

12 February 2015

Agenda Item: 4

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR TRANSPORT, PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL SCHEME 2015 / 2016

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Committee approval of the arrangements for the 2015 / 2016 Nottinghamshire Concessionary Travel Scheme including the additional discretionary entitlements.
2. To seek approval to publish the final scheme notice on 3 March 2015.

Information and Advice

3. Concessionary travel is highly valued and provides a wide range of travel opportunity, choice and access to key services for older people and residents with disabilities of Nottinghamshire. The County Council delivers a very successful countywide concessionary travel scheme, which is anticipated to cost £10.98m in 2015 / 2016 and benefits 164,000 residents undertaking nearly 11 million passenger journeys per year.
4. 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 are anticipated to cost £970k in 2015 / 2016 which is included in the budget forecast.
5. Free travel on the tram is available at the same times as on local buses i.e. 0930 to 2300 weekdays and all day at weekends and on bank holidays. Provision of this discretionary entitlement shows the County Council's commitment and support for the tram network which enhances travel choice and access to key services for many residents. This will be enhanced in 2015 when the new tram lines open.
6. 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.
7. The Council fulfilled its duty to issue a notice of the proposed 2015 / 2016 scheme by 1 December 2014. 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

8. There are currently 23 transport operators participating in the Nottinghamshire scheme of which 19 are bus operators, 1 tram operator and 3 community transport schemes.
9. Negotiations undertaken with operators for the 2014 / 2015 scheme successfully resulted in a two year fixed reimbursement arrangement being agreed with 15 operators. These fixed arrangements have been reviewed in line with the agreement especially where patronage is affected by the new tram lines opening. Negotiations with the remaining eight operators not in the fixed agreement have been completed to agree their anticipated reimbursement level during 2015/16. The start up of the new tram lines during 2015 and changes to the bus network as a result of the new services will determine the final payments made to operators not in the fixed arrangement.
10. As a result of the above factors each review and negotiation has taken account of the implications for each operator's network. Using the fixed and variable arrangements ensures that financial risk is minimised for both the County Council and the operator and meets the reimbursement guidance requirements set by the Department for Transport (DfT) in November 2014.
11. Ongoing data monitoring will be undertaken during 2015/16 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 payments would be undertaken, and the impact on any existing transport operator's network / patronage would be reviewed.
12. 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

13. No other options are available for the national scheme as the provision of concessionary travel for older people and residents with disabilities is a statutory duty.

Reasons for Recommendations

14. 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

15. 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

16. The provision of the concessionary travel scheme and the additional discretionary elements ensures that older people and residents with disabilities can access key services thus improving their quality of life and enhancing social inclusion.

Financial Implications

17. The cost of reimbursement to transport operators (for statutory and discretionary entitlements) and scheme management is budgeted to be £10.98m in 2015 / 2016. Of this total £10.0m is reimbursement for statutory travel which is provided by central Government through the revenue support grant mechanism. The remaining £0.98m for discretionary travel and scheme management costs, is fully funded by the County Council. As detailed in paragraph 12 the final costs will be subject to agreements with transport operators and the subsequent demand for travel during the 2015 /16 financial year. Detailed monitoring of the patronage data will be undertaken on a regular basis and any variation to predicted costs will be reported through the budget monitoring process.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) Committee approves the 2015 / 2016 Nottinghamshire Concessionary Travel Scheme and associated reimbursement arrangements outlined in the report.
- 2) Committee approves publication of the final scheme notice on 3 March 2015.

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, Concessions & Ticketing Officer

Constitutional Comments (SLB 05/01/2015)

18. Transport & Highways Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments (TMR 05/01/2015)

19. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 17 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.

- DfT Guidance – Concessionary Fares Reimbursement November 2014.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All

