

The Highland Council

Lochaber Area Committee - 26 August 2013

Integrated Transport Project - Update

Agenda Item	12
Report No	LA 8/13

Report by Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Summary

This report updates Members on the Project, being carried out under the governance of the Council's Corporate Improvement Programme, to examine the options for improving the integration of transport services for health and social care and social inclusion.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Audit Scotland carried out an audit of Transport for Health and Social Care in 2011 and the key findings of that report were reported to the Transport, Environmental and Community Services Committee on 15 March 2012 (Report TECS-31-12).
- 1.2 Audit Scotland's report, which reviewed the position across Scotland, stated:

"Transport services for health and social care are fragmented and there is a lack of leadership, ownership and monitoring of the service provided. The Scottish Government, Regional Transport Partnerships, Councils, NHS Boards and the ambulance service are not working together effectively to deliver transport for health and social care or making the best use of resources."
- 1.3 The availability of transport is an essential part of making health and social care services work efficiently. Older people, those with long term health or social care needs, and people who live in remote and rural areas may need support to get to a hospital appointment or to access their day care centre. This includes help with paying for transport or getting to their appointment in transport provided by the ambulance service, councils, NHS boards or the voluntary sector.
- 1.4 Transport is often the first part of a person's contact with health and social care services and if this is poor, difficult or stressful, their experience can be undermined. If transport is not well planned it can result in unnecessary journeys, missed or late appointments, people staying in hospital longer than they need to, and reliance on unplanned options such as taxis.
- 1.5 Transport for health and social care generally covers three main groups of people:

- People with a medical need who are eligible to access the Patient Transport Service (PTS) provided by the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS).
- People who are not eligible for PTS but need help with transport including people who are on low incomes, those who live in remote and rural areas and those who have ongoing health or social care needs. **This group was the main focus of the Audit Scotland report.**
- People who have their own means of accessing services, for example those who have their own family transport or can easily access public transport.

1.6 The importance of sustainable transport solutions in rural areas is also recognised in the Programme for the Highland Council which contains the following commitment:

The Council will work with the Scottish Ambulance Service, the NHS and the Scottish Government, to achieve better coverage across the Highlands. We will investigate sustainable solutions to improve patient transport in rural and urban areas.

2. Key Recommendations from the Audit Scotland Report

2.1 Partners (Councils, NHS Boards, Regional Transport Partnerships and the Scottish Ambulance Service) should:

- Collect routine and accurate data on the activity, cost (including unit costs) and quality of services they provide and routinely benchmark performance and costs to ensure resources are used efficiently.
- Assess the impact of proposed service changes on users and other transport providers
- Ensure that staff have up-to-date information about all transport options in their area and provide better information to the public about available transport options, eligibility criteria and charges.
- Integrate or share services where this represents more efficient use of resources and better services for users, including considering an integrated scheduling system.
- Ensure that transport for health and social care services is based on an assessment of need and that it is regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure value for money.
- Use the Audit Scotland checklist (contained within the full audit report) to help improve planning, delivery and impact of transport for health and social care through a joined up approach.

2.2 Although the Audit Scotland Report focussed on transport for health and social care, social inclusion for people living in rural communities is just as important and access to transport will help people, in particular the elderly, to live more active lives within their communities. This project will therefore include transport solutions to support social inclusion as well as health and social care.

3. Project Governance

3.1 A Project Board has been established with representatives from:

- The Council (TECS, Education Culture and Sport, Health and Social Care, Finance)
- NHS Highland
- Scottish Ambulance Service
- HITRANS

3.2 A Project Team, which includes representatives from all the partner organisations, provides information and data to support the project.

3.3 Given the scale and importance of this project, the Council has appointed a full time Project Manager.

3.4 A similar project focusing on healthcare and involving Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils, NHS Grampian, The Scottish Ambulance Service, and The North East of Scotland Transport Partnership (NESTRANS) is currently underway. A Transport to Healthcare Information Centre (THInC) has been established, as part of a one year pilot. The facility is based in Elgin and we are working with the Elgin based project to share information and knowledge.

4. Selection of Pilot Area

4.1 Given the geography of the Highlands it was decided to select a Pilot Area which will be used as the basis for developing proposals aimed at improving the integration of transport across the Highlands.

4.2 Following an Options Appraisal involving the project partners, Lochaber was selected as the most appropriate area for a pilot. This was reported to the Transport, Environmental and Community Services Committee on 15 November 2012, as part of an update report on the Project (TEC-71-12).

4.3 The principal aim of the project is to work in partnership to design, implement and co-ordinate an integrated and sustainable transport system that delivers best value for the pilot project area. A key project output will be a Transport Target Operating Model that can be applied across Highland Council's area and the operational areas of the Project Partners.

5. Integrated Transport Pilot - Lochaber

5.1 Research was conducted during the period September to November 2012 to

establish the nature of the existing transport provision in Lochaber and to explore where demand was not being met.

5.2 The research involved consulting with:

- Commercial transport providers (bus companies and taxi operators)
- Community transport groups
- Community representative groups.
- Project Partners (Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS Highland, Adult Health & Social Care Centres, Highland Council schools and Integrated Children's Services).

5.3 The main findings from the research were:

- Scottish Ambulance Service Patient Transport Service vehicles (3 in Lochaber) are fully engaged Monday to Friday.
- The 5 minibuses deployed at the adult care centres have surplus capacity.
- Some of the school minibuses are used for a mixture of school and community use. Others are reserved solely for school use.

(School minibuses are located at Kilchoan Primary, Ardnamurchan High School, Kinlochleven High School, Lochaber High School (3), and Kilchuimen Academy)

- The bus companies collectively cover 29 routes and convey 671 pupils to and from school in Lochaber. Typically these services are well-organised and well-integrated with public bus services wherever and whenever possible.
- The extent to which community transport groups are active is variable across the area.
- In some areas the ability of community groups to provide transport services is restricted by the number of volunteer drivers.

