

<b>Executive Member</b>	Councillor Lucy Botting, Executive Member for Wellbeing
<b>Strategic Management Team Lead Officer</b>	Rachel O'Reilly, Corporate Head of Service
<b>Author</b>	Stuart Cole, CSS Business Development Manager
<b>Telephone</b>	01372 204506
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:stuart.cole@molevalley.gov.uk">stuart.cole@molevalley.gov.uk</a>
<b>Date</b>	27/02/2018

<b>Ward (s) affected</b>		<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
<b>Subject</b>	COMMUNITY TRANSPORT STRATEGY		
<b>Recommendations</b>			
The Executive is asked to approve the Community Transport Strategy, 2018 – 2022 attached as Appendix 1 and agree for a review of the new operation to be conducted after 12 months			

**Corporate Priority OUTCOMES**

**Environment**

**A highly attractive area with housing that meets local need**

Community Transport provides safe, accessible transport and is dedicated to making further improvements to the service as well as finding ways of reducing the negative impact on the environment. This includes looking into eco-friendly ways of delivering an essential service, whilst reducing the carbon footprint and assisting with the Government's clean air plan.

**Prosperity**

**A vibrant local economy with thriving towns and villages**

Community Transport is a vital service transporting its older people or vulnerable residents to leisure activities or employment, supporting the local towns and rural economies.

**Community Wellbeing**

**Active communities and support for those who need it**

Community Transport provides access to many of its isolated and vulnerable residents to essential services to improve the social interaction through increased usage to group-travel on various routes, and reducing social isolation.

Door to door transport offers residents improvements to their overall mental wellbeing by building up confidence and maintaining independence by providing opportunities for residents to live safe and healthy lives.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Mole Valley District Council Community Transport (MVDC CT) is a safe, accessible, cost-effective and flexible form of transport, run by the local authority for the community. It was set up to directly address gaps in public transport provision and through this create noticeable and lasting social and economic benefits.
- 1.2. Community transport is of particular value to people who, for a variety of reasons, do not have access to a car or public transport. It provides a lifeline in both rural and urban areas, catering for a variety of needs, such as taking disabled people to work, children to school, people to healthcare and older people to the shops and social activities. It is a vital service in reducing social isolation and loneliness.
- 1.3. Community Transport offers far-reaching socio-economic benefits; working with the most marginalised in society and providing services that create more cohesive and prosperous communities, in addition to supporting local economies.
- 1.4. This method of transport is often the best or only alternative when public transport does not meet the needs of the community. In many cases, community transport has developed in an area as a direct response to unmet local needs.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. A review of Community Transport in Mole Valley was commissioned during 2016 and the outcomes of that review were agreed at Executive in February 2017. A recommendation from that review was to develop a strategy for the future of a co-ordinated community transport offer for Mole Valley.
- 2.2. The review recommended that the Strategy should include consideration of Mole Valley Community Transport as an enabler of a wider network of community transport options across the district and that it should consider changes to the current one-size-fits-all membership arrangements.
- 2.3. The draft Strategy attached at Appendix 1 has addressed these recommendations as well as other outcomes from the review in relation to fleet management and a mixed-fleet approach.

## **3. Consultation with Users**

- 3.1. The proposed Strategy was developed with stakeholders including a User Forum consisting of Community Transport users and Group Hire Members. The Forum provided an evaluation of the effectiveness of the current service and gave invaluable feedback and input into the future direction of the service. Four User Forums were held between September and January and that relationship will continue.
- 3.2. Engagement with other Community Car schemes and providers has been established and they have helped to shape the draft strategy also. There is a commitment to working together and Mole Valley Community Transport is offering support to those schemes in order to better co-ordinate transport activity for communities.

3.3. Parish Councils were also consulted on the service and relationships built to provide better access and knowledge of the service. Parish Councils now advertise the Community Transport Service on their web pages and local news bulletins. Other Local Community Transport schemes around Surrey and London were visited to consult on their activities and benchmark services in both terms of operations and costing.

