

**8 February 2018****Agenda Item: 4****REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLACE & COMMUNITIES****NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL SCHEME 2018 / 2019****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for the Nottinghamshire Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2018 / 2019, publication of the final statutory scheme notice on 3 March 2018 and the proposed funding (subject to Full Council budget approval in February 2018).
2. To seek approval to continue with the County Council's additional discretionary elements of the scheme which are estimated to cost £1.125m in 2018 / 2019.
3. To seek Committee approval to grant delegated power for the Service Director for Place & Communities to agree the final reimbursement arrangements and associated financial commitments from 1 April 2018 in conjunction with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Communities & Place Committee and the Group Manager for Highways & Transport.
4. To seek approval to introduce a hot listing process whereby lost and stolen concessionary travel passes are blocked from use on buses and trams.
5. To seek approval for the modernisation of application processes for disabled applicants to simplify and improve the customer journey whilst ensuring compliance with best practice guidance.

**Information**

6. Within the Council Plan and emerging Place Plan, transport is highlighted as an important part of making "Nottinghamshire a great place to live, work , visit and relax."

To help realise this vision; the County Council's provides Concessionary travel for Nottinghamshire's elderly and disabled residents which enables Nottinghamshire residents to access work ,training , health, shopping and leisure facilities.

7. The County Council has been a Travel Concession Authority (TCA) since April 2011 and has the duty to provide free travel on local bus services for the holder of a valid English National Concessionary Travel Pass (ENCTS). Free travel is available between 0930 and 2300 weekdays and all day at weekends and on bank holidays anywhere in England.

8. Concessionary travel passes are available to those who qualify on the grounds of age or disability. The age of entitlement is gradually being increased, for both men and women, in line with the rise in state pension age for women and is currently 64 years of age rising to 66 by 2020. At present there are approximately 155,500 Nottinghamshire pass holders.
9. The eligibility criteria for a concessionary travel pass on grounds of disability are defined in legislation and summarised below as a person who:-
  - Is blind or partially sighted
  - Is profoundly or severely deaf
  - Is without speech
  - Has a disability, or suffered an injury, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to walk
  - Does not have the use of both arms whether by the loss of limbs or otherwise.
  - Has a learning disability
  - Would have an application to drive a motor vehicle refused due to a disability
10. TCA's are allowed to offer, and fund, additional travel entitlements using discretionary powers from Section 93 of the Transport Act 1985. The County Council currently offers two additional travel entitlements for Nottinghamshire residents which are discounted travel on the tram and a companion's travel facility attached to passes issued for certain severe disabilities. On 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017 the Transport & Highways Committee approved an additional discretionary travel entitlement for holders of Nottinghamshire disabled persons ENCTS passes. This entitlement is for discounted travel on Section 19 minibus services in the county. It is anticipated that these discretionary elements will cost approximately £1.125m during the 2018/19 financial year.
11. Holders of Nottinghamshire concessionary travel passes are entitled to free travel on the tram at the same times as on local bus services detailed in paragraph 4. Unlike the statutory bus concession, detailed in paragraph 6, the County Council is responsible for reimbursing the tram operator for travel by Nottinghamshire pass holders only. This requirement covers the entire Nottingham tram network.
12. Passes with the additional companions' entitlement are issued to people who are blind, have a severe walking disability or a severe learning disability and would have difficulty travelling alone. The pass allows one additional person to travel with the pass holder at the same discounted rate for all journeys commencing in Nottinghamshire.

## **Reimbursement**

13. The County Council is responsible for reimbursing transport operators for all statutory free concessionary travel whereby the holder of a valid ENCTS pass boarded a bus within the administrative boundary of Nottinghamshire irrespective of which English TCA issued the pass. The Council has met its duty to issue a draft notice of the proposed scheme by 1 December 2017 and must issue a final scheme notice by 3 March 2018 to enable the scheme to commence on 1 April 2018. The final notice must detail scheme entitlements and reimbursement arrangements.
14. The transport operators have a duty to accept travel passes on the local bus services they operate. Travel is permitted under the terms of carriage of each operator.

