

<b>Report to</b>	Marlborough Area Board
<b>Date of meeting</b>	26 January 2016
<b>Title of report</b>	Shopmobility Scheme for Marlborough

**Purpose of the Report:**

To consider proposals and funding for a new Shopmobility scheme for Marlborough.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 There is a proposal to work alongside Marlborough Town Council in establishing a new Shopmobility scheme in Marlborough. Members of the town council and the Chair of the Area Board visited the proposed site at the Mobility Store at George Lane on 7<sup>th</sup> October. Discussions have also taken place within the town council and the proposal has been well received by Marlborough's Town Team.
- 1.2 The Community Engagement Officer, Marlborough's Town Clerk and the owner of the Mobility Store, Mr Willie McIvor, visited Shopmobility Salisbury in November to learn from this well-established and successful scheme. There has also been a subsequent meeting with Mr McIvor at his shop in Marlborough.
- 1.3 Shopmobility is a service that helps people with mobility problems (whether through disability, illness or injury) to continue to get around city and town centres independently and without having to rely on friends or family. For those wishing to join the scheme, a registration fee is charged centrally at around £15.00 per year and a membership card issued. There is a low charge each time the service is used. Non-registered users (temporary) are charged a higher fee for temporary registration plus a usage charge. Equipment to hire usually includes mobility scooters, power chairs and manual wheelchairs.
- 1.4 More information about the scheme and where it is run is available at the National Federation of Shop Mobility at <http://nfsuk.org/>. There is also a regional group – the Wessex Group of Shop Mobility. Details at: <http://www.shopmobilitybasingstoke.org/how-it-works/shopmobility-wessex/>. The Wessex Group has already offered to advise Marlborough on setting up the scheme.

**2 Salisbury Shopmobility**

- 2.1 This is currently managed by Wiltshire Council. During the November visit, the Team Leader, Cindy Demain-Griffiths, gave a tour of the facility which is based in the Maltings Car Park, close to the main shopping areas and centre of town. As well as being in the main car park, it also has its own reserved parking spaces for users which increases the service's accessibility. The Salisbury scheme operates a large number of scooters, powered wheelchairs and manual wheelchairs along with other equipment such as rain covers, baskets, bags, etc. available to hirers.
- 2.2 Up until 2016, Salisbury Shopmobility has been operated by Wiltshire Council but this has now been passed over to Salisbury City Council. This transfer shows that communities can no longer expect Wiltshire Council to solely run these services and show that it is important that Marlborough Town Council has a role to play in helping set up services like Shopmobility and running them.
- 2.3 More information is at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/healthandsocialcare/shopmobility.htm>. A Friends Group has been established in Salisbury at: <http://salisburyfoss.weebly.com/team.html> and they carry out fund-raising and publicity for the scheme.

- 2.4 An information pack has been put together based on Salisbury's experience to help start-up the scheme which includes details about working with volunteers, example risk assessments, scheme registration, subscription and hiring out of equipment.
- 2.5 What is very clear from visiting the Salisbury shop is how strongly involved the volunteers are and how well valued they are within the set-up of the organisation. They include retired people, sixth formers, those on work placements and those working through the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme. All those we met were enthusiastic about what they did and took pride in the service they provide for the community and visitors to the city. They are rewarded with small incentives and their role within the shop is made clear to visitors.

