

**REGENERATION, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**25 OCTOBER 2016**

**MEMBER'S ITEM: RELOCATION OF THE DISABILITY  
MOBILITY SERVICE AT THE PENTAGON CENTRE,  
CHATHAM**

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation

Author: Rubena Hafizi, Parking Manager

**Summary**

This report sets out an issue, raised by Councillor Osborne on 13 September 2016 relating to the relocation of the Disability Mobility Service at the Pentagon Centre, Chatham. The Director's response is set out within the report.

**1. Budget and Policy Framework**

1.1 Under the Overview and Scrutiny rules in the Council's Constitution (Chapter 4, Part 5, Paragraph 9.1) Councillor Osborne has requested that an item on this matter is included on the agenda for this meeting.

**2. The Issue**

2.1 Councillor Osborne has requested that this item be placed on the agenda. It relates to the movement of the Disability Mobility Shop in the Pentagon Centre and the concern raised by several residents with mobile disabilities. The particular questions raised by Councillor Osborne are as follows:

- When was the original decision considered by the Council in terms of internal communication and consultation with members of staff or third parties?

- Why was there no advance warning given to service users and was the Council acting in a discriminatory way by not undertaking appropriate consultations? Why did the Council not use the contact details they had for those registered with the service to let people know?
- How is the Council intending to mitigate the impact for those who use the car park, because public transport is not an option and who now have to travel further to use the service?

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Medway Council took responsibility for the shop mobility scheme in April 2004 and has managed this until 1 September 2016 within the Highways & Parking Team. Provision of the shop mobility scheme is a discretionary service.
- 3.2 The shop mobility scheme operated on a pre-booking system from the Parking Reception Point on the ground floor at the Brook Multi Storey Car Park. The hours of operation were Monday to Saturday 10am to 4.30pm and closed for the lunch period between 1pm to 2pm. Since April 2014 there have been 146 users registered for this service and on average there have been 7 users per day.
- 3.3 As part of the Council's Budget Setting process for 2015/2016 a saving target of £40k was set to change the Brook Multi Storey Car Park to Pay & Display. To meet this savings target the Parking Reception Point would need to be closed and an alternative provider secured for the shop mobility scheme.
- 3.4 Highways & Parking explored various alternative provider options for the shop mobility scheme including relocation to Chatham Community Hub, The Pentagon Centre, Sainsbury's, Halfords and the Salvation Army. The most viable alternative provider identified was the Mobility Hub which opened in the Pentagon Centre on 2 May 2016.
- 3.5 Highways and Parking Services entered into negotiations with Mobility hub to transfer the shop mobility scheme with an effective transfer date of 1 September 2016.
- 3.6 The transfer of the shop mobility scheme to the Mobility Hub has resulted in the following service benefits:
- Additional operating hours - 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Saturday
  - No closure during the lunch period
  - No advance booking
  - Holiday hire of scooters
  - Other disability services available that may be of interest to the service user.

As part of the service transfer to the Mobility Hub a service charge has been introduced of:

Scooters: £4 first two hours and £1 per hour thereafter  
Wheelchairs: £2 first two hours and £1 per hour thereafter  
This is in line with other service providers.

- 3.7 Consultation on the proposed transfer of the shop mobility scheme has not undertaken in accordance with the Council's Consultation Policy.
- 3.8 There have been no reported corporate or confirm complaints regarding the relocation of this service.

#### **4. Director's Comments**

- 4.1 The comments of the Director of Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation on each aspect of the Member's Item submitted by Councillor Osborne are set out below:

- 4.2 Question 1: When was the original decision considered by the Council, in terms of internal communication and consultation with members of staff or third parties?

Internal consultation was undertaken with staff on the requirements to identify an alternative provider for the shop mobility scheme to meet the Budget Setting savings target that was set at Full Council. Formal consultation on implementing the Budget Setting savings target will be taken forward by the service.

Except for consultation with alternative providers for the shop mobility scheme there was no consultation with third parties or direct consultation with existing users of the service on the proposed transfer. The service will be commencing consultation this financial year with users of the shop mobility scheme on the new location for the service. A diversity Impact assessment has now been completed and is attached at Appendix A to this report.

