

## **Additional information – Community Minibus Association**

### **Community Minibus Association**

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The Association operates a fleet of 11 minibuses to relieve social isolation for those who live in West Sussex, do not drive and do not have access to public transport. We provide a door to door minibus service for non-drivers, allowing them to shop and attend social events, to maintain independence. The Association has been in existence for over 40 years and this is a testament to the commitment of its volunteers – drivers, escorts and administrative volunteers alike.

The journeys are carried out entirely by volunteers, either driving or escorting passengers. Many of our passengers are elderly, often living by themselves. Our journeys give people a lifeline, allowing them to avoid social isolation by meeting other people on a regular basis.

Our service has obviously been badly impacted by the coronavirus, and we ceased movements at the end of March. Recently, we have started again, very slowly and carefully, to move individuals who need to go to the surgery for non-coronavirus issues. Our volunteers in Storrington have offered to move people to the Glebe Surgery and home again, to meet doctor's appointments. To do this we are operating in coordination with the Storrington Hub.

In time, we obviously are very keen to get back on the road. Our service is, by its very definition, one of the first services which will be needed in West Sussex. Our passengers have no other way of moving within their communities and they will be calling us as soon as some form of clearance is granted. We will clearly need to work carefully and diligently to deal with anyone over 70, and this may take time to achieve. We wait for suitable guidance from the experts and the government.

We are applying for funds to allow us to get through the current problems and, at the same time, protect our need to replace minibuses in a balanced and controlled way. If we fail to replace a minibus according to schedule, we rapidly impact our financial position in

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subsequent years, leading to a very quick loss of service in some villages. Our ability to stay in operation for over 40 years is a clear reflection of our ability to correctly plan for the future, both operationally and financially. Additionally, in those 40 plus years of existence no single volunteer has ever been paid – a clear testament to our ability to watch the pennies and a testament to the commitment of our team.

The revised 2020 forecast, amended to reflect the impact of the coronavirus, shows a shortfall of £27,750, compared to the previous forecast of a neutral budget. A grant of £20,000 will allow us to make up some of the passenger shortfall by refunding membership payments for 2019. This may happen through granting a free period during 2020, or a refund where it is requested. At the same time, we will be able to continue with the planned minibuss replacement.