

13 February 2014

Agenda Item:4

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR TRANSPORT, PROPERTY AND
ENVIRONMENT**

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL SCHEME 2014 / 2015

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Committee approval of the arrangements for the 2014 / 2015 Nottinghamshire Concessionary Travel Scheme including the additional discretionary entitlements.
2. To seek approval to publish the final scheme notice on 3 March 2014.

Information and Advice

3. Concessionary travel is highly valued and provides a wide range of travel opportunity, choice and access to key services for elderly and disabled residents of Nottinghamshire. The County Council delivers the countywide concessionary travel scheme, which is budgeted to cost £10.8m a year, benefits 177,000 residents undertaking nearly 11 million passenger journeys per year. The County Council also supports discretionary travel for concessionary pass holders residing in Nottinghamshire. This allows concessionary travel on the tram network and provides a companion's facility for people with disabilities who are unable to travel alone. These discretionary elements cost £670k per annum.
4. Passes with the additional companion's 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 another person to travel with the pass holder at the same discounted rate for all journeys commencing in Nottinghamshire within the agreed scheme times.
5. Free travel on the tram is currently available at the same times as on local buses i.e. 0930 to 2300 weekdays and all day at weekends and on bank holidays with the exception of a reduction to half fare travel between 1600 and 1800 weekdays. However, negotiations with Tramlink, who operate the tram, have resulted in the removal of this half fare restriction with effect from 1 April 2014. It is possible that this change may be introduced before April to coincide with the introduction of on-street ticketing for the tram system. If this ticketing system is introduced before April, Tramlink will waive their right to claim half fare during the evening peak period without reimbursement from the County Council.

6. This change in arrangements will provide additional opportunity for pass-holders to travel and shows the County Council's commitment and support for the tram network which
7. many residents enjoy travelling on. This gives improved travel choice and access to key services.
8. Following Committee approval in October the Council fulfilled its duty to issue a notice of the proposed scheme by 1 December 2013. This gave transport operators the opportunity to comment on the scheme proposals. No comments have been received so it is proposed to issue the final scheme notice on 3 March 2014, in accordance with the statutory timescales.

Reimbursement Arrangements

9. Committee was informed at the October 2013 meeting that 23 transport operators were participating in the Nottinghamshire scheme of which 19 were bus operators, 1 tram operator and 3 community transport schemes.
10. Negotiations with operators have been extremely complex because of several significant changes to the Nottinghamshire transport network due to take place during the next year. These include the introduction of on-street ticketing for the tram, increased frequency of trams on the current network, the opening of the new tram lines, the response by bus operators to the new tram lines commencing operation, changes to fares and ticketing and the re-design of the tendered bus network.
11. Each of these factors may have a different degree of impact on each operator. For example the ticketing changes may affect passenger numbers recorded, the increased frequency and new tram lines may cause lower patronage on the bus network.
12. As a result of the above factors each negotiation has taken account of the implications for each operator's network. This has resulted in a range of fixed, partially fixed and fully variable reimbursement arrangements. Using this variety of arrangements ensures that financial risk is minimised for both the Council and the operator and meets the reimbursement guidance requirements set by the DfT.
13. Detailed data monitoring will be undertaken during 2014 / 2015 to ensure that levels of patronage and operated mileage remain within the agreed parameters of each arrangement. Should any new operators start services in Nottinghamshire, an assessment of their patronage and mileage would be undertaken, and the impact on any existing transport operator's network / patronage would be reviewed.
14. The actual final costs of the scheme will be determined through passenger data, the final reimbursement agreements with the operators and the subsequent demand for travel.

Other Options Considered

15. No other options are available for the national scheme as the provision of concessionary travel for elderly and disabled people is a statutory duty.

Reasons for Recommendations

16. The recommendations ensure that the County Council has met its statutory duty whilst continuing to provide a wide range of travel opportunities and choices for the residents of Nottinghamshire.

Statutory and Policy Implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working 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

18. The provision of the concessionary travel scheme and the additional discretionary elements ensures that elderly and disabled people can access key services thus improving their quality of life and enhancing social inclusion.

Financial Implications

19. The cost of reimbursement to transport operators (for statutory and discretionary entitlements) and scheme management is budgeted to be £10.8M in 2014 / 2015. Of this total £10.0M is reimbursement for statutory travel which is provided by central Government through the revenue support grant mechanism. The remaining £0.8M, of which £0.67M is for discretionary travel comprising tram and companions; and £0.13M for scheme management costs, is fully funded by the County Council. As detailed in paragraph 14 the final costs will be subject to agreements with transport operators and the subsequent demand for travel during the 2014 /15 financial year. Detailed monitoring of the patronage data will be undertaken on a regular basis and any variation to predicted costs will be reported.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Committee approves the 2014 / 2015 Nottinghamshire Concessionary Travel Scheme and associated reimbursement arrangements outlined in the report.
- 2) Committee approves publication of the final scheme notice on 3 March 2014.

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Constitutional Comments (SHB 23.01.14)

20. Committee have power to decide the Recommendation

Financial Comments (TR 15.01.2014)

21. The financial implications of the scheme are set out in paragraph 19 of 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.

- Report to the Transport & Highways Committee dated 31 October 2013.
- DfT Guidance – Concessionary Fares Reimbursement October 2013.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All