



West Oxfordshire Community Transport (WOCT) started operating in Witney in 2017.

It now operates seven routes- four in Witney (213,214,215,216), two in Carterton (345,355) and one (210) linking the Wychwoods to Witney town centre.

The Carterton services operate 3 days a week, the 210 and Witney Town services 6 days a week.

The 216, which was introduced this year, links the town centre with Lidl and Sainsbury`s 2 days a week.

All the services are operated by minibuses.

Minibuses are cheaper to operate than the traditional larger buses and are able to penetrate housing estates more easily.

Finance

All these services are unlikely to ever be profitable- i.e. supported entirely by income from fares; they rely primarily on a mixture of fares, grants and donations.

In the first 9 months of this financial year (ending Feb 28) WOCT`s grants from parish and town councils are: £16,800 from Witney, £11,250 from Carterton, £4,200 from the Wychwoods.

In 2020/21 there was a substantial surplus due the payments we received via the government to keep us going during COVID. The years following the surpluses were modest at 6.4 and 5.4 percentage of turnover which is not high by business standards.

Before 20/21 WOCT`s reserves, which are required for emergencies but primarily for asset depreciation and the purchase of new buses, were far too low- indeed to the extent the then chair lent money to WOCT for cash flow purposes.

At the end of the first nine months of this financial year WOCT has a deficit of £6990.

Passengers

Currently across WOCT we are exceeding regularly 1000 passenger journeys a week. Around 70% of these use the Witney Town service.

90% of those using the Witney Town services are of pensionable age.

80% make return trips; some 70% use the service two or more times a week.

This means on a typical week on the Witney Town services we estimate some 470 individual residents of Witney travel with WOCT on their Witney Town services

Virtually all of these individuals do not own a car, most of these people, not surprisingly, are on low incomes and are dependant on our services.

Many are elderly and are unable to walk half a mile to a bus stop.

The most common quote from passengers is that the WOCT service they use is a “lifeline”

Plea

WOCT relies on annual contributions from local authorities-town and parish councils particularly. Most of our minibuses-all converted vans- are at the end of their lives. We need funds not just for the day to day operation but for new buses – the cheapest being £50k (if wheelchair accessible over £120k!)

We hope the Witney Town Council continues to support WOCT and the many Witney residents who use their services.

Mike Parker
Chair