15. Reimbursement is calculated to ensure that the transport operator is “no better or no worse off” as a result of carrying the concessionary passengers. The Department for Transport (DfT) has issued guidance to assist with these calculations. Although it is not mandatory to use this guidance it has been used as the basis of negotiations with transport operators to minimise the risk of any appeals against the level of reimbursement. A small number of services, mainly rural shopper, market day or infrequent services, do not fall within the scope of the guidance and a local methodology will be used to calculate reimbursement for these services.
16. In recent years the County Council has negotiated fixed reimbursement arrangements with most operators which have helped to maintain network stability and service provision, whilst giving financial security to all parties, during the current challenging economic climate. The current two year arrangements are due to end in March 2018. There are 23 transport operators currently participating in the Nottinghamshire scheme of which 18 are bus operators, 1 tram operator and 4 community transport schemes.
17. Negotiations with the transport operators are underway with a view to agreeing a mixture of fixed and variable reimbursement arrangements as in previous years. Several factors impact on the type of arrangement applicable for each operator including network stability and competition.
18. The actual costs of the scheme will be determined through historic passenger data, the final reimbursement agreements with the operators and the subsequent demand for travel. The County Council makes total reimbursement of approximately £10.6m (2017 / 2018 figures) to transport operators for approximately 11 million journeys per annum.

### **Hot Listing**

19. About 3500 to 4000 passes held by Nottinghamshire residents are lost or stolen each year. To ensure that these passes cannot be used in a fraudulent manner they are cancelled within the card management system at the point of a replacement being ordered. The next stage to block use of these passes is to introduce a process called hot-listing. This means that electronic messages are sent using secure nationally defined systems, to the transport operators to be loaded on to the bus or tram ticket machines.
20. Hot-listing has been successfully introduced in many areas of England and it is intended to model the Nottinghamshire delivery on the best practice elements from these models and live systems. A series of safety features have been included in the delivery plan to both assist the drivers and to ensure that a vulnerable pass holder is not left stranded. These include the ability for a driver to issue a two trip ticket to a pass holder whose pass has been hot-listed therefore enabling them to travel home safely having been given the information required to obtain a new / valid pass. Introduction of hot listing in other regions has highlighted this requirement as pass holders often find a pass that they have previously reported lost, therefore hot listed, and use that instead of the new one provided. A series of leaflets will be introduced to assist pass holders and drivers with the introduction and associated grace period for this process. Appendix A details the phased approach planned for the Nottinghamshire transport operators.

### **Application Process**

21. The current application / assessment process for residents with disabilities can be cumbersome and frustrating for the applicant. National best practice guidance requires a TCA to avoid asking a resident to get their GP to verify an application. In

Nottinghamshire we currently state “medical professional” on our application forms but invariably we seek further information which leads to the applicant burdening their GP. It is therefore proposed that a desk top based assessment tool is developed in conjunction with the customer services centre and occupational health officers. Many applications will then be processed through this assessment tool. The customer services centre also have access to information from the Department of Work and Pensions to clarify whether the applicant does actually receive the appropriate benefits to automatically qualify for a pass.

22. Should further information be required an appointment for an independent medical assessment will be made. This process has been introduced successfully in the Nottingham City Council area.
23. It is proposed that this new assessment process is developed in conjunction with a full refresh of the application forms and information leaflets. This should speed up the assessment for the applicant whilst ensuring that only those entitled are awarded a travel pass.