#### **4. Membership options**

4.1. Currently there is one membership and service option. Costs for journeys are then calculated on travel within or across zones. This flat rate membership and zonal charging is charged irrespective of the type of journey required or the frequency of usage. As the review in 2016 suggested, there was evidence to suggest that a variety of membership options should be considered to provide a more equitable charging policy designed around the needs of service users.

4.2. The draft strategy is proposing 3 types of service based on 2 membership charges.

4.3. All individual members will fall within a membership which gives them access to bespoke dial-a-ride journeys or group-travel journeys which are scheduled regularly to take users to social and shopping activities.

4.4. An example of group-travel is the trial Shoppa service was developed during 2017 and which is a door-to-door service taking groups of customers to specific locations for shopping or social activity on a scheduled basis. Designed to reduce social isolation, allowing social interaction and providing a more accessible operation, it runs designated shopping trips from parts of the district on fixed days.

4.5. Take up for the trial has been encouraging and this will be evaluated at the end of March.

4.6. The Shoppa is a flexible service that is designed to run on demand of its users who can suggest trips that they would like and as long as numbers can be achieved it can run.

4.7. This enables the most effective use of the vehicles from a service point of view whilst increasing the opportunities for social interaction and scheduled activity options for customers. The increase in scheduled use will ultimately make space in the schedules for essential individual journeys.

4.8. There will also be the option for the use of taxi vouchers where it would be the most cost effective and appropriate option for the user.

4.9. Rather than zonal charging, charging for travel will now be based on a mileage.

4.10. Non-commercial organisations can continue to be members of the service (under the 3<sup>rd</sup> service option) for an annual fee which gives them access to competitive rate bus-hire with or without a driver.

## **5. Fares and benchmarking**

- 5.1. The Review in 2016 benchmarked MVDC Community Transport against local Community Transport Schemes and this work was updated during 2017. It was identified that there was a significant difference in MVDC CT fare structures compared to others.
- 5.2. The review had recommended a tiered membership, and it was noted that the other Community Transport services which offered a higher capacity of use (group travel) have a different price structure to individual Dial-a-ride journeys which are more expensive to provide. The Community Transport (group travel) fare should encourage more use of its services allowing the individual Dial-a-ride service to be more available for bespoke journeys. The revised Dial-a-ride fare covers 32% of the subsidised service for the individual journey.

## **6. Funding**

- 6.1. As the Review in 2016 detailed, the current Community Transport Service in Mole Valley is funded by a number of sources; by membership and travel charges, by income generated from providing school runs and by subsidy from Mole Valley District Council. Surrey County Council (SCC) has provided grant funding for community transport services across the County for some years and the scheduling service provided to East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership (ESRTP) provided significant income for MVDC CT.
- 6.2. Over the past 2 years, there have been steady reductions in the grant provided from SCC and MVDC CT has lost significant income over the last year from ESRTP due to changes in their requirements for scheduling.
- 6.3. Due to these reductions, a two-year growth bid was agreed in the 2018/19 budget to increase funding to support Community Transport, along with the other Community Support Services, to develop longer-term sustainable models of delivery. The changes to service delivery proposed within this draft strategy are designed to reduce the impact of the funding losses. Other plans to develop the use of the fleet including increased contract work with SCC for school travel and increased marketing of the Group Hire side of the business will be drivers to reduce those losses also.
- 6.4. Discussions have been held with Commissioners from the Clinical Commissioning Group's Local Joint Commissioning Group which includes health and social care providers to investigate future funding possibilities. At this time there are no plans from commissioners to assist further with funding other than the current grants provided by Surrey CC for the service.

## **7. Fleet management**

- 7.1. The current fleet of CT vehicles is aging and becoming more costly to maintain. There have been a large number of maintenance issues to deal with in 2017. These costs will be lowered with a vehicle replacement strategy and capital is set aside to replace vehicles.
- 7.2. Planning for the future workforce, must also be a consideration and a necessary change in vehicle purchasing is required to address the ever-decreasing pool of eligible drivers with D1 licences who can drive Minibuses.

7.3. A mixed fleet of smaller Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAVs) and Minibus Lites is an option being considered for the way forward, allowing the service to become more effective and efficient going forward.

## **8. Marketing of the Service**

8.1. From consultation with users, other providers and Parish Councils it was clear that there needed to be better promotion of the Community Transport Service provided by MVDC and this was reflected in the review of 2016.

