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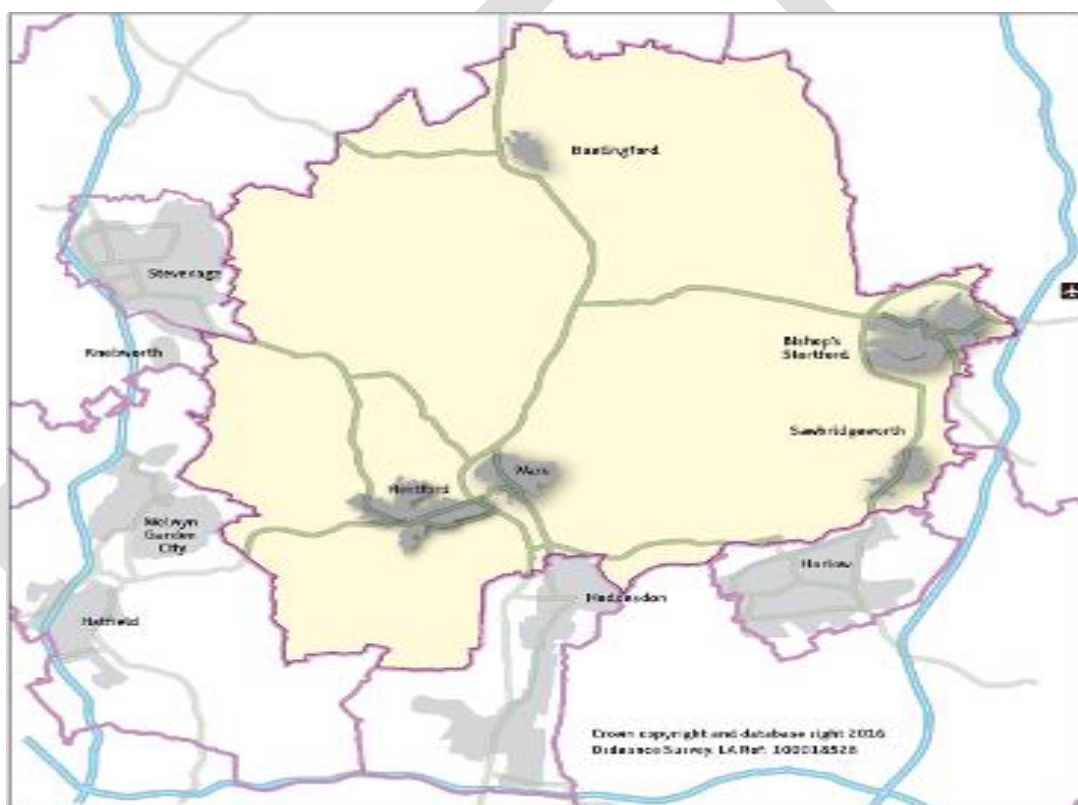
**East Herts Council**

**Community Transport Strategy 2018-2021**

# 1. East Herts Council's Vision; the case for Community Transport

## 1.1 *The council's strategic priorities*

The District of East Hertfordshire has a population of approximately 145,000 and covers about 480 square miles on the eastern side of Hertfordshire.



The district has Broxbourne to the south, Welwyn Hatfield and Stevenage to the west and North Hertfordshire as its northern boundary. To the east the district borders on the county of Essex.

The vision of the council is to provide East Hertfordshire residents and businesses with a future that is prosperous and sustainable.

Our strategic priorities are given in the table below.

<b>East Herts Council' Strategic Priorities</b>	
<b>Priority</b>	<b>Outcomes we want to see</b>
Priority 1 - Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities	Residents living active and healthy lives Support for our vulnerable families and individuals Communities engaged in local issues
Priority 2 - Enhance the quality of people's lives	Attractive places Future development best meets the need of the district and its residents
Priority 3 - Enable a flourishing local economy	Support our businesses and the local economy Vibrant town centres Working with others, to have achieved the right infrastructure for our businesses and communities

## **1.2 What forms of transport do residents use?**

It is a fact that East Herts has high levels of car ownership. This is likely to be a reflection of relatively high incomes in much of the district and somewhat patchy public transport links in some areas, especially the more rural parts of the district. Car ownership ranges from 76.7% to 95.6% across the council's 30 electoral wards. The average rate is 87.2%, compared with the national average of 74.2%.

There are good rail links into and out of London from the district's major towns, except Buntingford, and some high frequency bus routes, most typically around Hertford, Ware and Bishop's Stortford. There are eight train stations across the district, with over 7.9 million

journeys recorded in 2016/17. Many rural communities, however, still have very limited transport options other than car use.

Thus, the council considers that community transport can be a key way to 'plug gaps' in provision.

### **1.3 What is community transport?**

The definition of community transport is quite broad. It generally refers to transport provided by voluntary and community sector organisations using a mix of volunteers and paid staff often, though not always, supported with subsidies.

Schemes defined as community transport include car schemes operated by volunteers using their own vehicles and mini buses operating on a planned route, say, between villages and local towns on market days.

### **1.4 Why community transport matters in East Herts**

It is the aim of East Herts Council to directly and in partnership with others enable members of our communities to live independently and lead fulfilled lives.

There are national and local demographic trends which can militate against this aim. Of note:

- the population of East Herts is continuing to increase and in line with national trends the average age of our residents is growing older; national statistics show that car ownership drops beyond the age of 65 and particularly beyond the age of 75 – *ONS, Living Costs and Food Survey (Expenditure and Food Survey prior to 2008)*
- economic factors can mean that families are moving further apart which may impact on residents social isolation

- the rural nature of much of our district can result some residents feeling isolated and withdrawn from their communities.

