

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SERVICES IN SOUTH YORKSHIRE – SUPPLEMENTARY
INFORMATION AS REQUESTED BY MEMBERS**

Key Decision? Yes No

If this is a Key Decision, please state which category ...

Expenditure/Saving of +£250k Affects two or more districts

Strategic Priority (tick all relevant boxes)

Business and Innovation Place Research and Innovation
 Skills Transport Cross Cutting

Purpose of Paper

At the last OSC meeting in January 2019, SYPTE Officers were asked to provide further information following a number of questions raised by Members in the meeting, namely:

- 1) Reasons for a greater decline in Community Transport usage in Barnsley compared to the rest of the Region;
- 2) Areas where Community Transport services are provided;
- 3) Promotion of Community Transport services across the Region.

Freedom of Information and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

A – the paper will be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme

Recommendations

This report constitutes follow-up information to a previous report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and is presented to give further information.

Responses to questions raised by Members at 17 January 2019 OSC Meeting

Q1 Reasons for a greater decline in Community Transport usage in Barnsley compared to the rest of the Region

- 1 SYPTE was requested by SCR Scrutiny Committee to look at the decline in Community Transport (CT) usage in Barnsley. Whilst it is difficult to identify reasons for a decline in the number of CT journeys, this paper sets out national and local factors which potentially have influenced usage of CT in Barnsley.

2 Increase in Older Drivers

An increase in the number of people in older age groups holding driving licences means that more people are likely to be able to drive into old age. The number of people over 90 holding a driving licence in Britain has been on the rise - it recently topped 100,000. The number of over 70s holding a driving licence exceeded five million for the first time in 2018.

2018 data from the DfT's National Travel Survey shows that the overall number of people holding driving licences went up from 19.4 million in 1975 to 32.9 million in 2017, a 70% increase. Particularly notable was the 160% increase in women licence holders. Historically, women outnumbered men as users of CT.

Between 1975 and 2017, the percentage of drivers in the over 70 age group rose from 19.4% to 32.9% of people. When we look at the statistics for women only, this rise in the licence holders over 70 goes from 15% of women in 1975 to 50% of women in 2017.

Although older users of community transport may have disabilities (either age related or existing) which mean they may not have the option of personally being car drivers, there may still be an impact caused by the increased percentage of older (50+) carers able to drive their elderly parents or partners, rather than rely on options such as CT.

As public transport has become more accessible to people with disabilities, and private vehicle adaptations have become more affordable, passengers with disabilities are no longer as reliant on CT services as they once were (feedback from SCT would support this).

They report a reduction in the numbers of passengers, however, their needs are generally more complex. This has resulted in an overall increase in average journey time.

Additionally, a parallel rise in car ownership means that households are more likely to have a car available during the daytime to drive around older family members for appointments, shopping and so on. By 2005 only 25% of households had no car – less than the number of two-car households.

3 Improved Accessibility to the Public Transport Network

Improved provision of accessible infrastructure (dropped kerbs on footways/raised kerbs at bus stops) and level-entrance buses, has enabled many more elderly and disabled wheelchair users and people with their own approved mobility scooters to access mainstream local bus services.

There has been an increase in the ownership of mobility scooters, and the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT)'s National Mobility Scooter Permit Scheme (introduced in 2012) has given passengers clarity on being able to access mainstream bus services with their scooter, as permits show both the passenger and details of their individual approved eligible scooter.

4 **Shopping Trends**

Online shopping is on the rise. December 2018 saw High Street footfall nationally drop by 2%, compared to an online sales increase of 12%. However, we do not have data to relate this to the target demographic.

5 **Information for Users**

For the years 2011 to 2014 (the period when CT district timetables and promotional leaflets were produced by SYPTE), the usage of Group Travel in Barnsley almost doubled (approximately 98% increase over three years). When looked at in this light, the decline over subsequent years can be seen as more of a return to pre-promotional activity levels of usage.

