

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: ORDER OF MALTA DIAL-A-JOURNEY LTD
Meeting: HOUSING AND SOCIAL CARE COMMITTEE
Date: 26 MAY 2009
Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2006 the TAS Partnership carried out a review on behalf of Order of Malta Dial-A-Journey Ltd (DAJ), which was funded by Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Stirling Councils. TAS noted a decline in the number of passenger journeys being made by residents within the Falkirk Council area. In May 2008 this Committee reported that matter to the Policy and Resources Committee with a recommendation that a one year Service Level Agreement (SLA) should be implemented from 1 October 2008. The recommendation was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 3 June 2008. This SLA included the specific targets of 10,000 passenger journeys and 250 active registered users.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Dial-a-Journey Ltd has taken on board many of the recommendations from the TAS report. A new booking system and reduced fare structure has been implemented from 1st April 2009. The implementation of the booking system was delayed due to complications with the software package which had been installed in October 2008. This is a bespoke package which required some development work from the software supplier and took some months to install and become fully functioning.
- 2.2 Dial-a-Journey Ltd has also remarketed the service including a new vehicle livery in an effort to attract more passengers to the service. This remarketing was initially concentrated on the Falkirk Council area.
- 2.3 Dial-a-Journey Ltd has now reported a reversal of the downward trend in passenger numbers and has also reported a slight increase in the number of passenger journeys for 2008/9 within the Falkirk Council area (Table 1). The forecast for the current year 2009/10 is to maintain passenger journeys at similar level (Table 2). While this increase in the number of journeys is to be welcomed, this still falls short of the level detailed in the current SLA. The number of active registered users for the year from 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009 was 237.
- 2.4 It is still possible that Falkirk Council might eventually wish to consider putting the current DAJ operation out to open tender, in view of the emerging market for such operations. However, the current position regarding the fluctuating demand for the service remains unclear.
- 2.5 A number of experiments have been undertaken with regard to the service delivery within the Falkirk area and these been met with varying degrees of success. Although various improvements have been made to the DAJ service, it still has not established a firm baseline for level of service provision. The improved booking service and reduced fares structure (these were items identified within the TAS report as areas in need of improvement) have only been in operation since 1 April 2009 and have not yet provided any noticeable change in demand.

- 2.6 An extension of six months to the current SLA (to 30 March 2010) would allow for further monitoring of passenger numbers and give DAJ the time to complete the current service improvements. This extension would also allow for investigation into the related Taxicard service to identify passenger and journey trends. More efficient use of funds may be possible by the reallocation of some funds from Dial-a-Journey to Taxicard.
- 2.7 Central Shopmobility appears to be working well and currently there is no cause for concern regarding their operations in the Falkirk Council area. The current SLA with DAJ for Shopmobility also expires in September 2009. It is now recommended that the Council offer an extended SLA to DAJ, for the Shopmobility operations, until 31 March 2011.

3. POLICY, PERSONNEL, LEGAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no policy, personnel or legal implications. The level of funding (£202,950 for DAJ and £68,171 for Shopmobility) for these operations was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 3rd June 2008 and ratified when budgets were set for the current financial year. There will be no reduction in the level of funding for DAJ in the 2009/2010 budget and the extension to the Service level Agreement can be met from the existing budget.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Committee refer the matter to the Policy & Resources Committee with the recommendations:
- a) that the Council offer Order of Malta Dial-A-Journey Ltd a further six months extension to the current one year service level agreement until 31 March 2010 at current funding levels (plus an inflation element to be determined by the Director of Finance);
 - b) that there is continued monitoring of the impact of the revised booking arrangements and reduced fares structure; and
 - c) that it extends the current SLA with Dial-A-Journey Ltd for the provision of a Shopmobility service until 31 March 2011.

R Geisler

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Director of Development Services

Date: 13TH May 2009

Contact Officer: Gary McGowan, Tel. 01324 504925

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

Falkirk Summary Stats 2001-2009**Table 1****Core Figures**

	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
DaJ Passengers	5562	5110	4784	4701	4647	4525	3981	4883
DaJ Escorts	1037	1031	964	851	983	956	851	979
Other Contracts Pass	117	82	149	76	73	24	0	0
Group Hire	1656	1315	1524	1261	1324	1389	2020	2660
<u>Sub Total</u>	8372	7538	7421	6889	7027	6894	6852	8531
Excursions						333	242	217
Small vehicle Hire								9
<u>Total</u>	8372	7538	7421	6889	7027	7227	7094	8748

Falkirk Passenger Year on Year Comparison**Table 2**

2007/08				2008/09			
	Pass	Escorts	total		Pass	Escorts	total
Sept	562	86	648	Sept	638	77	715
Oct	757	111	868	Oct	665	60	725
Nov	662	115	777	Nov	658	90	748
Dec	522	105	627	Dec	632	110	742
Jan	475	72	547	Jan	549	90	639
Feb	531	93	624	Feb	613	90	703
Mar	514	77	591	Mar	617	100	717
Total	4023	659	4682	Total	4372	617	4989
Monthly Average				Monthly Average			
			669				713
Passengers	2007/8	2008/9		Projected Annual Usage	8553		
Escorts	4023	4372					
	659	617					

Figures supplied by Dial-a- Journey Ltd 27/04/09