

AGENDA ITEM No. 6

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

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| TO: Motherwell Area Committee | SUBJECT: Shopmobility Scheme |
| FROM: Jim Dickie, Director of Social Work | |
| DATE OF COMMITTEE: 17 March 1999 | |
| REPORT AUTHOR: | |
| REF: | |

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for establishing a mobile shopmobility scheme within North Lanarkshire.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Shopmobility is a service designed to improve access and freedom for people with limited mobility, based in a shopping area. Typically it provides electric scooters, manual wheelchairs and powered wheelchairs on loan to members of the public (both disabled people and those whose mobility is restricted by age, illness or accident, temporary, or permanent) who find getting around the shopping area difficult. Access to the scheme is enhanced by dedicated parking and links to accessible transport (such as Dial-a Ride).
- 2.2 The service is disarmingly simple, but has far reaching consequences for those who use it and for the shopping area where it is located. Residents and visitors are provided with mobility and gain their rightful independence and autonomy. Shopmobility gives equality of access to shopping facilities and to the benefits which accrue from this: companionship; autonomy; freedom; and occupation. In addition, Shopmobility benefits other sectors, most notably traders.
- 2.3 Growing awareness in the management of shopping centres of the needs of disabled people has resulted in new and refurbished schemes providing good access for disabled people to malls, shops and restaurants, as well as accessible toilets, telephones, lifts, and car parking spaces. Where a Shopmobility scheme has developed in tandem accessibility can be maximised.
- 2.4 The success of any scheme is inextricably linked to the accessibility of any town centre involved, in relation to both physical access and the attitudes of traders. It is therefore essential to determine an appropriate group involving people with disabilities to undertake an access audit of town centres within North Lanarkshire.
- 2.6 Having established the accessibility of any town centre, consideration would then be required as to how this could be improved, including incentives for traders in terms of funding of the actual work, and publicity (e.g.. access award stickers by local access groups)

- 2.7 The nearest local schemes are run in Hamilton and Falkirk. The Hamilton scheme was established with funding from the Scottish Office under European Urban Development regulations. It operates as a Company registered by Guarantee and is also a Registered Charity. They sought advice from the service which was operating at that time in Glasgow, which subsequently folded, but which has recently re-emerged. The Central scheme, based in Falkirk, was established from the Central Regional Council Equal Opportunities Development Fund. It operates as a Company with limited liability and has charitable status. 51% of the Board of Directors have to be (potential) users of the service, and there is also representation from the three participating Councils: Stirling, Clackmannanshire, and Falkirk.

Following an approach from the Town Centre Manager for Motherwell, the Head Occupational Therapist, North Lanarkshire Council Social Work Department, has joined him to investigate the potential for such a scheme in Motherwell and other towns in North Lanarkshire.

- 2.8 The views of the disabled community are paramount, as are those of the wider community who may at some time in their lives benefit from such a scheme. Initial consultation has taken place with the North Lanarkshire Coalition of Disabled People, and a number of its component groups.
- 2.9 To be successful schemes require a population who require such a service and shopping centres which attract people to spend time and money. They have traditionally developed in first and second tier town centres of which there are none within the boundaries of North Lanarkshire. The Central Mobile Shopmobility scheme was designed to operate in smaller town centres such as Alloa, Grangemouth, and Callender, and provided the evidence required to establish a permanent base in Stirling. Although the mobile scheme is no doubt valued by the people who use it, usage is limited, with people appearing to prefer to travel amongst schemes in larger centres. This is obviously representative of the general mobility of the population as a whole.
- 2.10 North Lanarkshire does not have the size of shopping centre normally associated with a fixed base scheme. The introduction of a mobile service would enable monitoring of demand and usage to take place, and assist in the appropriate development of any fixed base schemes. It would also provide a flexible resource which could be remodelled as required in the future.

3 - CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 There is interest within the disabled community in establishing a Shopmobility scheme.
- 3.2 It is proposed that initial administrative duties could be carried out by the two Social Work Department Disability Resource Centres, in consultation with the Coalition of Disabled People. This would primarily cover the pre-booking of equipment and monitoring of usage.

- 3.3 A suitable vehicle is required, together with secure parking facilities, and provision for the recharging of powered wheelchairs and scooters. It is proposed that in the first year this could be contracted from North Lanarkshire in house Transport services, together with a suitable driver, who would also be responsible for staffing the service on site.
- 3.4 A range of suitable chairs and scooters would require to be purchased.
- 3.5 Arrangements need to be in place for the servicing and maintenance of equipment, together with appropriate indemnity considerations.
- 3.6 Appropriate parking facilities for the project vehicle and service users would need to be negotiated in each town centre.
- 3.8 Clerical support will be required to co-ordinate the use of the service, and to monitor usage.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Capital costs for start up equipment are detailed in the document "Getting Started" produced by the National Federation of Shopmobility.

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| | <u>Capital NRR</u> | <u>RR</u> |
| 4.2 Initial start up costs are estimated at approximately: | £40,500 | £51,500 |

- 4.3 Future development of the scheme through charitable status would attract other sources of funding in future years

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The establishment of a mobile Shopmobility scheme would provide a service to the community which could be evaluated and developed as required.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Director of Social Work to initiate discussions with other departments as appropriate e.g. Planning, Transport, Economic Development.
- 6.2 Director of Social Work to report to future Motherwell Area Committee on progress.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to the Economic Development Committee for the Director of Planning & Development, dated 31st July 1996, reference:DE/MG/REPORT.044

Financial BreakdownCAP/NRRRR

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| Vehicle hire & driver costs | | 30,000 |
| Powered wheelchair purchase (x 3) | £7,500 | |
| Scooter purchase (x 8) | £16,000 | |
| Manual wheelchair purchase (x 10) | £5,000 | |
| Operational costs - Co-ordinator (? P/T) | | 21,500 |
| - stationery | | |
| - computer | | |
| - wheelchair maintenance | | |
| Time limited worker for access audits | £12,000 | |
| | £ <u>40,500</u> | <u>£51,500</u> |



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
10 March 1999