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**By:** David Hall, Head of Transport & Development

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

**Subject:** Minibus Application Procedure

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**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.

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## **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.

<b>Background Documents:</b>
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None
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**Contact Officer:** Stephen Gasche  
Public Transport Team Leader (East Kent)  
✉ [stephen.gasche@kent.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.gasche@kent.gov.uk)  
☎ 01622 221995

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