8.2. The draft strategy prioritises marketing activity for the sustainability of the service and work is underway with the Council's marketing and communications team as well as with partners to develop this work.

## **9. Next Steps**

9.1. The draft Strategy runs from 2018 – 2022 and brings with it a new model of service delivery. A review of this new operation will be conducted after 12 months to appraise the outcomes from these changes and provide an evidence base for moving the service on.

## **Financial Implications**

Community Transport has under the Community Support Services had a growth bid accepted for two years in order to support the programme after reduction in funding and income streams. The aim is to reduce the subsidy where possible.

## **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

## **2.0 Options**

OPTION 1 – The Executive agrees to adopt the draft Community Transport Strategy 2018-2022 with a review of the new operation after 12 months

OPTION 2 – The Executive requests more work to be undertaken to the draft Community Transport Strategy

## **3.0 Corporate Implications**

### **Monitoring Officer commentary**

The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that relevant legal implications have been considered

### **S151 Officer commentary**

The financial implications of the report relate to budgeted expenditure and are outlined in the report.

### **Risk Implications**

Option 1: There will be a risk to the future of the service if the strategy is not adopted by limiting the amount of future capacity to the service.

Option 2: There will be a delay in the implementation of the service model and a risk of limiting capacity to the service.

### **Equalities Implications**

There are no specific equalities implications as a direct consequence of this report.

### **Employment Issues**

There are no employment issues implicated in the adoption of the draft strategy.

### **Sustainability Issues**

It has been announced that by 2040, all diesel engine vehicles will be banned from UK roads. As 100% of Mole Valley's Community Transport vehicles are diesel fuelled, this future plan cannot be ignored, and the current Mole Valley CT management team are making short term vehicle replacement plans (five or six years) that consider the long term future plan (seven to twelve years).

### **Consultation**

User Forums. Community Transport Members, Group Hire Members, Surrey and London Community Transport Schemes, Community Car Schemes.

### **Communications**

A new marketing strategy is being devised for Community Support Services and Community Transport. This will include the use of social media/ internet as well as more traditional methods.

### **Background Papers**

Community Transport Review conducted by Societas 2017

# Mole Valley District Council

## Community Transport Strategy

### 2018 – 2022

#### Purpose and context of Community Transport in Mole Valley

Mole Valley District Council understands the importance of its Community Support Services, and sitting within this suite of services is Community Transport (MVDC CT), a non-statutory but vital service that links the communities within the District.

Community transport is a crucial service for older and disabled people, enabling them to remain active and valued members of their communities, and to live independently in their own homes. It offers other benefits beyond simply transporting people from door to door. The 'added value' is comprised of many different facets, from the accessibility and responsiveness of the service, to its potential to enable greater independence and social interaction for the service users, many of whom would rarely leave their house without this provision.

Mole Valley has two towns, three villages, six larger rural villages, nine small rural villages and ten rural communities (hamlets and ribbon developments). There is little scheduled public transport beyond the main towns and villages.

The Council established the service to directly address the gaps in public transport provision and, through this, to create noticeable, lasting social and economic benefits. The most vulnerable Mole Valley residents are those most affected by a lack of affordable and accessible transport and community transport is of particular value to people who, for a variety of reasons, do not have access to a car or public transport. It provides a lifeline in both rural and urban areas, catering for a variety of needs, such as taking disabled people to work, children to school, people to healthcare and older people to the shops or to day centres. People suffering a degree of social exclusion by virtue of poverty, geographical remoteness or ill health can also access the service, as can those that believe it would be unsafe for them to use any other public transport service.



Pins denote areas of heaviest CT membership

## Current Membership

The distribution of members across the District is shown below. The highest concentrations are in the more urban areas and, even adjusting for population levels, it is evident that the service is not used by individuals from rural areas as much as those in built up areas.

There are nine community car schemes operating in the Mole Valley, some of whom cover parts of these rural areas. The Council believes that it has a role in ensuring that those other options for travel are being used, and where there are gaps in provision, to enable those gaps to be filled.

