Deborah Simpson, Head of Human Resources, tel: 01223 – 458101, email: Deborah.simpson@cambridge.gov.uk