

**17 March 2016**

**Agenda Item: 4**

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

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL SCHEME 2016 / 2017**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To advise Committee of the final reimbursement arrangements for the 2016/17 Nottinghamshire concessionary travel scheme for elderly and disabled persons.
2. To inform Committee of changes to the City Council's Concessionary Travel scheme 2016/17 which will have an impact for Nottinghamshire residents.
3. To update Committee on the progress of on-line applications and associated processes.

**Information and Advice**

4. The Nottinghamshire Travel Scheme has been very successful for many years and the 167,500 pass holders enjoy significant benefits as a result of the scheme giving them the opportunity to live independently and access key services. The cost of the scheme in 2015/16 is £11.182 m. This compares favourably with other similar councils and is a result of close partnership working with the transport operators delivering bus and tram services across the county.
5. At its meeting on 12 November 2015 Committee approved the 2016/17 concessionary travel scheme for elderly and disabled residents and proposed funding for 2016 / 2017 subject to:
  - publication of the scheme notices on 1 December 2015 and 3 March 2016, subject to recommendation three and Full Council budget approval.
  - continuing with the County Council's additional discretionary elements of the scheme which are estimated to cost £1.245m in 2016 / 2017.
  - granting delegated power for the Service Director for Environment, Transport and Property to agree the final reimbursement arrangements and associated financial commitments from 1 April 2016 in conjunction with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee, and Chairman of the Finance and Property Committee and Service Director Finance and Procurement.

6. As in previous years the scheme provides the statutory level of free travel on local buses and additional discretionary entitlements for travel on the Nottingham tram network and for a companion to travel with eligible disabled pass holders.
7. Negotiations with the transport operators are well advanced and have resulted in 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. Agreements continue to take account of the new tram lines and the potential impacts on bus patronage levels these may create. The final scheme notice for the 2016/17 scheme was issued to operators on the 3rd March 2016.
8. As a result of the above factors each review and negotiation has taken account of the implications for each operator's network. Using a mixture of fixed and variable arrangements ensures that financial risk is minimised for both the County Council and the operators whilst still meeting the reimbursement requirements set out in the guidance issued by the Department for Transport.
9. Final agreements with some operators cannot be made until patronage data for February has been analysed and used within the calculations for 2016/17 reimbursement. However, agreement on the process to be used has been reached with all operators subject to fine tuning with this data.
10. As detailed in paragraph 24 of this report the scheme is anticipated to be delivered within the budget levels detailed in November and approved by Full Council in February 2016. This will deliver the £100K budget reductions in the options for change.
11. Ongoing data monitoring will be undertaken throughout 2016/17 year 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, mileage and anticipated reimbursement will be undertaken and the impact on any existing transport operator's network / patronage would be reviewed.
12. As reported previously the County Council is responsible for reimbursing transport operators for all statutory free concessionary travel on eligible local bus services, where the holder of a valid English concessionary travel pass boarded a bus within the administrative boundary of Nottinghamshire, irrespective of which English Travel Concession Authority (TCA) issued the pass. Legislation gives each TCA the option to assess all local bus services within their administrative area and exclude any that they feel are not standard local bus services i.e. they offer some additional 'amenity' element that a normal local bus service does not such as a newspaper, a coffee or a ticket to an event.
13. Using this option, as part of their budget challenge, Nottingham City Council have identified two changes to their concessionary travel offer from 1 April 2016 which will affect the concessionary travel options available for Nottinghamshire residents.
14. Firstly the City Council have categorised the Red Arrow service (operated by trentbarton) as a premium service. This services operates on a limited stop basis between Nottingham and Derby. As the service does not serve any stop within

Nottinghamshire it does not affect the Nottinghamshire scheme. All concessionary travel currently undertaken on this service is reimbursed either by Nottingham City Council (for passes accepted at Nottingham and the QMC) and Derby City Council for passes accepted in Derby.

15. Derby City Council has decided to retain the Red Arrow service as an eligible service for their concessionary fares scheme. This means that from 1<sup>st</sup> April a concessionary pass holder can have free travel from Derby to Nottingham but will have to pay for the Nottingham to Derby journey, if they use the Red Arrow services.
16. Other services are available between Nottingham and Derby for concessionary pass holders to use free of charge. These services take much longer than the Red Arrow as they serve many more stops and communities along the route. The County Council will communicate these changes via the County Council website and Social Media.
17. Secondly, the City Council has deemed the bus based park and ride services as having an amenity fare element because the parking is free. This affects the Queens Drive and the Racecourse services. As a result from 1 April 2016 any concessionary pass holder (other than those who hold a pass issued by Nottingham City Council) will not be able to use their concessionary pass when boarding a bus at the park and ride sites but will need to pay £3.50 cash or £3.15 with a Robin Hood card, per car load. Pass holders can board the services at any other stop along the route as the services are eligible local bus services. Parking at the park and ride site and walking out to the next stop is not permitted by the conditions of use of the sites and will be monitored.

It is also worth noting that this proposal does not affect County Council Concessionary pass holders who use Tram based Park and Ride provision.

18. The ability to process online concessionary pass applications, renewals and replacements has been a long standing requirement for the scheme. As part of the Digital First project, significant progress has been made for these services to be delivered online. Work is at an advanced stage to deliver this functionality through the new County Council website. As part of this process all aspects of the customer journey are being reviewed to ensure a robust and streamlined process can be delivered.
19. As part of this review there is an opportunity to fully review, simplify and clarify qualification criteria and associated evidence provision for all applications including those where a companion's entitlement is requested. It is hoped that the new processes will be faster and will reduce the workload on local GP's.

### **Other Options Considered**

20. No other options were considered for the national scheme as the provision of concessionary travel for elderly and disabled people is a statutory duty. Consideration was given to financially supporting the park and ride and Red Arrow travel facilities but it was felt that suitable alternatives are available and that financial support would not be appropriate in the current economic climate.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

21. The recommendations ensure that the County Council meets its duty to provide the statutory scheme and that Committee is kept fully aware of the scheme costs proposed to move to online applications.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

22. 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**

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

## **Financial Implications**

24. The cost of reimbursement to transport operators (for statutory and discretionary entitlements) and scheme management is budgeted to be £11.329m in 2016 / 2017. The final scheme costs will be subject to agreements with transport operators and the subsequent demand for travel during 2016/17. Detailed monitoring of the patronage data will be undertaken on a regular basis and any variation to predicted costs will be reported to Committee. The projected cost includes the £100K option for change saving for 2016/17.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) Committee notes the final reimbursement arrangements and financial commitments for the 2016/17 concessionary travel scheme.
- 2) Committee notes the changes to the City Council's travel scheme. implications to travel options as a result of Nottingham City Councils budgetary challenges.
- 3) Committee notes the progress towards online applications.

**Mark Hudson**  
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**For any enquiries about this report please contact: Mark Hudson – Group Manager, Transport & Travel Services or Dave Bennett, Concessions and Ticketing Officer.**

**Constitutional Comments (RHC 23/02/2016)**

25. The subject of the report falls within the scope of Transport & Highways Committee and this is the appropriate body to consider the report.

**Financial Comments (SES 23/02/2016)**

26. 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.

Transport and Highways Committee - Nottinghamshire Concessionary Travel Scheme 2016 / 2017 - 12 November 2015

**Electoral Divisions and Members Affected**

All.