## Mole Valley District Council’s Commitment

As part of the Mole Valley District Council Corporate Strategy, the following underpinning statements set out the Council’s values:-

**We Listen ► We Respect ► We Care ► We Trust ► We Lead**

The Community Transport service is committed to supporting these values and has the following vision:

***“Community Transport provides a vital link to Mole Valley residents who wish to remain independent, safe and empowered outside of the home, pursuing everyday life.”***

## Strategic Objectives

The MVDC CT service links in with the Council's Corporate Strategy, demonstrating its commitment to delivering the priorities set out.

ENVIRONMENT	PROSPERITY	COMMUNITY WELLBEING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Protect the District from environmental pollution, particularly air quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Support the market town culture and economy of Dorking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Improve opportunities for residents to live safe and healthy lives</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Work with rural communities and help them thrive and be more sustainable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Increasing participation of wellbeing activities across generations especially those communities most in need</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Look for innovative ways to minimise the cost to taxpayers of Mole Valley District Council whilst protecting services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Foster community spirit, encouraging individuals and communities to support each other</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Encourage healthy lifestyles and responsible enjoyment of our open spaces, countryside and roads.</li> </ul>

Community Transport's core ethos links to Wellbeing Strategy objectives such as-

- Reducing social isolation and working to support carers in our communities
- Protecting and improving the mental health of residents

It also combines objectives of the Rural Community Strategy, by way of:

- Maintaining and strengthening thriving, inclusive, sustainable and resilient rural communities

Transport should be a main priority when considering the needs of older and vulnerable people. Giving access to isolated individuals allows them to be part of the community, providing them with an important source of enjoyment and activity. Accessible transport is often the only way that they are able to move around the District and access society, so is key to tackling social isolation, improving mental health, and linking those in rural areas to towns.

## Strategic Aims for Community Transport in Mole Valley

The Strategy for Community Transport from MVDC has four broad aims:

1. To provide an appropriately priced membership scheme which offers a range of options for travelling within and out of the District
2. To be an enabler for the co-ordination of community transport options for residents of Mole Valley. MVDC CT recognises that it cannot be, nor needs to be, the sole provider of community transport and will work with community car schemes and other voluntary organisations to achieve the best outcomes for residents.
3. To have a sustainable service for the future. This will include the appropriate use of technology for customers needs and for scheduling. In addition, there will be a focus on the marketing of the service and the options it offers, to broaden take up and accessibility for communities.
4. To ensure a range of vehicles appropriate to different journey types are available and of good quality and fit for purpose reflecting future expectations of the service.

In order to ensure the community transport service meets the needs and expectations of its members, it aims to achieve the following goals and objectives:-

- The continued delivery of a well valued and respected service with a positive approach to change.
- Operate a fleet of good quality, fit for purpose stock on a rolling replacement programme.
- Building sustainability by way of confidently bidding for and winning new school contracts compatible with current contracts; developing and growing the 'group hire' element of community transport; and offering regular excursions resulting in steady trickle revenue.
- Dovetailing with neighbouring providers on larger projects with the confidence of having a grounded service that is capable of expansion without jeopardising core services.
- Continuing outreach work in the most rural areas of the District, signposting and developing a cohesive approach with voluntary car schemes.
- Refer members to statutory services where necessary, applying safeguarding procedures when required.
- Offer a tiered service, designed to meet the needs of a wide range of the community.

## Strategic Aim 1 - Membership

In order to best serve the changing need of a local community, MVDC CT will offer a tailored-tiered membership/service package in the form of three different strands.

1. **Dial a Ride-** A door-to-door service for individuals wishing to travel to specific destinations at a time specified by the member, promoting independence and reducing isolation.
2. **Community Transport-** A door-to-door service taking many members to a single destination, reducing costs and aiding social interaction.
3. **Group Hire-** A door-to-door vehicle hire service for local community groups and not for profit organisations, uniting and empowering communities.

