

West Oxfordshire Community Transport Limited

Report on 210 bus service and funding request.

We started this service on 9 February 2018. By its second anniversary (February 2020) passenger numbers were regularly reaching over 300/week. This is as a result of a huge amount of work by us to ensure that the service we provided was reliable and punctual and met the needs of the residents of the Wychwoods, Leafield and Crawley. We fundraised, promoted the service at events and through articles. We appreciated the efforts of the Parish Councils to also promote the service in a range of ways.

The next 2 years of service, from March 2020 to date (February 2022) saw a dramatic decline in passenger numbers (see table below) because of the restrictions arising from the pandemic – lockdowns and government’s advice to the public not to use public transport, but at the same time, asking bus service operators to continue to provide services. During these 2 years we have received Government support through grants to support the bus sector as well as furlough. All this financial support has now come to an end, and we are left with significantly reduced passenger numbers and every increasing costs (fuel, maintenance and drivers’ wages). We anticipate that the numbers will gradually increase – assuming there are no further negative consequences as a result of Covid 19 – and hopefully will be close to pre-Covid numbers within 12 – 18 months.

Many residents of Leafield rely on our bus service. In particular students at Witney College, older people who do not have access to a car and those on low incomes. It is indeed for these particular groups that we set up the service.

We have always recognised that this service will require a funding gap to be plugged through fundraising – even in spite of the healthy passenger numbers of 300/week. But the funding gap this coming year is higher than we can bear.

The direct costs of running the service based on our estimate of passenger numbers reaching an average of 240/week will leave us with a deficit of £12,000 for our coming financial year 1 March 2022 to 28 February 2023.

We ask Leafield Parish Council to consider providing us with a grant of up to £3000 to support running costs for the coming financial year 2022/23 of £3000.

Margaret Burden, 2 February 2022