

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Name of Committee** Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Committee** 8 November 2007

**Report Title** Concessionary Travel in Warwickshire

**Summary** The report provides a summary of how the new national concessionary transport scheme, due to commence in April 2008, will benefit residents in Warwickshire.

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**Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?** Yes/No

**Background Papers** None.

**CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-** *Details to be specified*

- Other Committees  .....
- Local Member(s)  .....  
(With brief comments, if appropriate)
- Other Elected Members  Councillor J Appleton }  
Councillor K Browne } for information  
Councillor Mrs E Goode }
- Cabinet Member  Councillor M Heatley – for information.  
(Reports to The Cabinet, to be cleared with appropriate Cabinet Member)
- Chief Executive  .....
- Legal  I Marriott – agreed.
- Finance  .....

- Other Chief Officers  .....
- District Councils  .....
- Health Authority  .....
- Police  .....
- Other Bodies/Individuals  .....

**FINAL DECISION**                      **YES/NO**      (*If 'No' complete Suggested Next Steps*)

**SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS :**

*Details to be specified*

- Further consideration by this Committee  .....
- To Council  .....
- To Cabinet  .....
- To an O & S Committee  Further report when more details available.
- To an Area Committee  .....
- Further Consultation  .....

**Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee –  
8 November 2007**

**Concessionary Travel in Warwickshire**

**Report of the Strategic Director for  
Environment and Economy**

**Recommendation**

That Members note this report and endorse the partnership working between Warwickshire County Council and the five District and Borough Councils across the county in delivering a national concessionary travel scheme from April 2008 for older and disabled passengers in Warwickshire.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of recent developments, both nationally and locally which have enhanced concessionary travel facilities for older and disabled people, and to update Members on new legislation which will lead to a free national concessionary travel scheme in April 2008.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Prior to April 2006, five separate schemes were administered across the county by the appropriate District or Borough Council. The schemes varied considerably, both in terms of cost and benefits offered. The Transport Act 2000 provided for a statutory minimum 50% discount on local bus services within each District or Borough. When this was introduced in April 2001 it highlighted numerous limitations and inequities in schemes previously in place across the county.
- 2.2 Close partnership working between the County Council and the county's five District and Borough Councils secured funding to provide a facility whereby passengers could travel anywhere within the county, and to neighbouring towns and cities. This scheme was well received and used by a significant number of passengers. Of equal significance is that this new approach also ensured regular dialogue between the County, District and Borough Councils.

### **3. The Current Position in Warwickshire**

- 3.1 From April 2006, the statutory minimum requirement in the Transport Act 2000 was increased to provide free off peak travel for older and disabled people travelling on local bus services within each District or Borough. All men and women aged 60 and over, as well as various categories of disabled people as defined in the Act, qualify.
- 3.2 Responsibility for providing concessionary travel schemes currently rests with local authorities at District, Borough and Unitary Council level.
- 3.3 Passes must be issued free of charge. The statutory minimum provides for concessionary travel between 9.30 am and 11 pm Mondays to Fridays and all day at weekends and Bank Holidays. Local authorities may offer a more generous scheme.
- 3.4 The Government provided an extra £350 million nationally from 2006/07 to fund the cost of providing additional bus travel.
- 3.5 Prior to the introduction of the April 2006 scheme, concessionary travel specialist consultants MCL were commissioned to review concessionary travel in Warwickshire, including the way it is delivered and administered. The consultants concluded that, based on projected increase in travel, an off peak county-wide scheme would be affordable, and recommended that it should be introduced. Districts and Boroughs obtained political endorsement to provide an enhanced free county-wide facility.
- 3.6 Whilst Districts and Boroughs wished to retain responsibility for the issue of passes, they recognised the benefits of centralising the administration of reimbursement. The advantages are evident:-
  - (i) The scheme was welcomed by operators who are able to keep their additional cost claims to a minimum.
  - (ii) It avoids duplication of skills and resources.
  - (iii) It offers scales of economy.
  - (iv) It achieves more power and consistency in negotiation.
- 3.7 Officers from County, District and Borough Councils shared the view that the centralisation of reimbursement management was the best approach and, subsequently, the scheme has been co-ordinated by the County Council since April 2006.
- 3.8 The county-wide scheme presently available in Warwickshire offers a facility which exceeds the statutory minimum scheme. These additional benefits are significant:-