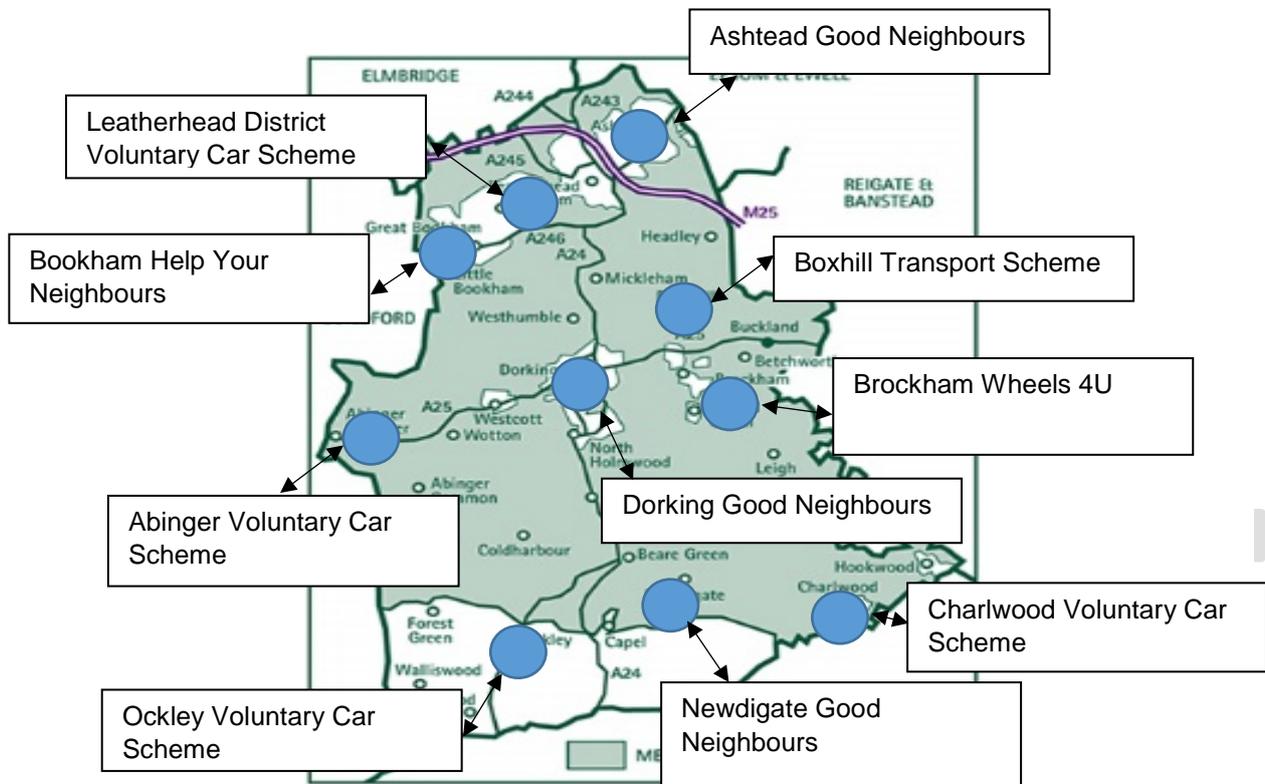
Members can travel in and around the District, as well as further afield to neighbouring boroughs to access hospitals, medical appointments and shopping centres.

With the two towns of Leatherhead and Dorking being north and central of Mole Valley respectively, there is a distinct pattern of rural members travelling in a northerly direction for much of their day-to-day business. There are a number of voluntary car schemes that provide local trips to people in and around the rural areas with MVDC CT used for the longer trips to main towns and villages. The introduction of a more structured offering of those trips will encourage increased social interaction and enable a more cost-effective service.

It is recognised that there will always be the need for bespoke journeys to be booked by members for the purposes of medical appointments and individual social activities. However, it is more cost effective for the service to run with higher capacity so a Community Transport (group-hire) service will be developed to offer regular planned journeys or excursions to members who are able to exercise some flexibility in when they travel.

