

Chair Report April 1st 2023 – March 30th 2024

It is my pleasure and privilege to report on the activities of Shopmobility Enniskillen in the past year.

The focus for the year has been on the Department for Infrastructure's Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). Staff and members of Shopmobility Enniskillen, along with other associated charities, were advised to provide evidence to the EQIA in order to ensure that the Department for Infrastructure is left in no doubt about the value of and need for Shopmobility services.

It will come as no surprise to anyone that financial difficulties were front and centre in all our discussions last year. Initially, SME was only guaranteed funding to the end of June, but fortunately, the DFI eventually released funding for the whole year. While we do understand the pressures on public finances, it is frankly unacceptable that the annual grant remains virtually the same in cash terms year on year, with no account taken of the inflationary pressures on spending. The amount allocated to Shopmobility services represents a minute percentage of the overall transport budget, yet we could do so much more to improve the lives of our clients with a relatively modest increase in funding.

Claire, the SME co-ordinator was successful in acquiring funding from a variety of sources. New wheelchairs were purchased with a grant from Awards for All. The office computers were upgraded thanks to the Black Santa Appeal. The Halifax Foundation and the Leathersellers Foundation contributed to revenue costs, and we also received support from Enniskillen Community Market. Claire's expertise in fundraising is of crucial importance in ensuring the continuation of Shopmobility services to the community.

The coordinator took part in the Go Succeed Programme, a new source of expert business advice led by Northern Ireland's eleven local councils. The coordinator attended a number of webinars during the programme, including a very useful beginner's guide to innovation and marketing via email. A Go Succeed mentor was assigned and the coordinator had 6 weekly mentoring sessions to develop a Financing the Future Business Plan. This working document will assist in the development of a structured plan to highlight Shopmobility Enniskillen's pathway towards sustainability and growth over the next five years.

Usage statistics from April 2023 to March 2024 included total usage of 521, with 40 new members for the year. A further data cleanse of membership was completed in December.

In delivering an annual report, it is hard to resist the temptation to look ahead and report on more recent events. For example, the Co-ordinator's involvement in the Go Succeed Programme led to the employment of an intern who carried out some research projects over the summer months. Another item of breaking news is that Laverne has decided to retire and we are currently engaged in seeking a replacement for her. Laverne is modest about her contribution to SME, but she has provided steady, caring and selfless support to clients, staff and committee members alike. She

will be greatly missed. On behalf of all of us, I thank her for her dedicated service and wish her well in her second retirement.

On behalf of the SME committee, I also acknowledge Claire and Stefan for their hard work. Both have accumulated considerable expertise in the community service and disability sectors and can be relied upon to give considered responses to any strategic challenge. Stefan is also to be acknowledged for his excellent financial management.

As Chair, I also express my appreciation of the Committee members who so generously give of their time to support the work of SME.

Marion McLaughlin, Chair Shopmobility Enniskillen 11 September 2024