### **3 A new Shopmobility store for Marlborough**

- 3.1 The Mobility Store offers a good location as it sits in the George Lane Car Park. The owner, Willie Mclvor, has identified an area of floor space close to the rear entrance (car park side) that he proposes to give over to establishing the new Shopmobility scheme for the town. Currently this space is used for servicing the Mobility Store's fleet of scooters and equipment but is soon to be moved to a separate location. This area provides a useful location for the new scheme with good access to the George Lane car park and ample space for storage and any work needed to equipment. It is also separate from the commercial side of the building.
- 3.2 The proposed scheme for Marlborough would be a much smaller operation, both given the space available and being a brand new scheme. Taking advice from Mr Mclvor, the proposal is to initially operate:
- three power scooters,
  - two power wheelchairs
  - one manual wheelchair.
- The scheme will be manned by a small team of volunteers working two at a time, to be recruited at a later stage, once the future of the scheme is clearer. Help and expertise will be available from the staff of the Mobility Store, who will oversee the operation.
- 3.3 The commercial operation, which offers hiring of equipment as well as the sale of mobility products, would sit totally separate from the Scheme. The Scheme and the existing Mobility Store complement each other and having such expertise on hand will be hugely beneficial.
- 3.4 This scheme complements other proposed tourism initiatives for Marlborough – the Coach Friendly Initiative (the coach park sits yards from the proposed site) and the A4 Great West Way tourist route.
- 3.5 The Shopmobility Scheme is not just for visitors. It is a low cost way to hire mobility assistance for local people whether those recovering from illness, disabled or the elderly. With a growing older population in the town this will be an important service as well as catering to the increase in care home facilities.
- 3.6 Whilst a historic town like Marlborough may not initially appear to be a good location for encouraging access by wheelchair (steps, split levels, uneven surfaces, narrow doorways), there is already evidence that shopkeepers and other businesses are doing a good job and serving disabled or wheelchair-using customers. Some doors have call-bells to request help getting into the shop, other businesses are happy to fetch items and bring them to the customer waiting at the door if they cannot themselves get in. With a Shopmobility scheme established in Marlborough, this kind of additional service can be further encouraged to other premises. In time, this could include a system such as in Bourton-on-the-Water where retailers put notices in windows welcoming wheelchair and scooter users offering help in the shop.

### **4 Start-up and Running Costs**

- 4.1 Based upon advice from Mr Mclvor and the Salisbury Shopmobility there are two options for capital purchases needed to establish a Shopmobility scheme for Marlborough:

Item	Cost	Total
3 x 4mph Pavement Scooters (taking customers up to 20 stone)	@ £1000.00 ex VAT	£3,600
2 x Transit Wheelchairs (taking customer up to 15 stone)	@ £140.00 ex VAT	£336
1 x Self Propelled wheel chair (taking customer weight up to 18 stone)	@ £308.63	£308.63
Spare batteries (2 per chair x 3 chairs)	@ £88	£528
Ancillaries (rain covers, bags, crutch holders, etc.)		£181
Option 1 Total		£4,953.63 (inc VAT)

Add annual servicing of  
Scooters £165.00 ex VAT  
Wheelchairs £60.00ex VAT

Some people are over the weights given above. Option 2 will give more flexibility around the users of this equipment:

Item	Cost	Total
2 x Scooters as above Pavement Scooters (taking customers up to 20 stone)	@ £1000.00 ex VAT	£2,400.00
1 x Scooter 8mph which can be reduced to 4mph for safety around the town (taking customers up to 25 stone with larger captain's chair)	@ £2,500.00	£2,500.00
1 x Transit Wheelchair (taking customer up to 15 stone)	@ £140.00 ex VAT	£168.00
1 x Self Propelled wheel chair (taking customer weight up to 18 stone)	@ £308.63	£308.63
1 x Transit Bariatric wheelchair (taking customers up to 31 stone)	@ £425.00	£425.00
Spare batteries (2 per chair x 3 chairs)	@ £88	£528.00
Ancillaries (rain covers, bags, crutch holders, etc.)		£181.00
Option 2 Total		£6,510.63

Add annual servicing of:  
Scooters £175.00 ex VAT  
Wheelchairs £60.00ex VAT

Once purchased, this equipment will become the property of Marlborough Town Council who will be responsible for insuring them. Provision will be made for maintenance and servicing

this equipment to keep it in a satisfactory condition. This will be through other income streams.

- 4.2 Additional costs in order to help establish the Shopmobility scheme include the building of a new drop kerb at the rear of the Mobility Store to allow better wheelchair access to the new scheme. Wiltshire Highways quote the cost of this at £800.
- 4.3 There are currently two disabled parking bays in George Lane car park. These are both at the opposite end, at the public conveniences. To improve access to the Shopmobility scheme, it is proposed to re-line the spaces at the rear of the Mobility Store to create two new disabled parking bays. Because this would take away use of at least two, possibly three paid spaces, Wiltshire's Parking Services would need to be reimbursed £850 per space per year to cover the loss of income from these paid-for spaces. This means Marlborough Area Board will need to fund up to £2,550 per year in order to provide these additional parking spaces.
- 4.4 There will also be a cost in having the current parking bays re-lined to have them marked as disabled bays instead.
- 4.5 Based on the size of the space to be given over to the Shopmobility scheme, in proportion to the size of the Mobility Store overall, the annual rent to cover this space is given as £2,000. At its meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> December, Marlborough Town Council agreed a budget line that will fund this running cost for 2016/17.
- 4.6 Initial conversations have been had with Wiltshire's Revenue Services over whether the Shopmobility Scheme would incur Business Rates. Because the scheme would be in a separate part of the existing shop, it may not incur Business Rates but the Valuation Office Agency would have to make an assessment. If Rates are incurred, the scheme will have to look for additional funding through other income streams (see para. 5 below).

