VOLUNTEER CAR SCHEME

OPERATING PROTOCOL

**Introduction**

Parish councils in England received powers to support transport initiatives through the Local

Government and Rating Act 1997 (sec 26 to 30). Using these powers parish councils are able to set a precept for and support:

* A car sharing scheme.
* A local bus service.
* A community bus service.
* Taxi fare concessions.
* Transport information.
* Traffic calming works.

As a result of a number of public consultations within the Wilsden Parish Council area, the need for a volunteer car scheme was established.

The establishment of the scheme was funded by a grant from Yorkshire Forward through the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive. It was a condition of this grant that the option of extending the scheme to other villages within Bingley Rural was investigated, in conjunction with their local councils. The schemes covers the rural areas south of Bingley and particular the villages of Wilsden, Harden, Cullingworth and parts of Denholme. Details of the scheme are available through the Wilsden and Cullingworth Medical Centres.

**Objectives**

The Wilsden Parish Council volunteer car scheme has been established to provide transport for people who do not have ready access to their own transport and where public transport is unavailable or unsuitable. It is primarily directed towards providing access to the Wilsden and Cullingworth Medical Centres along with visits to hospital. Transport is also provided to local village shops, hairdressers and dentists along with the Wilsden Luncheon Club and to the Thursday Afternoon Group, both which meet at Wilsden Village Hall.

**Insurance**

The requirement for public liability insurance, over and above that currently held by Wilsden Parish Council, has been investigated. When drivers are actually transporting people we have been advised that because they are volunteers they will be covered by their own insurance. As stated below, when considering driver qualification, fully comprehensive insurance is a requirement for all drivers.

**Additional Parish Council requirements**

As the arrangements with the local councils in Bingley Rural develop it is probable that management of the scheme may be transferred to a separate organisation jointly controlled by all four councils.

**Car Scheme Coordinator**

The day to day operation of the scheme is provided by a coordinator who is responsible for receiving calls from potential users and identifying a driver who is willing and able to provide the required transport.

The appointment of the Car Scheme Coordinator is the responsibility of Wilsden Parish Council who will appoint a councillor with responsibility for ensuring the smooth operation of the scheme. It will be the responsibility of this councillor to provide a written report to each Council meeting on the operation of the scheme

**Drivers**

The success of any car scheme is dependent on the commitment and expertise of its individual volunteers. It is therefore important that, as part of the recruitment process, appropriate checks are carried out and volunteers are made fully aware of their responsibilities.

The following selection criteria must be completed as part of the introduction of new drivers:

* A full license is required for all drivers and volunteers must agree to inform the Car Scheme Coordinator immediately of any driving conviction they have received. A single speeding conviction will not necessarily exclude a driver from continued involvement in the scheme but repeated speeding convictions and conviction for more severe driving offences will result in a review of the involvement of the driver concerned by the Parish Council. The application form incorporates an agreement that the volunteer will inform the Car Scheme Coordinator of any driving endorsements after they join the scheme.
* Age, we should be careful about specifying either an upper or lower in order to avoid any charge of discrimination. Age, in itself, is no indication of driving ability. However, we should observe any age limits set out in insurance policies to protect the volunteer and ourselves.
* Drivers should confirm in their application form that their sight is of the standard required in the Highway Code.
* Drivers will confirm on their application form that they have no illness and/or disabilities notifiable to the DVLA. Drivers are expected to report any illness or disability, which may permanently or temporarily, affect their abilities to drive or assist service users.
* Drivers must hold fully comprehensive insurance for their vehicle and provide an up to date copy of the certificate to the Car Scheme Coordinator within 30 days of each policy renewal.
* Where relevant up to date copies of MOT certificates should be provided to the Car Scheme Coordinator.
* The Scheme does not transport vulnerable adults and there is therefore no requirement for drivers to be CRB checked. Although there is no requirement for drivers to be CRB checked any driver joining the scheme will be asked if they have undertaken a CRB check in the previous 3 years for another organisation. If a CRB check has been carried out the driver will be asked if they are willing to supply a copy.
* Drivers will be asked to provide two references. These references could include the Car Scheme Coordinator and/or members of the Parish Council. The Coordinator must take up references either verbally or in writing for all new drivers.

**Car Scheme Users**

As stated above the primary purpose is to transport residents who do not have access to their own transport to the Medical Centres in Wilsden and Cullingworth, to hospital, to events at Wilsden Village Hall such as Luncheon Club and the Senior Citizens. The scheme is also available to residents who wish to access local village shops within Wilsden, Harden, Cullingworth and Denholme. Transport to supermarkets outside the villages will not be supported although journeys to access other specialized facilities may be provided where no other public or private transport option is available.

The journeys that are considered acceptable for access to the scheme are under continuous review with two particular issues being of primary concern. The scheme is not intended to be in competition with commercial taxi companies and is also not normally intended for people whose journey begins and ends on a direct bus route. The other key criteria is that the availability of volunteer drivers is limited and in all cases the Car Scheme Coordinator will allocate drivers on the basis of what is believed to be the greatest need.

Potential users must contact the Car Scheme Coordinator initially in order to register. Users will need to supply their name and address and to confirm that they are over 18. They will also be asked to provide details of disabilities or mobility difficulties that need to be communicated to the driver. They will also be requested to provide an emergency contact number, only to be used in case of unforeseen circumstances.

No user who is 18 or under will be allowed to use the scheme unless accompanied by a parent, guardian or someone who is acting in loco parentis.

When a user has registered with the scheme and wishes to book a collection they will contact the Coordinator providing details of their journey, giving as much notice as possible. The Coordinator will then attempt to match up the user with a suitable driver taking into account where possible the location of both. Where a regular journey takes place the user may make direct arrangements with the driver. In all cases the driver concerned must inform the Coordinator of these direct arrangements in order that they are aware of the impact upon potential driver availability.

The user will make a contribution towards the drivers operating costs of no more than 40p per mile. This mileage will be calculated from the driver’s home at the start of the journey until their return. Where the driver has to incur any additional costs, such as parking charges at a hospital these will normally be reimbursed. The driver must not accept any additional payment, tips or gifts from users as this may invalidate their insurance.

**Training and operations guidelines**

All drivers will receive Welcome Instructions highlighting key operating requests along with a card that may be displayed in their windscreen when they are collecting or dropping off users. Regular meetings will be held with drivers to identify any operating difficulties and suggestions for improvements.