

Bustler

Annual Review

2023-24



**Excellence in
Community
Transport**

**Established
1991**



An electric bus for you when you want it!

Bustler is working in partnership with Surrey County Council to deliver an accessible, 'on-demand bus service' within Surrey.



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Welcome from our Chair and Chief Executive



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheila".

Sheila Rapley
Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G Padfield-W".

Guy Padfield-Wilkins
Chief Executive

This report covers one of the most challenging periods for older people, children, parents and carers, and those living with reduced mobility in the UK.

Sharp increases in the cost of living, hard on the heels of the Covid-19 pandemic, drove many more families into further difficulty. Bustler was on the front line dealing with the fallout, supporting children and young people to get to school, including those with SEND, older people to get to hospital/doctor appointments and to go shopping, and to enable social inclusion for everyone.

All this was happening as Woking Borough Council, one of our major sponsors, issued a Section 114 Notice under the Local Government Act 1988 in response to the unprecedented financial challenges faced by the Council.

Over the last year, we committed our funds to three priorities:

- a) boosting our frontline services;
- b) making sure our systems are fit for the future;
- and
- c) investing in our colleagues.

In this report, we describe how we delivered on these commitments.

Boosting our frontline services

This year, we were proud to support 4,026 dial-a-ride members, who made a total of 20,402 transport bookings. Popular destinations included hospitals, GP practices, shopping, centres for the community, and days out. An increase of 208 members and 864 journeys over the previous year. The introduction of additional vehicles, including fully electric, enabled us to continue to increase availability while transporting passengers further distances, such as Ashford Hospital.

We made our vehicles available for community use, providing minibuses with and without drivers. We completed 504 journeys and transported an estimated 2,730 passengers.

Our Woking Centre for the Community Service to the Vyne, Brockhill, and St Mary centres completed a total of 7,094 passenger journeys, further building on the bounce back following the pandemic.

The introduction of the Surrey Connect On Demand Bus Service has proven to be very popular. The new on-demand, shared bus service has helped people travel around Surrey and access key hubs. Rather than being restricted by traditional bus timetables, our accessible electric buses have been available for everyone to travel when needed.

Making sure our systems are fit for the future

At the same time, we were boosting our frontline services, and we made significant progress in updating our core systems. Not only will this serve to increase our time and energy to devote to additional community transport services, but by improving the quality and visibility of our vehicle data, we will go further and faster in delivering excellence across Surrey.

It is not only in the way we deliver support that we are changing. We are steadily improving how we raise funds through donations/legacies and diversifying our services. This diversification includes offering new training courses to other not-for-profit organisations, including MiDAS (Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme), EV (Electric Vehicle) Driver Training, garage maintenance services, and other grant and donation opportunities.

We are also focused on inspiring others (organisations and people) to join the Bustler community through job fairs/information days, demonstrating the impact and influence we can achieve with our supporters.

Investing in our colleagues

We are especially conscious of the need to support our hard-working colleagues in the context of cost-of-living increases. That's why we decided,

partway through the year, to make a one-off payment in addition to the annual salary award.

Meanwhile, we have been working towards a new approach to pay, reward, and recognition that will allow us to continue recruiting and retaining a talented, values-driven workforce.

Following difficult and prudent decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic, we entered 2023-24 in a solid financial position. We continue investing in new vehicles, improving our systems, and supporting our colleagues. However, the removal of all funding by Woking Borough Council will have a devastating impact on the services we can offer and on many of the passengers we transport who are living with reduced mobility and facing the cost-of-living crisis.

Going forward, we are united in our steadfast commitment to delivering high-quality, inclusive community transport services for all.

Finally, we would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to our colleagues, including volunteers, for their hard work and dedication, to our Board of Directors, who generously donate their time and wisdom, and to our supporters, partners, and donors such as the Woking Lions Club, without whom we could not continue with our vital work of providing accessible transport services across Woking and Surrey.

Strategic Report

Impact Report:

How we made a difference in 2023-2024

'Road to Zero'

The continual introduction of fully electric vehicles into our vehicle fleet is starting to have a noticeable positive effect. Not only are the vehicles quieter, cleaner and more comfortable for our customers, but they are also helping to reduce our emissions. For 2023/2024, emissions were estimated to be reduced by 140,401.92kg. The electric vehicles are also reducing our monthly maintenance and fuel costs, providing additional funds to invest in services such as dial-a-ride.

At the end of the financial year, we were operating 18 fully electric vehicles, which is fast approaching 50% of the fleet. The electric fleet is not just confined to minibuses; we have also invested in an electric support/maintenance vehicle for use by our mechanics.

