

21 March 2013

Agenda Item:

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

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL SCHEME 2013 / 2014

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Committee approval of the arrangements for the 2013 / 2014 Nottinghamshire Concessionary Travel Scheme including the additional discretionary entitlements.
2. To update Committee on progress made towards the bulk re-issue of travel passes.

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 provides the countywide concessionary travel scheme which costs £10.3m a year, is of significant benefit to 180,000 residents and results in nearly 12 million passenger journeys per year. The County Council also continues to support discretionary travel entitlements on the tram and a companion's facility for people unable to travel alone at a cost of £500k per annum.
4. These additional entitlements are only available to holders of concessionary travel passes issued to Nottinghamshire residents and for companion's trips which commence within Nottinghamshire. Free travel on the tram is available at the same times as on local buses with the exception of a reduction to half fare travel between 1600 and 1800 weekdays. 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. The Council has a duty to issue a notice of the proposed scheme by 1 December 2012 which gives the transport operators the opportunity to comment on the scheme proposals. No comments were received so the final scheme notice was

issued on 3 March 2013, in accordance with the statutory timescales, to enable the scheme to commence on 1 April.

Reimbursement Arrangements

6. Committee were informed at the November 2012 meeting that there were 21 transport operators participating in the Nottinghamshire scheme of which 16 were bus operators, 1 tram operator and 4 community transport schemes. Of these 21 a total of 18 had signed a two year reimbursement agreement (in March 2011) with the County Council. This agreement includes review clauses should higher or lower than anticipated patronage variations occur or significant network changes are introduced.
7. Since the November Committee a significant change to service provision has occurred with the cessation of trading by Premiere Travel Ltd. Several new operators have commenced operation of routes previously operated by Premiere Travel which has changed the overall number of transport operators who participate in the Nottinghamshire scheme. There are now 23 operators in total of which 19 are bus operators, 1 tram operator and 3 community transport schemes. Of these 23 a total of 15 will enter the second year of the negotiated fixed payment arrangement from 1 April 2013. The eight remaining operators will be reimbursed on an actual usage basis from patronage data supplied.
8. Detailed data monitoring will be undertaken during 2013 / 2014 to ensure that levels of patronage and operated mileage remain within the agreed parameters. Should any further 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 in accordance with the agreed criteria.
9. 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.

Update on the Bulk Re-Issue of Passes

10. Approximately 90% of Nottinghamshire residents who qualify on age currently hold a concessionary travel pass. The scheme is of significant value to the pass holder and contributes to their wellbeing and life choices as well as helping to support the local economy.
11. As reported to Committee on 14 June 2012 a major pass renewal programme has commenced to renew approximately 100,000 passes by 31 March 2013. A renewal of this volume and complexity has generated some customer issues and complaints, such as pass holders on our records who no longer need their pass but for whom we have had no prior notification of a change. A robust communication and publicity strategy has been implemented to ensure that the programme of renewals has been undertaken with minimum inconvenience to the

user with any issues dealt with in an efficient and timely manner. The new passes will have a range of expiry dates so that future replacement programmes can be undertaken on a rolling renewal basis.

12. Approximately 85% of those invited to renew their pass have done so and will receive their new pass during March. Of the outstanding 15% many have moved out of the area or into care and no longer require a pass. For those who apply later an in-house renewal process is available.
13. After this bulk renewal process has been completed an in-house process will renew the 7,000 passes per month which will need replacing.
14. The concessionary travel database has also been utilised to mail out details of bus service changes within the Newark area following TITAN stage 1 and to Mansfield residents giving details of the new bus station and associated arrangements.

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 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

18. 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.

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 2013/2014. Of this total £10.3M is reimbursement for statutory travel of which £9.81M is provided by central Government through the revenue support grant mechanism. The remaining £0.99M, of which £0.49M is for statutory travel and £0.5M for

discretionary travel, is fully funded by the County Council. As detailed in paragraph 9 the final costs will be subject to agreements with transport operators and the subsequent demand for travel during 2013/14. 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 2013 / 2014 Nottinghamshire Concessionary Travel Scheme and associated reimbursement arrangements outlined in the report.
- 2) Committee note the progress made for the bulk re-issue of passes during March 2013.

Mark Hudson
Group Manager, Transport & Travel Services

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Mark Hudson – Group Manager, Transport & Travel Services or Dave Bennett, Commissioning and Concessionary Travel Manager

Constitutional Comments (SHB.20.02.2013)

20. The report is for noting only so no constitutional comment is required.

Financial Comments (DJK 20.02.2013)

21. The contents of this report are duly noted; the financial implications are brought out within the report. The costs of pass re-issue have been funded from reserves.

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 14 June 2012.
- Report to the Transport & Highways Committee dated 22 November 2012.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All