- (i) The statutory minimum scheme only permits free travel between 9.30 am and 11.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays. The Warwickshire scheme allows free travel after 9.00 am with no evening restrictions.
  - (ii) The statutory minimum scheme only permits free travel in the District or Borough in which the resident lives. The Warwickshire scheme allows free travel throughout the county:
  - (iii) The statutory minimum scheme does not permit free travel outside the county in which the resident lives. The Warwickshire scheme allows free travel on any local bus service which either starts or finishes in the county, therefore providing free travel to all major towns and cities in neighbouring counties.
- 3.9 As well as providing an enhanced concessionary travel facility, the collaboration between the County, District and Borough Councils has provided the opportunity to adopt a more consistent approach to the situation than was previously the case. This has been welcomed by both users and providers, including drivers who no longer have to understand and interpret five separate schemes and the many passes in use within those schemes. The cost of the scheme in Warwickshire in 2007/8 is likely to cost around £4.1 million, none of which is funded by Warwickshire County Council.

#### **4. New Arrangements from April 2008**

- 4.1 In the 2006 budget the Chancellor announced that, with effect from April 2008, eligible pass holders will be able to board any local bus operating in England and enjoy free off peak travel. This entitlement will apply irrespective of which transport concessionary authority issued their pass, and where they wish to travel, as long as it is in England.
- 4.2 The new concession, enabled by provisions set out in the Concessionary Bus Travel (CBT) Act 2007 will clearly generate more journeys, thus creating the need for additional funding to be paid by Districts and Boroughs (referred to by Department for Transport (DfT) as Travel Concession Authorities, or TCAs) to operators. The Government is making available £212 million in 2008/9 to cover these additional costs. This figure is based on assumptions around fares, pass take up rates, extra journeys and additional costs.
- 4.3 For the immediate future, all concessionary travel schemes will continue to be managed and funded by TCAs. The total amount of additional funding to be made available to Warwickshire's Districts and Boroughs is likely to be between £1.1 and £1.9 million, subject to a DfT consultation exercise due to be completed at the end of November. This is in addition to funding already allocated to meet the cost of local free travel, introduced in April 2006.
- 4.4 In assessing the size of grant payable to each TCA the DfT will use a wide range of available data including eligible population, disability data, current passenger journeys on buses (BV102 statutory performance indicator), number of day visitors, number of overnight visitors, population density, number of passes issued in neighbouring authorities, bus stop density, and retail floor space.

- 4.5 The cost of travel will be based on single journeys and will be paid by the TCA in which the passenger boards, not where they live. For example:-
- (i) An entitled passenger travelling on the X17 service from Kenilworth to Coventry will be funded by Warwick District Council for the outward journey, and CENTRO for the return journey.
  - (ii) If a Warwickshire resident took a holiday in Torquay and used the local bus services, the cost would be met by Torbay Borough Council.
  - (iii) If a Worcestershire resident spent a day in Stratford-upon-Avon and used the local bus services, the cost would be met by Stratford District Council.
- 4.6 The statutory minimum provision in England will apply to travel between 9.30 am and 11.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays and unlimited travel at weekends and Bank Holidays. The Warwickshire scheme will continue to allow free travel after 0900 hrs with no evening or weekend travel restrictions.
- 4.7 As part of the management requirements of individual schemes, TCAs will remain responsible for the purchase and distribution of passes to entitled passengers. In order for drivers throughout England to be able to easily recognise eligible passengers, all passes will conform to a design and standard specified by the Department for Transport.
- 4.8 The County Council will continue to co-ordinate the scheme to ensure that the partnership approach which has brought about so many benefits over the last few years for passengers, operators and local authorities will continue. This will include the collection of monies from Districts and Boroughs, and payment of reimbursement to passenger transport operators. Again, it must be stressed that the scheme is funded by Warwickshire's Districts and Boroughs and not the County Council.

JOHN DEEGAN  
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19 October 2007