

6 June 2019

Agenda Item: 17

DISCRETIONARY SCHOLARS PASS SCHEMES PRICE REVISION

Purpose of the Report

1. To approve the revised rates for the County Council's discretionary pass schemes for Under-16 Home to School and Post-16 Transport travel from 2019/2020 and 2020/21 academic years.
2. To recommend that inflation increases are applied annually after 2020/21

Information

3. NCC currently provides an integrated home to school transport solution. It ensures that pupils and students can access their nearest or catchment school as well as many opportunities to attend a preferred school (including faith schools) or college. Services may currently carry pupils with a statutory entitlement for free home to school travel, those attending their nearest/catchment school who live below the statutory walking distance, those attending the school through parental choice and Post 16 students. To support this there are a number of discretionary pass schemes aimed at helping families and reducing costs.
4. The current pass schemes are:
 - a) A season pass for pupils living within the catchment or attending their nearest school but who do not meet the eligibility criteria for free travel. This pass currently costs £86 per term or £220 per year, a discounted rate set by Committee a number of years ago. The pass is available on both NCC supported and commercially provided services.
 - b) Faith Travel Scheme, this caps the pass rate at £100 per term or £300 per year for pupils attending their nearest or catchment faith school with eligibility on faith grounds confirmed by the Head Teacher. The pass is currently only available on NCC supported services.
 - c) The Post 16 Scheme. This allows travel at half adult fare, either by purchasing a half fare pass and paying daily on the vehicle or by calculating an annual cost for the pass. Both versions have an initial cost to the student of £120 to join the scheme.
5. Commercial bus prices are currently an average of between £2.40 - £3.00 per day or an annual pass price of between £456 - £570.

6. The current discretionary charges have remained at the Committee agreed levels for a number of years and are approximately 30% behind current costs and equivalent fares. The Faith Travel Scheme was introduced in 2007 and charges have not been reviewed since then. The Catchment School Discretionary pass price was last adjusted in 2009 and the Post 16 pass charges were last reviewed and increased in 2014.
7. The proposed increases shown in the table below reflect a significant step towards addressing this whilst maintaining affordable and practical help to parents both in terms of subsidy and convenience. The proposal is to make the changes over two years so that it is easier to accommodate for parents and provides a good level of notice of the changes. The choice of whether to use the service remains the same. It is also proposed that an annual R.P.I increase is applied each new academic year from 2021/22 academic year.

Proposals: 2019/20 Academic Year

	Current	Cost per day	% Increase	New Cost	Cost per day
Faith Pass Scheme	£300 p.a	£1.58	17%	£350	£1.85
Catchment Scheme	£220 p.a	£1.16	17%	£257	£1.35
Post 16 Scheme	£120 p.a	£0.63**	17%	£140	£0.74**

- ** Pass price does not include the daily half adult fare cost

Proposals: 2020/21 Academic Year

	Current	Cost per day	% Increase	New Cost	Cost per day
Faith Pass Scheme	£350 p.a	£1.85	17%	£410	£2.00
Catchment Scheme	£257 p.a	£1.35	17%	£300	£1.58
Post 16 Scheme	£140 p.a	£0.74**	17%	£165	£0.86**

- ** Pass price does not include the daily half adult fare cost

Other Options Considered

8. Alternative options to make no change or to apply an R.P.I increase only were considered but additional revenue generated would not move the schemes towards a more sustainable cost recovery.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

9. It is recommended that the changes proposed above are approved to help sustain the integrated transport network of school and college services whilst still continuing to offer a level of support and assistance to families.

Statutory and Policy Implications

10. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

11. The current charges for discretionary scholars passes have been held for several years, the proposed increases will address this in the 2019/20 and 20/21 academic years and then be maintained with an annual price increase.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

12. As there are no changes being proposed to the policies for the 2019/20 academic year, an Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken

Implications for Service Users

13. Pupils and students will have increased transport costs, but these are still below the level of commercial alternatives and the County Council will continue to coordinate the scheme with bus operators to provide discounted travel passes.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That Committee approves the proposed increase in discretionary pass prices for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years
- 2) An R.P.I increase is applied to all discretionary pass schemes annually from the 2021/22 academic year.

Councillor John Cottee
Chairman of the Communities and Place Committee

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Chris Ward, Manager, Transport & Travel Services, Tel: 0115 977 3520

Constitutional Comments (EP 29/04/19)

14. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Communities and Place Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (RWK 20/05/2019)

15. It is estimated that the proposed increases in prices set out in the report will result in an additional income of £50,000 per annum in each of the next 2 years, a total additional income of £100,000. The proposal to increase prices in future years by RPI will produce an estimated additional income of £10,000 per annum.

Background Papers and Published Documents

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.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All