### **Other Options Considered**

24. No other options are available for the national scheme as the provision of concessionary travel for elderly and disabled people is a statutory duty.
25. The County Council funds additional discretionary elements for Nottinghamshire pass holders as described in paragraphs 9, 10 & 11 above. The County Council considers that these additional elements are of significant value to the users therefore has ruled out, at a very early stage in the process, the removal of this support.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

26. The recommendations ensure that the County Council meets its statutory duty whilst continuing to provide a wide range of travel opportunities and choices for the residents of Nottinghamshire. The need for the delegated authority in recommendation 3 ensures that the County Council can issue the statutory notice for the scheme and agree reimbursement levels by the 3 March 2018.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

27. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Equal opportunities Implications**

28. The provision of the concessionary travel scheme and the additional discretionary elements ensures that elderly and disabled can access key services thus improving their quality of life and enhancing social inclusion. The proposed changes to assessment processes should speed up the application process for applicants.

## **Financial Implications**

29. The cost of reimbursement to transport operators (for statutory and discretionary entitlements) and scheme management is budgeted to be £11,137,000 in 2018 / 2019. As detailed in paragraph 17 the final costs will be subject to agreements with transport operators and the subsequent demand for travel during 2018/19. Detailed monitoring of the patronage data will be undertaken on a regular basis and any variation to predicted costs will be reported.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) Committee approves the Nottinghamshire Concessionary Travel Scheme and proposed funding for 2018 / 2019 and publication of the final scheme notice on 3 March 2018, subject to recommendation 3 and Full Council budget approval.
- 2) Committee approves to continue with the County Council's additional discretionary elements of the scheme which are estimated to cost £1.125m in 2018 / 2019.
- 3) Committee grants delegated power for the Service Director for Place & Communities to agree the final reimbursement arrangements and associated financial commitments from 1 April 2018 in conjunction with the Group Manager for Highways & Transport.
- 4) Committee approves the introduction of hot listing of ENCTS passes in Nottinghamshire.
- 5) Committee approves the modernisation of the application assessment processes for applications on disability criteria.

**Derek Higton**  
**Service Director**  
**Place & Communities**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

**Gary Wood, Group Manager, Highways & Transport or Pete Mathieson, Manager, Development & Partnerships.**

## **Constitutional Comments (SLB 10/01/18)**

29. Communities and Place Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

## **Financial Comments (SES 12/01/18)**

30. The financial implications are set out in the report.

## **Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Draft Nottinghamshire Concessionary Travel Scheme – December 2017

Department for Transport Reimbursement Guidance September 2017

Report to Transport & Highways Committee 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017 – (Concessionary Fares Scheme Extension to include Section 19 Minibus Schemes).

## **Electoral Divisions and Members Affected**

All

## **APPENDIX A – Hot Listing Introduction**

### **Delivery Plan**

To ensure a smooth delivery it is planned to follow the phased approach detailed below.

- Initial introduction on one route operated by Transport & Travel Group's own fleet
- Review and fine tune then roll-out to entire Transport & Travel fleet operation
- Roll-out in Newark area on local operators (Travel Wrights, Marshalls and Stagecoach)
- Expand Stagecoach roll-out to all other areas of Nottinghamshire (particularly Bassetlaw, Mansfield and Ashfield).
- Services in Greater Nottingham area (trentbarton, Nottingham City Transport and Tramlink).

The delivery has been phased in this way to take into account the interactions between various IT systems and any development time required by the transport operators.

Other operators not mentioned above will be included in the appropriate phase of introduction.

### **Communication Plan**

**The plan includes the following:-**

- Driver briefing prior to each phase
- Leaflets / posters available one month prior to introduction advising of the process should the pass holder have a damaged or inoperative pass.
- Leaflets / posters available at point of introduction advising of the process should the pass holder have a damaged or inoperative pass. This will coincide with a grace period.
- Leaflets / posters available after the grace period advising of the process should the pass be removed by the driver. This will coincide with the introduction of a complimentary ticket in cases where the entitled pass holder happens to be using the incorrect pass (for example when they have previously reported it lost and subsequently found it).
- Possible social media campaign.
- Detailed briefing of customer service centre staff of all phases of the processes and associated actions.

It is anticipated that the programme will commence in April 2018 and be completed by late Autumn 2018.