(The Lochaber Car Scheme needs drivers for its Arisaig / Mallaig and Spean Bridge operations, and the Lochleven Community Minibus Association only has one volunteer driver. Lochaber Action on Disability, despite the wide-ranging services it manages to provide, reports that "...drivers are a difficulty.")

- The Duror-Kentallen community is particularly clear on the deficiencies in transport support for their area, and some schools highlighted particular difficulties with transport making it more difficult or more expensive for

pupils to participate in out-of-school activities.

5.4 The Project Manager has also consulted with the Lochaber Transport Forum, the Lochaber District Partnership and Ward Members.

5.5 It is also understood that the Scottish Government may be looking to develop a Pilot Area(s) in relation to integrated transport for health and social care, and Scottish Government officials have been made aware of the Pilot in Lochaber and our willingness to participate in a national pilot.

6. Project Initiatives

6.1 The central initiative being proposed by the Project Board is the establishment of the Lochaber Transport Advice and Bookings Service (LTABS). The pilot project is being developed as an “active learning” project, to allow the scope and operation of the central initiative to be modified during its lifespan.

6.2 It is proposed that LTABS runs for a full year, with an option to extend for a further 6 months, subject to the agreement of project partners and funding.

6.3 The project initiatives fit well with the recommendations from the Audit Scotland report which urges the responsible organisations to:

- Ensure that up-to-date information about all transport options in the pilot area is available to staff to enable better information provision to the public about available transport options, eligibility criteria and charges.
- Integrate or share services where this represents more efficient use of resources and better services for users, including considering an integrated scheduling system.
- Collect routine and accurate data on the activity, cost (including unit costs) and quality of services they provide and routinely benchmark performance and costs to ensure resources are used efficiently.
- Assess the impact of proposed service changes on users and other transport providers.

6.4 Other initiatives being pursued concurrently include:

- Seeking to make school and care centre minibuses available to eligible community groups in Lochaber. Liaison with schools and NHS Highland is on-going to establish this.
- Examining high-priced home-to-school contract routes to determine whether there might be alternative solutions.
- A survey of Duror-Kentallen residents (being conducted by Lochaber Transport Forum) to establish the precise nature of public transport needs.

6.5 It is important that the local transport groups are involved in the project from an early stage and the Project Board met with the local transport groups, and other interested groups on 26 March in Fort William to explain the purpose of the project and to seek early engagement from the local groups. The feedback from the local groups has been very positive.

7. Project Benefits

7.1 The Project Board has established a set of benefits that the overall Integrated Transport Provision Project should seek to attain, and these include:

- Increased assurance that healthcare appointments will be attended.
- Increased opportunity to utilise seats on Patient Transport Service vehicles.
- Increased use of Project Partner minibuses for community purposes.
- Development of minibus eligible driving pool.
- Specific, new, factual knowledge which can be applied to inform future transport provision planning in Lochaber.

8. Delivery of Lochaber Transport Advice and Bookings Service

8.1 The Project Board are of the view that the delivery of the LTABS is more likely to succeed if it is embedded in the community where local relationships and transport factors are properly understood.

8.2 The Project Manager, through the Community Transport Association's Network Development Officer for Scotland, met with the Lochaber based community transport groups in during March 2013 to explore whether they might be interested in submitting expressions of interest to set-up and run the proposed Lochaber Transport Advice and Bookings Service.

8.3 Three of the organisations, Voluntary Action Lochaber (the lead partner), Care Lochaber and Lochaber Action on Disability have joined together to submit an Expression of Interest and subsequently a more detailed proposal. They have been offered and propose to make use of advisory input from the Community Transport Association.

8.4 Voluntary Action Lochaber exists to advise, support, grow and develop voluntary and community activity across the Lochaber area. They go about these tasks in a number of ways, but three of their approaches seem particularly relevant to the Integrated Transport Provision Project generally and the Lochaber Transport Advice and Booking Service initiative specifically:

- Encouraging enterprising activity, growth and development
- Encouraging collaboration and knowledge transfer between organisations and sectors
- Encouraging community engagement, involvement and participation

8.5 Discussions are currently ongoing with Voluntary Action Lochaber in relation to their involvement with the Pilot.

9. Funding for Pilot

9.1 There are four partners represented on the Project Board, the Council, NHS Highland, Scottish Ambulance Service and HITRANS. HITRANS has committed funding of up to £25k, and the other partners are currently investigating the extent to which they can contribute to the pilot, either through direct funding or support “in kind”.

9.2 The extent and cost of the Pilot can be varied to suit the available funding; however as a minimum it is proposed that the Pilot be set up for a 12 month period and the base costs are estimated to be in the region of £75k to £100k.

9.3 Members are invited to note that an application for the Council’s contribution will be made to the Council’s Strategic Change and Development Fund.

10. Implications

10.1 Project partners are currently working to identify funding for the Pilot.

10.2 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report however, it will be necessary to establish a formal Agreement in relation to the operation of the Pilot.

10.3 The project will involve a review of access to transport for disabled groups, both in terms of booking services and accessing vehicles.

10.4 The project will seek to make transport more efficient which will have a positive effect on climate change.

10.5 There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

11. Recommendation

- 11.1 Members are invited to support the Project, being carried out under the governance of the Council's Corporate Improvement Programme, to examine the options for improving the integration of transport services for health and social care and social inclusion.
- 11.2 Members are invited to note that an application for the Council's contribution will be made to the Council's Strategic Change and Development Fund.

Designation: Director of Transport, Environmental and Community Services

Date: 13 August 2013

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