At the end of the 2013/14 financial year and linked to SYPTE's Medium Term Financial Strategy as agreed with the Districts, SYPTE reduced the volume of printed products it provided, including stopping production of Community Transport publicity leaflets. These had provided a summary of the services available in each Local Authority area, including timetables for the Shopper Bus routes. They had been displayed in libraries, GP surgeries, hospital departments, rural community centres and SYPTE Interchange sites, and were used by the operators and SYPTE staff to publicise the services to local groups and meetings.

An analysis of the variation in the number of trips following the withdrawal of the promotional products has been undertaken¹. This shows that Barnsley had a 22% decrease in patronage in the two years after leaflet production ended, double the 11% decrease for the other three districts, as shown in **Appendix A**.

6 **Staff Resources**

Until 2016, SCT employed a Community Links Co-ordinator on behalf of the four main CT operators (SCT/DCT/BDaR/RCT) to raise awareness of Community Transport throughout the Districts. This officer assisted small groups to develop structures and Terms of Reference, and to apply for grants which was then spent on booking Group Travel. The post was funded through a proportion of SYPTE's grant payment to the operators. The Co-ordinator was based at the Barnsley DaR offices but was available to promote CT through disability and community groups and local clubs in all districts. However, Barnsley was the operator who chose to use the resource most: the other operators did not support retention of the post and it was made redundant in 2016 as BDaR could not sustain the full cost of the position alone.

Whilst the impact of the loss of the role was subsequently felt across all operators, it was more acute in Barnsley, at 13% (4,798 journeys) for the two year period, 2016/17 and 2017/18 after the Co-ordinator role was made redundant, and 4% (9,822 journeys) across the other three main operators, as detailed in Appendix A.

However, as the role had also provided additional back office support (eg as lunch cover for other staff) as well as undertaking bespoke promotion to Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups in the District, in 2015/16, the last year of the Co-ordinator's employment,

¹ Data from MCT and T17 is not included in this analysis as their service share is less than 4% each and is restricted to groups such as lunch clubs in very small geographic areas

the role had achieved a 20% increase in Group Travel in Barnsley mainly through engagement with BAME groups. An analysis in the variations in passenger numbers by service type after the loss of the Co-ordinator's post shows that a significant reduction in group travel journeys occurred in Barnsley of 341 journeys (6.18%) in 2016/17 and a further decrease of 1,271 journeys (24.54%) in 2017/18.

7 Changes in Shopmobility provision

In 2014 Barnsley Dial-a-Ride lost the Shopmobility scooter hire contract from BMBC. Previously passengers had been able to book a scooter and transport into the town at the same time. The organisation (a subsidiary of a care home company) which took over the scooter hire contract proved to be uncooperative with BDaR and SYPTE on co-ordinating CT bookings, and whilst this improved when the contract subsequently passed to another provider, the ongoing lack of a seamless booking facility for both the CT journey and scooter hire is likely to have had some impact on usage.

It should also be noted that as the customer base in Barnsley has traditionally been smaller than in other areas (Barnsley's journeys currently only account for 13% of the overall journeys made in South Yorkshire each year), a small variation in the number of journeys presents as a larger percentile swing than in other Districts.

Q2 Areas where Community Transport services are provided

- 1 Community Transport services are provided across the whole of South Yorkshire and are available across all geographies. **Appendix B** contains details of the schemes in each of the Local Authority areas which was recently circulated to all Local Councillors in February 2019.

Q3 Promotion of Community Transport services across the Region

- 1 As mentioned in response to Q2, SYPTE have circulated details of the Community Transport schemes in operation across South Yorkshire.

Separately, SYPTE will be launching a promotional campaign to raise awareness of Community Transport services with key stakeholders. The campaign will begin in Quarter 1 of the 2019/20 financial year.

Renewed publicity of the services to potential users - including elderly people, people with disabilities and a proportionally larger number of women than men – will ensure that there is a better awareness of the CT services currently on offer.

Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of Community Transport Patronage 2013/14 -2017/18

Appendix B – SYPTE Communications – Community Transport Services in South Yorkshire

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