- 4.3 Question 2: Why was there no advance warning given to service users and was the Council acting in a discriminatory way by not undertaking appropriate consultations? Why were registered service users not informed?

The team did advise service users of the proposed service change, but this was limited to one week prior to the transfer date and was via a flyer not a direct mailshot. The service fully accepts that this was an insufficient notice period for users.

- 4.4 Question 3: How will Medway Council mitigate the impact on those who use the car park, because public transport is not an option, and who now have to travel further to use the service?

The service will be commencing consultation this financial year with users of the shop mobility scheme on the new location for the service to identify what service improvements need to be considered.

4.5 In conclusion; Highways & Parking did not follow the correct procedure for consultation on transferring the shop mobility scheme to meet the Budget Saving target set and will be addressing this by undertaking consultation on the new location for the service this financial year.

## **5. Risk Management**

5.1 The risks are that the service is not utilised by its customers due to the additional travel time or due to the implemented hire charges.

## **6. Financial and Legal Implications**

6.1 Provision of a Shop Mobility service is a non statutory function, and as such there is no obligation on the Council to provide the service. However, in the circumstances, it would appear that the carrying out of a Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) and Consultation on the changes to the service would have been an appropriate course of action to take. The department has now completed a DIA and is undertaking a consultation exercise to address this issue.

## **7. Recommendation**

7.1 The Committee is requested to consider the Member's Item and the Director's response.

### **Lead contact:**

Name: Rubena Hafizi, Parking Manager

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### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Diversity Impact Assessment

### **Background Papers**

None

# Diversity impact assessment

<b>TITLE</b> <i>Name / description of the issue being assessed</i>	Shop mobility Service
<b>DATE</b> <i>Date the DIA is completed</i>	4 <sup>th</sup> October 2016
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b> <i>Name, title and dept of person responsible for carrying out the DIA.</i>	Rubena Hafizi Parking Manager

## 1 Summary description of the proposed change

- *What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed?*
- *How does it compare with the current situation?*

Medway Council took responsibility of the shop mobility scheme in 2004 and has managed this until 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016.

The service was offered by Medway Council to aid members of the public who were visiting Chatham Town Centre who have mobility problems, the service operated from the ground floor at the Brook multi storey car park facing Solomon's Road and it was a free service.

The service was open from Monday to Saturday 10am to 4.30pm and closed for lunch between 13.00 and 14.00hrs.

Equipment had to be pre booked 24 hours in advance (excluding Bank Holidays and Sundays) this was to ensure that staff members were available to issue the equipment to customers

This was a free service of manual wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs and powered scooters to valid Blue Badge holders although individual cases were assessed on their own merit and without prejudice. The average daily use of this service was 7 customers per day.

The service has been relocated to the mobility hub which is based within the Pentagon shopping centre next to the main door entrance on Military Road.

The rationale for looking at alternative delivery models was to identify service benefits due to the restricted operating model and the Council's long term proposal to convert the Brook multi storey car park to a pay & display facility that would impact on the provision of this service.

Various options were explored, the libraries, Pentagon Centre, Sainsbury's, Halfords and the Salvation Army, the most viable was the shop mobility which opened in the Pentagon Centre as there are other services available at this site i.e., electric beds, electric chairs, Zimmer frames, walking sticks and general equipment that may assist a person with disabilities.

# Diversity impact assessment

The benefits of this service relocating to the mobility hub are as follows:

- Additional operating hours
- No closure during the lunch period
- No advance booking
- Holiday hire of scooters
- Other disability services available that may be of interest to the service user.

The Pentagon Centre also meet the following DDA requirements:

- All entrances on the ground floor are automatic electric doors
- At the MFA Bowl entrance there is a ramp
- All passenger lifts have meet DDA requirements
- First floor shopping can be accessed via two lifts
- There are two disabled toilets in the public facilities
- There are twelve disabled car parking spaces sited in the underground car park and fourteen on the roof level

The disadvantages of the relocation to the service user is as follows:

- Additional travel time of 257 metres
- The service is now chargeable - Scooters: £4 first two hours and £1ph thereafter, Wheelchairs: £2 first two hours £1ph thereafter

## **2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment**

- *Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user records etc.*
- *Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile*

Since April 2014 there are 146 users registered for this service 16 of which reside outside Medway, there was an average of 7 users per day, the more popular days of use are Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays with the busiest time being between 10am and 12pm.