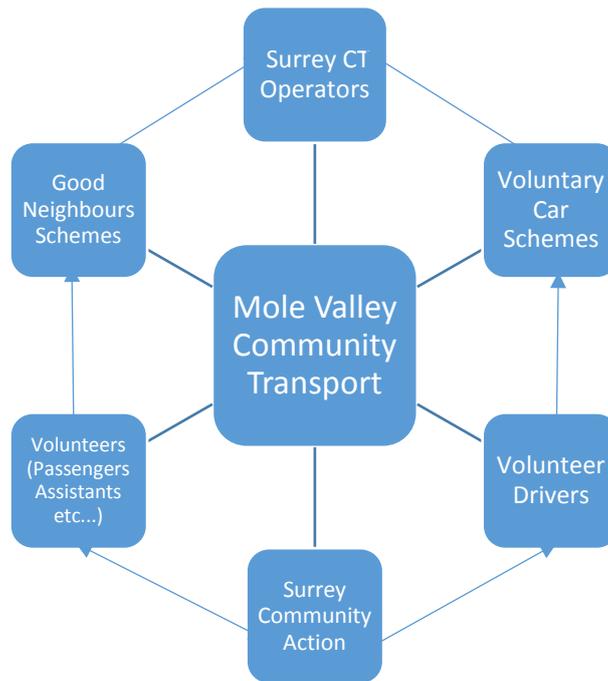
Membership has traditionally included older, mobility-impaired travellers and there is a need to open up that membership to others who find themselves isolated and unable to use alternative methods of transport.

## Strategic Aim 2 - Partnerships and Enabling Community Transport across the District



*Current Community Car Schemes*

MVDC CT works in partnership with other service providers, ensuring the gaps in service are filled and the transport needs of the most isolated communities are being met. The scheduling team provide booking services for other transport providers and actively signpost to local voluntary schemes in the area. MVDC CT will dovetail with other services but, if there is overlap or duplication in charges to MVDC taxpayers, the Council will opt for a single service, in order to offer 'best value to its residents.



MVDC CT is working with relevant third sector groups and is committed to a co-ordinated and comprehensive patchwork of transport options across the District. By working together with other local transport providers, be it paid or voluntary services, MVDC CT becomes the enabler, supporting communities to have the best opportunities for movement within and outside of the District, making everyday challenges achievable and enjoyable.

### Strategic Aim 3 – A Sustainable Future

#### Future customers and their expectations

It is anticipated that the needs of customers for community transport will continue to change in the future. A different demographic of customers will be served as membership opens up to a broader range of clients bringing changing attitudes and expectations.

It is envisaged that future members will:-

- Expect the booking methods to be in line with current technology; many may expect to book online and have a fully automated service through a smart phone, including updates by text
- Will have a higher expectation of the type of vehicles that provide the community transport service. The preferred choice may well be of higher-end vehicles with less decal or branding. There may be a preferred switch to smaller cars rather than larger vehicles.

- Have different trip patterns and destinations such as visits to the local gym, pool or park being favoured. Excursions will remain popular but destinations will change to suit the changing client group, conscious of the environment.
- Have expectations of environmentally friendly vehicles with lower emissions, such as hybrid and electric vehicles
- Be influenced by social media platforms. Service users will have the ability to share their trip planning schedules and may even take control of bus filling and excursion bookings, etc. by way of Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp.
- Be younger people with disabilities who are becoming less institutionalised and even more empowered. For the independent traveller, Community Transport is the ideal way to travel if no other reasonable, accessible service is available.

A target audience is not just the potential members themselves; it is their friends and family, the community near where they live, the local businesses they use, and the local infrastructure such as GPs surgeries and hospitals that make up a village or town.

## Marketing Plan

The community transport service needs to be publicised to attract further potential customers. An extensive, marketing plan together with a complete department rebrand is underway, being supported by the Council's Communications Team, ensuring a robust exercise and a holistic approach to identity. Marketing needs to be ongoing and in many formats in order to reach out to a wider audience.



## Strategic Aim 4 – A mixed fleet

The Community Transport Team at Mole Valley accept their responsibility for providing safe, accessible transport and are dedicated to making further improvements to the service as well as finding ways of reducing the negative impact on the environment. This includes looking into eco-friendly ways of delivering an essential service, whilst reducing the carbon footprint and assisting with the Government's clean air plan.