The council believes that a mix of private and public transport supplemented by effective community transport will play a crucial role in assisting the council and its partners fulfil our vision to preserve the unique character of East Herts, ensure it remains one of the best places to live and work and enable residents to lead active and healthy lives.

### ***1.5 The council's vision for community transport***

The council recognises that accessing appropriate transport for essential and social journeys could prove challenging for many people including older people, disabled residents, parents with young families and those who don't drive, including young people.

The council's vision for community transport is to provide advice and financial assistance to those wishing to establish and provide community transport schemes that reflect local requirements. We recognise that requirements for local community schemes will vary between East Herts' different communities although it likely that schemes are likely to address the need for:

- services that connect villages with our market towns
- services which support participation in key council programmes. The council's social prescribing programme, for example, relies on residents being able to access local medical, social and recreational activities and groups
- sustainability transport options in the district's new communities and settlements
- commuter 'shuttle services' to stations

- services for younger residents, perhaps extending into the evening
- services that assist children get to school where such services would not conflict with those run commercially or with Hertfordshire County Council support.

It is with these aspirations in mind that East Herts Council has identified the need for a Community Transport Strategy. The council is committed to working alongside our partner organisations to implement it.

This strategy outlines what is already happening and the action plan sets out what East Herts Council can do to assist our partners to ensure that the district has a range of accessible and affordable transport available to our residents.

## **2. What is currently in place?**

There are currently a number of Community Transport schemes in place across East Herts serving our towns and villages. As noted above, Community Transport include car schemes operated by volunteers using their own vehicles and mini buses operating on a planned route.

There are examples of all these forms of Community Transport currently operating in East Herts. These include a volunteer staffed Community Car scheme led by Community Volunteer Services (CVS) Broxbourne & East Herts and several bus services linking towns and villages with essential services such as shops and medical centres.

All of these schemes report that they are well used by local residents. For example in 2017 there were 3,361 community car scheme journeys made, this is an increase of 49% on the period to the end of 2016.

### **2.1 *Current partners and deliverers of community transport in East Herts***

There are many stakeholders whose input is vital to make a success of this Community Transport Strategy. Each of these stakeholders has been and will be given every opportunity to be involved and contribution in the implementation of this action plan.

Stakeholders include:

- residents of East Herts particularly older persons, disabled people and those isolated by the rural nature of where they live, this includes relatives on their behalf
- current users of the existing Community Transport services
- CVSBEH Community Car Scheme
- Town & Parish Councils

- operators of the various bus based Community Transport schemes
- Hertfordshire County Council

Other stakeholders will be invited to contribute to the delivery of the Community Transport Strategy.

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### **3. Our priorities and action plan for current and future Community Transport services and projects**

***Priority: Provide practical support and advice to those considering the need for Community Transport in their locality***

- We will work with partner organisations to develop and identify the need, capacity, potential self-sufficiency and environmental impact of any proposed new services.
- We can provide advice and assistance regarding the legal aspects of establishing a new community transport scheme.
- We can signpost partners to existing community transport schemes which may be able to extend their services and/or provide other forms of support to meet newly identified needs.
- We can provide socio-demographic statistics and information about Community Transport models to community groups, Town or Parish Councils and the like wishing to explore the provision of Community Transport locally.

***Priority: Assist with funding of new and existing services***

- We can help our partners identify external sources of funding and endorse bids partner organisations wish to make for external funding. It is recognised that there is potentially a broad range of funding sources, from resources made available by developers as part of the planning agreement for a new housing development to commercial sponsorship and grants from other public sector bodies. All such funding streams have supported community transport schemes in the district at one time or another.
- We understand that an element of subsidy is likely to be essential, both at the start-up stage and on an ongoing basis. Our aim is to provide financial support to assist schemes to develop as viable a business model as possible to ensure the

longevity of the scheme. To this end, within the overall budget available, we will aim to provide funding of up to a maximum of 50% of start-up and initial running costs. We will then work with the provider to reduce the reliance of East Herts Council funding over time with a view to moving each service towards a greater level of self-sufficiency.

**Priority: *Promote the importance of Community Transport***

- We recognise the value of Community Transport to the delivery of other local strategies and plans across the district, for example, those relating to tackling air pollution and promoting health lifestyles.
- We will work with partners to publicise and raise awareness of Community Transport.

The action plan for 2018 to 2021 is given in the table below.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Successful Outcome</b>
Annually review East Herts Council's financial contribution to each Community Transport Scheme	End of each financial period 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020/21	East Herts Council's contributions assist the scheme to maximise self-sufficiency over time, thus enabling the council's financial support to be reduced and recycled into new schemes
Review the number of users of each scheme in order to ascertain whether each scheme is covering the most utilised or requested route	Numbers should be reviewed on at least a six-monthly basis, with the council and provider reviewing the figures and, if necessary, amending the scheme	Number of users is maximised. Reduction in numbers could indicate that the route is no longer required, this could be as a result of a new shopping area being opened for example meaning users no longer have to travel to access services

Community Transport Conference	Bi-annually through the Strategy period	Provide assistance and support to stakeholders and partners to create a learning, resource and idea sharing workshop
Research and implement and new routes or schemes identified across East Herts	On-going	Implementation of new routes or Community Transport schemes identified as required to provide community users to services in East Herts

The Community Transport Strategy will be overseen and monitored by Community Wellbeing & Partnerships Team within East Herts Council's Housing and Health service. The Strategy will be reviewed on a regular basis as part of East Herts Council's commitment to sustainable Community Transport.