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| SDDC | Shopmobility SLA Proposal |
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| Confidential | Yes |
| Purpose | For information/discussion/decision |
| Length | 8 Pages |
| Financial Implications | Yes |

Background

Some years ago, SDCVS became the beneficiaries of the of the old Shopmobility assets namely five large battery powered scooters and a range of wheelchairs.

Prior to the pandemic, these assets were used spasmodically to encourage and enable local residents to have access to the town centre shopping area when visiting Swadlincote either by car or public transport. Users were given free hire for the duration of their visit thereby relinquishing them of the need to bring their own accessibility aid with them. The rationale was that in addition to supporting people with mobility issues the scheme would encourage greater take up of shopping facilities in the town.

The SDDC grant monies have enabled SDCVS to:

- Manage the arrangement
- Maintain and insure the equipment (NB insurance is quite expensive given the nature of the asset and its usage)

The actual take-up of the facility historically has been very modest indeed and during the pandemic, the assets were repurposed to assist with mobility in the vaccination centres at Oaklands and in Derby. The assets have now been returned. In relation to the investment made by the District Council we do not believe the grant to be a good use of public funds currently and indeed provides just one form of accessibly need.

Proposal Outline

SDCVS wish to propose the repurposing of the Shopmobility grant. We wish to continue to support people to access services and shop independently in Swadlincote (especially older people and those with disabilities) but utilise the investment to widen accessibility and make the support more inclusive.

Recent research undertaken by our charity has revealed changing trends in the demand for 'free to access' mobility scooters.

Instead we believe a responsive mini bus service, provided one day a week to augment the limited Dial a ride provision of Ashbourne Community Transport should be made available to local residents evidencing issues of disability, ill-health or other limiting conditions/issues.

The aim of this proposal is to provide a flexible town centre accessibility offer which can:

- Support significantly more beneficiaries to access the town.
- Work in tandem with shopkeepers in Swadlincote.
- Provide better value for money for SDDC.

We'd propose this as a pilot programme with a review after 12 months to gauge qualitative and quantitative data and to assess impact.

Pandemic and Cost of Living impacts

SDCVS have witnessed a continued reluctance on the part of many local elderly residents to leave their home; they often lack confidence or their physical health has deteriorated. Loneliness and isolation are now significant issues which the charity seeks to address on a daily basis.

In addition, the consequential cost of living crisis means that many don't have the means to pay for taxis or public transport to come into town.

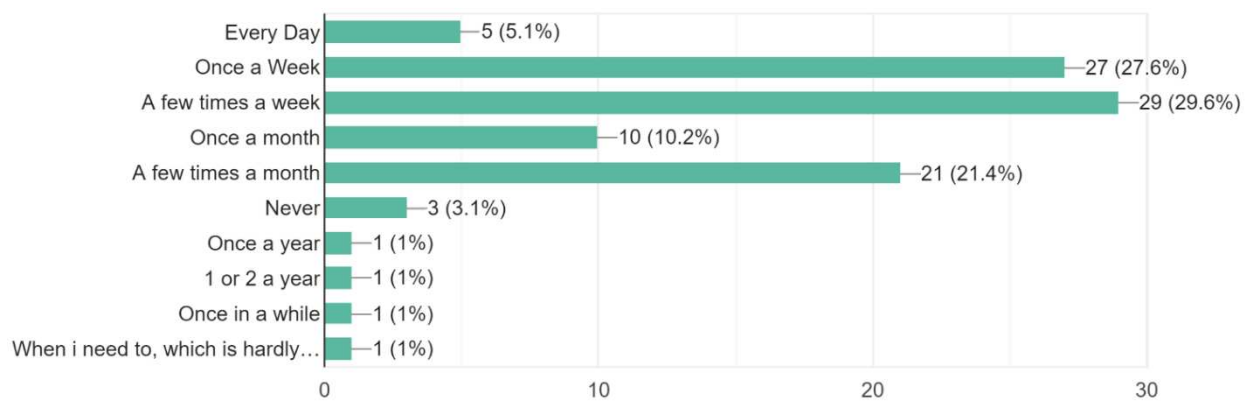
Recent Research on Town Centre Accessibility

During June 2022, SDCVS undertook some research to understand the accessibility issues of residents who might use Swadlincote for shopping.

98 responses were secured from people deemed to have accessibility issues. Below are some of the data outputs from that research.