*F.1. Minibus Lite*



*F.2. Typical WAV*



A vehicle replacement strategy is in place, which includes consideration of owning and leasing options, to ensure the current and future fleet meets the needs of its members, whilst considering the impact on the service, the District, the environment and the Council Tax payer. Moving with the current trends of modern day community transport, the service will see a shift of type and size of vehicles, namely models that can be driven by all full driving licence holders, (F.1 Minibus Lites) and smaller wheelchair accessible vehicles (F.2 WAV's).

A pilot 'Community Cab' scheme is scheduled for 2018, giving members access to a fully wheelchair accessible car, enabling cost effective single trips to priority destinations, such as medical appointments and consultations.

## **Conclusion**

The key recommendations of the recent Community Transport Review, undertaken by Societas Management Ltd have been endorsed as a basis for the future development of the service.

By engaging with stakeholders at regular forums, shaping relationships with Parish Councils, building partnerships with voluntary organisations and listening to all who use or are connecting with the service, MVDC CT is becoming even more robust and there is a true community spirit across the empowered community.

The community transport service team is committed to achieving further sustainability by attaining County Council contract work and, in turn, forming good relations with Surrey's public service departments, particularly Adult Social Care and Children and Families.

Community transport continues to build on the strengths of its outcomes; reducing isolation, improving people's wellbeing, empowering individuals and providing an all-inclusive, affordable service to local people and the wider community interest.

DRAFT

## Action Plan Year 1 (2018/19)

Strategic Aim	Action	Outcome	By When
Membership	<p>Increased exploitation of the Flexiroute software to gather increased management information in order to:</p> <p>Monitor trips and profile journeys</p> <p>Review and profile members</p>	<p>To provide tracking and reports on journeys/ customers/ finances in order to evaluate the service and its members usage</p> <p>Use Flexiroute to provide a profile of all MVDC CT members</p>	<p>April 18 – March 19</p> <p>April 18 – March 19</p>
Enabler	<p>Further develop relationships with other providers in the district e.g. ES RTP and community car schemes</p> <p>Continue to hold regular user forums</p> <p>Investigate training opportunities around H&amp;S/ Legislation with community car schemes/ look at where we can host scheduling/ offers to support with community car schemes</p>	<p>To actively continue to develop the relationships with partners including East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership and Community Car schemes in order to develop a co-ordinated patchwork of transport which offers the best option to the customer.</p> <p>Hold quarterly user group forums to gain feedback on service</p> <p>Investigate with Community Car Schemes where they require assistance with training and identify where we can offer further support to ensure a smooth operation and more joined up approach</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>May 18/ August 18/ November 18/ February 19</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Sustainability	<p>Develop a brand and marketing strategy to develop</p> <p>Review pricing and membership options</p>	<p>Develop a new strategy with marketing and communications to improve awareness and ensure that all eligible residents are aware of the service</p> <p>Complete a review of the service pricing and membership options including benchmarking with other local CT operators</p>	<p>January 18 – September 18</p> <p>October 18</p>
Fleet	<p>Lease mini bus Lite</p> <p>Trial of WAV Community Cab Scheme</p> <p>Trial Taxi 50/50 scheme</p>	<p>Lease for 12 months a new Mini Bus Lite to evaluate its operational use and the value of the leasing arrangement</p> <p>Trial Community Cab Scheme to offer residents an exclusive packaged bespoke service in a small Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle and develop a relationship with Community Car Schemes to offer wheel chair journeys where they are unable to.</p> <p>Build further relationships with local taxi companies to trial taxi voucher scheme</p>	<p>March 18</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> April 18 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 18</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> April 18 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 18</p>

## Community Transport Key Performance Indicators 2018/19

KPI	Description	Measure
Active members	The total number of members who actively use the service within the year that their membership is valid.	75%
Refusals	Refusals are a vital key indicator to many areas of performance. It can assess the need for expansion, or the need to streamline services for greater efficiency. It also indicates whether trip requests are of a reasonable nature or not, and reflects customer expectation.	3%
Surveys and feedback/ Customer Satisfaction	An accurate way to get feedback from the client base is to partake in regular customer surveys and feedback forms. These are generally anonymous studies, so there will be a great deal of honesty in the responses. This measures the benefits the service has on members and how the member feels after using the community transport service.	95%

DRAFT