We are using electric vehicles across a myriad of services, including dial-a-ride, hospital hub transport, home-to-school, adult social centres and the Connect service.



Surrey Connect (DDRT)

The introduction of the on-demand Connect service has helped fill the gap created by a reduction in traditional timetabled bus services within rural areas. The digital demand response transport has provided a service when needed, transporting people from surrounding villages to town centres, transport hubs (rail and bus), and leisure facilities, to name but a few. We have provided a service that has been bookable by telephone or via an app and that utilises 100% electric vehicles.

Passengers were able to make bookings up to seven days in advance or on the day of travel (subject to availability, with only a 30-minute notice

period required. The shared 'hop on, hop off' service has proven very popular between Woodstreet Village and the Friary Centre in Guildford, completing more journeys than any other like-for-like service in Surrey.

Dial-a-Ride

We experienced an increase of 15.03% in dial-a-ride bookings and an 11.14% increase in Woking Community Centre Transport last year; the increases reflect the continual bounce back following the pandemic.

The Woking dial-a-ride service has enabled users to get to hospital/doctor appointments, visit friends and family, do weekly shopping, and provide a means for social inclusion. The service has been a lifeline for many of our users, who, without the service, would probably be housebound. Dial-a-ride has become far more than a transport service; it provides a caring, supportive, and inclusive safe service for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Many of our members tell us their day only begins when the Bustler service arrives! The service is critical to the well-being of many vulnerable older people within Woking. However, these services will be dramatically reduced next year due to the 100% removal of funding by Woking Borough Council, which will mean reduced services and increased costs for all users.

Hospital Hub Transport

We have provided transport services to the Bedser Hub at Woking Community Hospital since 2015 for people registered with a Woking GP, and from 2018 to the Ashford Hub and Walton Hospital (The Thames Medical Hub) for people registered with a Walton or Weybridge GP.

The Hubs offer proactive and reactive care for older people with frailty and multiple long-term conditions who are registered with a Woking, Walton or Weybridge GP. An integrated team of health, mental health and social care staff provides this essential service. It is an innovative, multi-disciplinary model that has received local and national praise for its benefits for patients and the local health system overall.

Without the Bustler Hub transport service, many patients would have found it difficult or impossible to get to their appointments. Our dedicated call operators have developed an excellent rapport with Hub staff and customers alike. Each patient received a friendly call from our operator's the day before their appointment to remind them of the time/date of pick up. Throughout the last year we have operated a minimum of four vehicles a day from 08:15 to 16:30 Monday to Friday.



RHS Wisley Gardens - Daily shuttle bus from Woking

To enable more people to experience the serenity and beauty of RHS Wisley Gardens, we continued throughout 2023/2024 to provide our shuttle bus service from Woking train station to RHS Wisley. The service takes as little as 20 minutes, for only £2 each way.

The fully accessible bus transported parents with children, pushchairs, and wheelchair passengers, completing up to eight return journeys seven days a week.

Those using the service included, Woking residents and people travelling by train to Woking in order to link up with the Bustler bus.

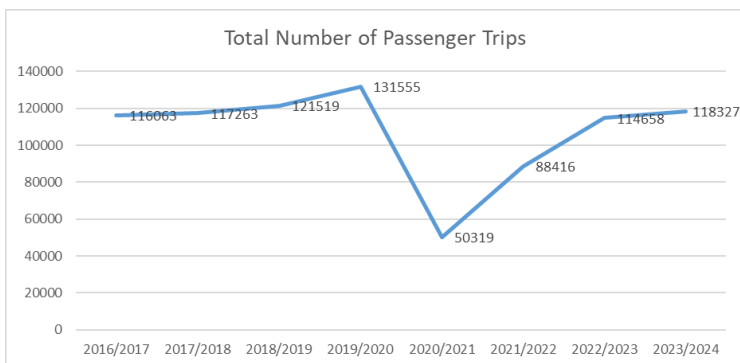


Home to School transport

Over the last year, we expanded our home-to-school transport, providing a secure, safe and reliable service for children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). All our vehicles are now fitted with telematics, which monitors driving styles CCTV (video and audio) and incorporates AI technology to help improve driving standards.

We have worked with the following schools over the last year:

Pond Meadow, St Dominics, Walton Leigh, Freemantles, Park School, Esher CofE, Send CofE, Treloars School and College, Alton College, St Lawrence Primary, Eastwick, and the Howard of Effingham.



Financial review

Woking Community Transport

A full audit report is available upon request.

Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31st March 2024

	2023		2024	
	£	£	£	£
Turnover	2,392,101		2,422,661	
Cost of sales	<u>(1,725,093)</u>		<u>(1,745,768)</u>	
Gross surplus		667,008		676,893
Administrative expenses	(519,789)		(629,466)	
Other operating income	<u>49,415</u>		<u>54,361</u>	
Operating surplus		196,634		101,788
Interest receivable and similar income	17,105		23,001	
Amounts written off investments	<u>(63,550)</u>		<u>9,841</u>	
Surplus before taxation		150,189		134,630
Tax on surplus	-	-	-	-
Surplus for the financial year		150,189		134,630

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The planned ending of all grant funding from Woking Borough Council (WBC) placed great uncertainty on the future of the dial-a-ride and Woking centres for the community services. The current services are not viable without local authority support, and therefore Bustler will only be able to provide a reduced service (within the boundaries of the borough) from the 1st April 2024.

Although the level of grant from WBC had reduced over the years, it was critical to the operation and expansion of the dial-a-ride service.

Extending the service to include the acute hospitals of Ashford, St Peters and The Royal Surrey was only possible due to grant support from Woking BC and Surrey County Council.

In addition to the loss of grant funding both our garage and office premises are leased through WBC, and are under threat due to the unprecedented situation WBC finds itself in. Our garage performs a vital role in keeping our vehicles on the road by carrying out preventative work whilst also ensuring the vehicles are safe to carry passengers. It is imperative that we retain garage services, therefore, we will seek to relocate our garage services and secure a long-term lease. Although we have leave to remain in our current

office accommodation, there is no long-term security, and we can be given notice at any time.

Plans for the future

We will continue to try to expand the services we offer to Surrey County Council and the NHS. These services will include additional digital demand responsive transport (DDRT), extra home-to-school transport and non-emergency patient transport. We will expand our driver training offerings and aim to deliver more MiDAS (minibus driver awareness scheme) and EV (electric vehicle) courses to local authorities, schools and other not-for-profit organisations.

We will move our garage and develop it to ensure it is fit for purpose for many years to come. In tandem with this, we will ensure that we have the electric vehicle charging infrastructure in place to accommodate our ever-growing electric vehicle fleet.

We will continue to invest in our workforce, providing training and development opportunities and recruiting new staff to fulfil our expansion ambitions.

Lastly, as a leading community transport provider, we will continue to strive to raise the bar across all our services, becoming a benchmark for others to follow.

	31/03/23	31/03/24
	£	£
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets	634,985	635,656
Investments	971,760	923,526
	<u>1,606,745</u>	<u>1,559,182</u>
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	331,813	422,869
Cash at bank and in hand	277,753	297,628
	<u>609,566</u>	<u>720,497</u>
CREDITORS		
Amounts falling due within one year	<u>(216,377)</u>	<u>(221,021)</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS	393,189	499,476
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	<u>1,999,934</u>	<u>2,058,658</u>
Amounts falling due after more than one year	<u>(494,453)</u>	<u>(418,547)</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>1,505,481</u>	<u>1,640,111</u>
CAPITAL & RESERVES		
Called up share capital	150	150
Other reserves	25,083	25,083
Income & expenditure account	1,480,248	1,614,878
TOTAL CAPITAL & RESERVES	<u>1,505,481</u>	<u>1,640,111</u>

The financial statements were approved on behalf of the Board of Directors on 4th September 2024 by:
A Sales – Director G Padfield-Wilkins – Director



Extract of Auditors Comments

In accordance with our normal practice we are writing to draw your attention to various matters which arose during the course of our audit of the society's accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024.

We have two comments to make concerning the qualitative aspects of the society's accounting practices and financial reporting.

We did not encounter any significant difficulties during the audit and there are no significant findings from the audit to draw to your attention.

A draft of our proposed letter of representation has been provided. The letter is routine.

A schedule has been provided of all the unadjusted misstatements determined during the course of our audit, except for those considered to be clearly trivial.

As you are aware from our letter of engagement, our audit procedures were directed towards testing the accounting systems in operation upon which we have based our assessment of the accounts. There were no material items to report in an appendix, minor items have been reported to management and directors during the audit process.

We do not propose any modifications to our audit opinion and hence will be issuing a clean audit report.

We would like to take this opportunity of expressing our thanks to your team for their assistance during the course of our audit.

WCT is a registered society (no. 27313R) under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, and as such, is a not-for-profit organisation run for the benefit of the community.

Registered Number

27313R

Structure, Governance and management

Mrs Sheila Rapley	Chairman
Mrs Anne Ansell	Vice Chairman
Mrs Sheila Rapley	Secretary
Mr Andrew Sales	Director of Finance
Mr Guy Padfield-Wilkins	Managing Director
Mrs Carol Magras	Director for the Community
Mr Stephen Barklem	Director

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