## **5 Income Generation**

- 5.1 Within the scheme, there are opportunities to generate income. These are based on members of the scheme paying an annual membership fee and the charge for hiring out equipment each time and also from sponsorship opportunities where local businesses could sponsor each scooter, for example.
- 5.2 Looking at other schemes within the Wessex Association, annual membership ranges from £7.00 to £8.00 a year and equipment costs £3.00 to £3.50 a day to hire. Even if all items of equipment are hired out by the scheme, it will generate a daily income of approx. £20. Whilst not covering the cost of replacing larger equipment such as the scooters, this income might be sufficient to pay for servicing of the fleet or replacement of smaller items such as raincovers, batteries etc.
- 5.3 It is hoped that, in the New Year, local retailers will be invited to visit the Mobility Store to discuss the scheme. It will certainly provide sponsorship opportunities (e.g. scooters could show the logo/name of stores). This income might be sufficient to help pay for some of the running costs of the scheme, such as servicing the scooters and chairs or replacement batteries.

## **6 Project Monitoring**

- 6.1 As a brand new initiative for the town, the success of the Shopmobility Scheme will need to be closely monitored. Experience from Salisbury shows processes for doing this based on numbers of registered users and daily usage figures of the equipment.
- 6.2 Marlborough Town Council has provided funding for one year of rent for the scheme, 2016/17. A decision will have to be made as to the success or not of the scheme so that the town council can choose to renew this funding or not. During the course of this first year of operation, further sources of running cost funding can be explored to increase the long-term viability of the project.
- 6.3 Should the project come to an end for any reason, such as being unsuccessful or lack of running costs, equipment such as the scooters will have a second-hand resale value. This value is to be realised and returned to Marlborough Area Board.

## **7 Main Considerations**

- 7.1 Councillors will need to be satisfied that funding awarded in the 2015/2016 year is made to projects that can realistically proceed within a year of it being awarded.
- 7.2 Councillors must ensure that the distribution of funding is in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation to Area Boards.

## **8 Environmental & Community Implications**

- 8.1 A new Shopmobility Scheme for Marlborough will contribute to the continuance and/or improvement of cultural, social and community activity and wellbeing in the community area, the extent of which will be dependent upon monitoring of the project.

## **9 Financial Implications**

- 9.1 Financial provision had been made to cover this expenditure.

## **10 Legal Implications**

- 10.1 There are no specific legal implications related to this report.

## **11 Human Resources Implication**

- 11.1 There are no specific human resources implications related to this report.
- 11.2 Neither Marlborough Area Board nor Marlborough Town Council will directly employ staff to operate this scheme although it will make use of volunteers to man the project. Salisbury Shopmobility has great experience of using volunteers and this will be used to ensure volunteers from Marlborough are recruited, retained and managed using best practice.
- 11.3 There will be some administrative management of the scheme (volunteer training, rotas, accounting for hire, etc.). This will be handled by Marlborough Town Council for the pilot period in collaboration with the Area Board and The Mobility Store.

## **12 Equality and Inclusion Implications**

- 12.1 Community Area Boards must fully consider the equality impacts of their decisions in order to meet the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **13 Safeguarding Implications**

- 13.1 The Area Board has ensured that the necessary policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

## **14 Recommendation**

- 14.1 That Marlborough Area Board agree to the expenditure detailed in section 4 and summarised below, choosing between Options one and two towards the capital purchases and initial running costs of the scheme and the alterations to George Lane car park that will establish a new Shopmobility Scheme for Marlborough:

Item	Cost
Option One inc servicing	£5,223.63 (inc VAT)
Option Two inc servicing	£6792.63 (inc VAT)
Re-lining of new disabled parking bays	£1,000.00
Reimburse parking income	£2,550.00
Building of new dropped kerb	£800.00

No unpublished documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report

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