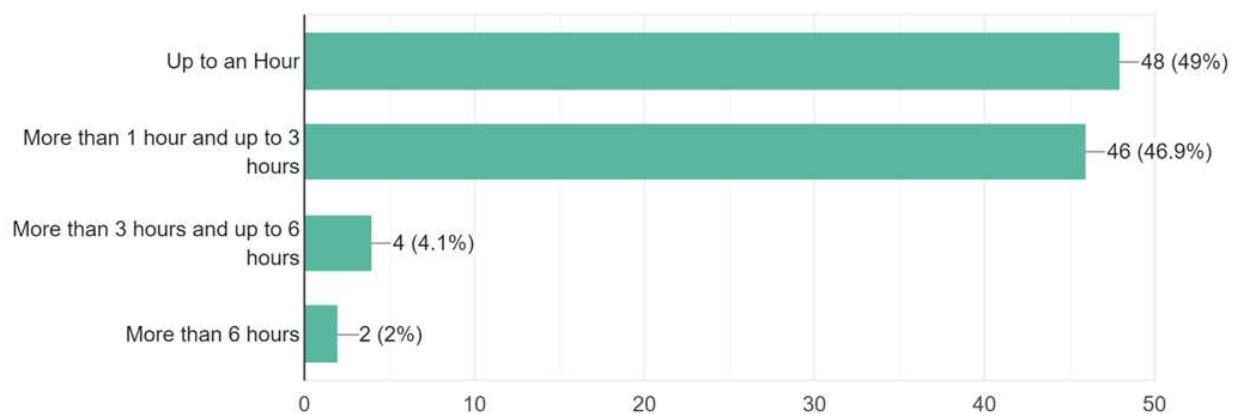
How frequently do you visit Swadlincote Centre? Please tick one

98 responses



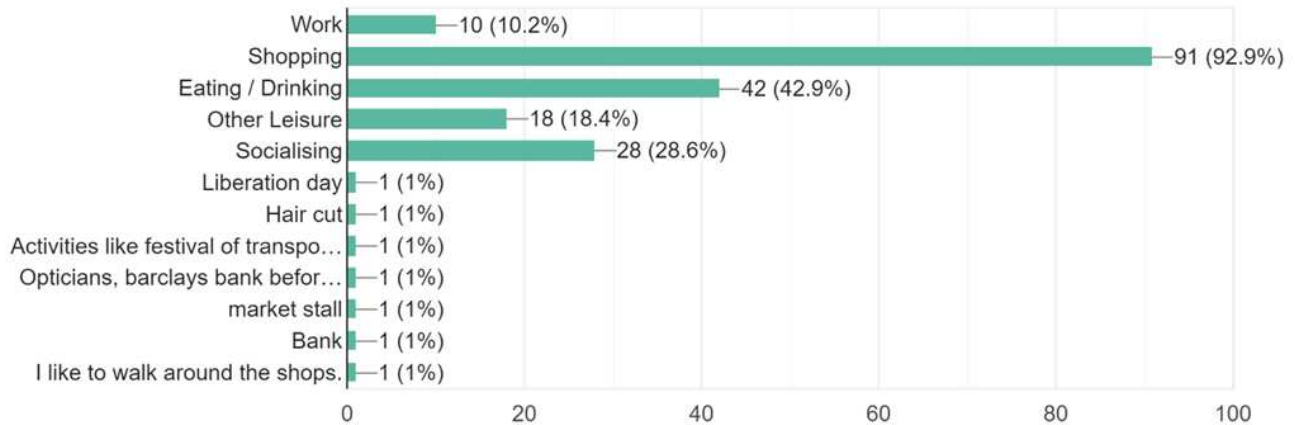
On average, how long do you spend in the Town Centre each visit? Please tick one

98 responses



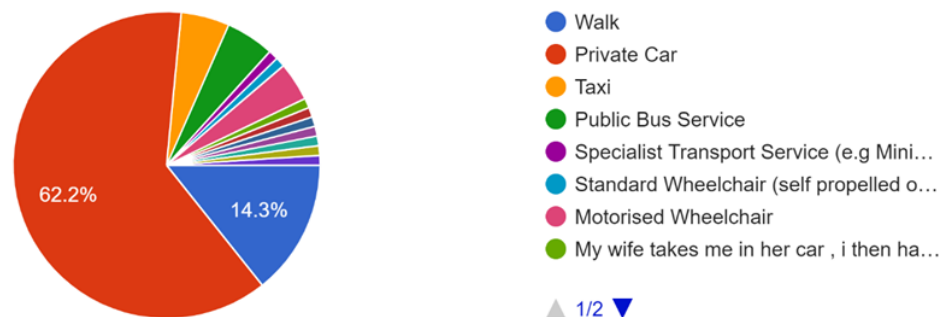
What activities/reasons do you generally visit Swadlincote Town Centre for? Please tick all that apply

98 responses



How do you usually travel into Swadlincote Town Centre? Please tick the most frequently used mode