We have contacted the local Kent districts and have not found any who are offering this service. We have also explored the local private / charitable agencies and have found some similar services being provided as listed below:

Blue Water shopping centre:-

Mon to Fri 10am to 9pm, Sat 9am to 9pm and Sun 11am to 5pm.

4 hours charging

£8 Power Chairs

£6.50 Scooters

£3 Wheelchairs

# Diversity impact assessment

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## Canterbury Shopmobility Scheme

Mon to Fri 10am to 4pm, Sat 9.30 to 4pm, Bank holidays 10am to 4pm

2 Hours charges

£4 Power Chairs

£4 scooters

£3 per day & £15 per week wheelchairs

## Bexley Transport Shopmobility

Monday to Sunday 10am to 3pm

All day charge

£3 Scooters

£2.50 wheel chairs

Tunbridge Wells shopmobility scheme is run by a registered charity service:

Mon to Sat 9am to 5pm

3 hours charge

£5 Scooter

£4 Wheelchairs

## Ashford Shopmobility

Mon to Sat 7am to 7pm Sundays 7am to 4pm

Per hour

£2 scooters

£1 wheelchairs

Following a benchmarking exercise it has been found that the service provided in the Medway mobility hub is comparable with other agencies that are providing the same service.

There have been no reported corporate or confirm complaints regarding the relocation of this service, there has been one reported complaint directed via a Ward Councillor and one phone call complaint who was then going to follow through with an email however, this has not yet materialised to date.

Feedback received from the manager of the Mobility hub has been generally positive, he has received comments from customers who have stated that the service is helpful and willing to help, customers have stated how good it is that they do not have to pre book and can take a scooter at short notice, also customers are pleased that they can hire a scooter for holidays and outside normal shopping centre hours. There have been some negative comments in relation to the charging.

# Diversity impact assessment

### 3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

*Is it likely to :*

- *Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups?*
- *Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups?*
- *Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't?*

*(insert ✓ in one or more boxes)*

Protected characteristic groups	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age	✓		✓
Disability	✓		✓
Gender reassignment			
Marriage/civil partnership			
Pregnancy/maternity			
Race			
Religion/belief			
Sex			
Sexual orientation			
Other (eg low income groups)	✓		✓

### 4 Summary of the likely impacts

- *Who will be affected?*
- *How will they be affected?*

There is likely to be an adverse impact on one of the protected characteristic groups because:-

- Travel time has been extended by 257 metres
- The service is now chargeable

### 5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

- *Are there alternative providers?*
- *What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?*
- *Can demand for services be managed differently?*



# Diversity impact assessment

The additional benefits as listed below mitigate the disadvantages:

- Additional operating hours
- No closure during the lunch period
- No advance booking
- Holiday hire of scooters
- Other disability services available that may be of interest to the service user.

## 6 Action plan

- *Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence*

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
Consultation with Users	Rubena Hafizi	Completed by 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2017
Monitoring Complaints		
Information provided on the Councils website		

## 7 Recommendation

*The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be:*

- *to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate*
- *consider alternatives*
- *gather further evidence*

*If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.*

To continue providing the service at the mobility hub as the benefits do outweigh the disadvantages.

Monitoring the service and any complaints

Consultation in February / March 2017.

## 8 Authorisation

*The authorising officer is consenting that:*

- *the recommendation can be implemented*
- *sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned*
- *the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored*

**Assistant Director**

**Date**

Contact your Performance and Intelligence hub for advice on completing this assessment

# Diversity impact assessment

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RCC: phone 2443 email: [annamarie.lawrence@medway.gov.uk](mailto:annamarie.lawrence@medway.gov.uk)  
C&A: (Children's Social Care) contact your normal P&I contact  
C&A (all other areas): phone 4013 email: [chrismckenzie@medway.gov.uk](mailto:chrismckenzie@medway.gov.uk)  
BSD: phone 2472/1490 email: [corppi@medway.gov.uk](mailto:corppi@medway.gov.uk)  
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