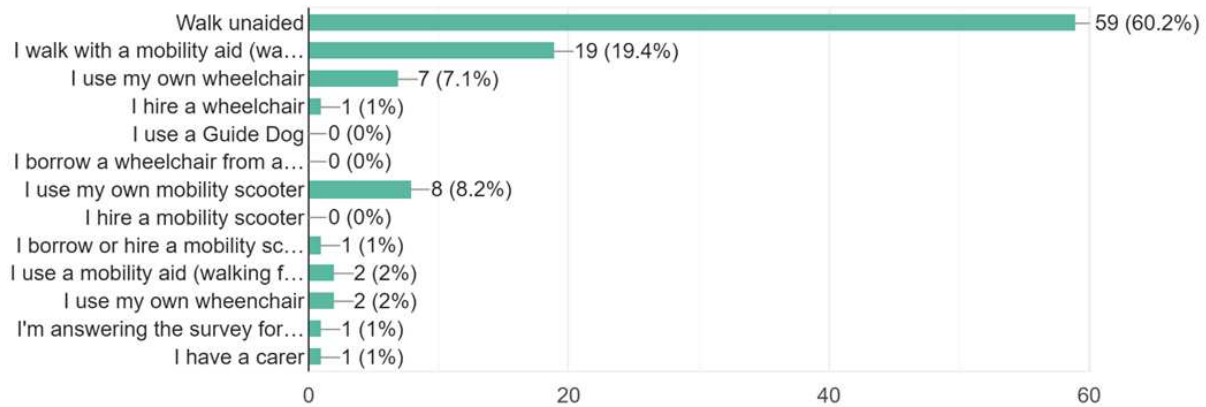
98 responses



NB the use of a private car suggests regular access to a vehicle but in fact many responders rely heavily on relatives and neighbours to bring them in

When you are at the Town Centre, how do you usually move around to visit the shops and other businesses? Please tick the most frequent method

98 responses



This small survey identifies that **only 1% of respondents hire a wheelchair and 1% hire/borrow a scooter.**

Proposal

SDCVS would like to propose the repurposing of the annual Shopmobility SLA grant provided by SDDC to offer a flexible responsive transport solution for registered local residents of Swadlincote and surrounding areas to improve accessibility to the town centre.

A responsive service would be provided one day a week to augment the limited Dial a ride provision of Ashbourne Community Transport (see below) and be available to local residents able to evidence issues of disability, ill-health or other limiting conditions/issues.

Utilising existing vehicle capacity of Swadlincote Community Transport (available between 10.30am and 2.30pm) we aim to offer a 'Thursday Shop' first come first served, bookable collection and drop off service focussing on the outlying areas of Midway, Newhall, Church Gresley, and Woodville.

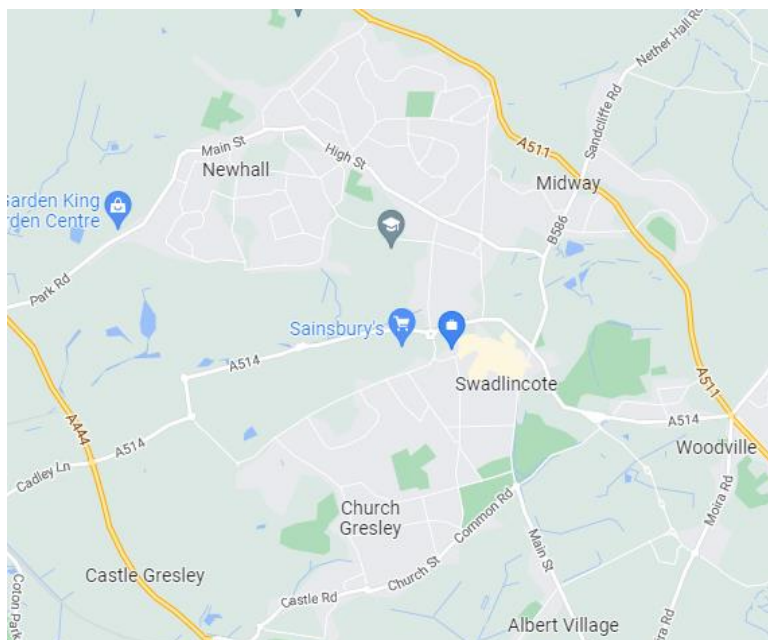
Users will need to book in advance to reserve their seat, with some limits being imposed on the extent to which any one individual could use the service in any given month. Users will need to become registered members of the service and provide evidence of the difficulties which impact on their ability to access the town centre. SDCVS staff will facilitate this process. Membership will be free.

The vehicle will be a 'wheelchair' accessible minibus with a maximum capacity of 14. (reduced if seats are taken out for more wheelchairs).

The minibus will be driven by an authorised and trained volunteer **and/or** a qualified approved driver from the Community Transport provider.

Our costs have accounted for a CT driver (see below) but we feel volunteer involvement would help support the group during their travels.

The collection route will be responsive each week to the location of the demand. If demand is such that a supplementary collection and drop off service is required, the driver will undertake a second run on any given Thursday.



Charges

In order to avoid issues of 'market disruption' and the undercutting of existing provision, we intend to mirror the charging regime of the Community Transport offer currently operating.

Membership to the scheme will be by registration but Free. Thereafter, fares will be charged as follows:

£2.50 Adult single

£4.50 Adult return

Gold Card holders travel for free after 9.30am weekdays. Gold Card is a DCC travel, discount and library card for older people and people with certain disabilities.

At this stage, we are unable to know the level of income this will generate given that we anticipate that a large proportion of the users may be Gold card holders. As this is a pilot in the first 12 months, we hope to review and modify the service once a pattern of use is established.

Demand for the service

SDCVS already has a large database of beneficiaries who have known accessibility issues due to pre-existing health conditions or post pandemic problems. Beneficiaries of the following services:

- Home from Hospital
- SDCVS Befriending
- Foodbank
- Active Travel (Hospital & GP Appointments)
- Home Handy Person Service
- Mental Health Advocacy & Support

.... provided by SDCVS and living in and around Swadlincote provide ample demand for this service. In addition, and subject to capacity, the charity will liaise with other health agencies, to make it known that we offer this service.

Existing Dial a Ride Service

Derbyshire Connect is for people of any age who are unable to use conventional bus services because of mobility difficulties or because they live in areas where bus services may be limited. All vehicles carry passengers in wheelchairs. Gold Card holders can use Derbyshire Connect services free-of-charge.

Derbyshire Connect South is run by Ashbourne Community Transport on behalf of Derbyshire County Council on Wednesdays (see below)

| Wednesday |
|--|
| Melbourne, Stanton by bridge, Ingleby, Ticknall, Formarke, Calke, Smisby To Swadlincote Pick-ups start at: 09:00 Returns at: 12:00 |
| Swadlincote, Woodville, Midway, Newhall, Walton Park Swadlincote Circular Pick-ups start at: 13:00 Returns at: 16:00 |

Fares:

See above.

We have spoken to Swadlincote Community Transport and they confirm that they do not provide any service of this nature. We have also consulted Ashbourne Community Transport and they confirm that whilst they provide the Wednesday service as above, our offer would not impact on them.

Added Value

Transport into Swadlincote and the economic regeneration of the town is just one beneficial impact of this service proposal. Recently, SDCVS began participation in a town centre retailers' group. Our aim ultimately would be to develop a loyalty or discount offer in various retail outlets (coffee shops etc) for members of the service and indeed other beneficiaries of SDCVS.

Additionally, we see the ride to and from town as a way of encouraging social interaction amongst SDCVS beneficiaries many of whom who may be lonely and isolated or have struggled with confidence, post Covid.

Beneficiaries will include

- Disabled
- Elderly and infirm
- Residents lacking confidence to leave home

Impact of the loss of free Scooter Hire

As mentioned earlier, the Shopmobility service has been focussed on supporting the vaccine roll out for several years and with the equipment having been off-site there would be no perceived loss. Additionally, a commercial supplier, Forever Mobility offer a paid-for service in town. We are unable to secure data as to the take up of their offer as this is commercially sensitive but the hire costs are as follows:

Wheel chair hire is £10.00 for the day and £25.00 for the week. £50.00 deposit

Scooter: £20.00 for the day and £70.00 for the week. £50.00 deposit

NB We would consider keeping and utilising one mobility scooter for hire should a storage solution be available. SDCVS no longer has storage facilities available.

Covering the costs: Managing the arrangement

In discussions with SCT, we believe that the £12k grant could be utilised as follows:

- 50 'single day' transport service offers

To include

- Hire of Van, insurances
- Fuel based on an average of 20 miles round journey per day

Costs estimated @ £6200 NB this arrangement includes a driver (from the Community Transport provider)

- Volunteer Recruitment/Training/Checks and Insurance

Costs estimated @ £500

- Booking/Administration

Costs estimated @ £3000

- Marketing and communications

Costs estimated @ £500

- Contribution to core costs of SDCVS

Costs estimated @ £1800 (15%)

Once established, we believe that between 400 and 600-person journeys into Swadlincote per year will be enabled through this arrangement.

SDCVS would endeavour to seek additional funding resources where possible to add additional benefits to the scheme.

Summary

The impact of the pandemic and our experience of the Shopmobility scheme over many years brings us to conclude that a new provision to support accessibility to the town centre is now required.

The repurposing of this grant and the development of new accessibility solution will mean:

- Shops and facilities with Swadlincote are more accessible to the elderly, disabled and infirm
- Loneliness and isolation can be combatted

Roger Moors

CEO