

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

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| Decision Maker: | Executive Member for Highways Operations |
| Date: | 18 November 2021 |
| Title: | Publication of the Concessionary Travel Scheme 2022-2023 |
| Report From: | Director of Economy, Transport and Environment |

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to provide the range of concessions detailed for the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2022/2023 (“the Scheme”).

Recommendations

2. That approval be given to provide the range of concessions detailed within this report for the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2022/2023 and that this forms the basis of the draft scheme to be published on 1 December 2021.
3. That authority is delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways Operations, to make minor variations to the final Scheme as may be required, and to implement the Scheme.
4. That a temporary change to the automatic renewal of Older Person’s Concessionary Bus Passes from 12 months to 24 months as part of the Council’s Covid-19 response measures be removed from 1 April 2022.
5. As part of the recovery from Covid-19, that Authority is delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways Operations, to make changes to the scheme as advised by the Department for Transport.

Executive Summary

6. This paper seeks to set out the background to the scheme and proposes the scheme for 2022/2023.

Contextual information

7. This report concerns the administration of concessionary travel, for which the County Council acquired responsibility in April 2011.

8. The published scheme is updated annually, and the County Council is required to publish details of its draft Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2022/2023 by 1 December 2021. The final details of the scheme have to be published by 3 March 2022, 28 days prior to implementation on 1 April 2022. This report seeks approval from the Executive Member for Highways Operations for the range of concessions detailed in this report.
9. The statutory scheme provides for free off-peak travel on local bus services for eligible older and disabled persons. Off-peak is defined as between 09:30 and 23:00 on Mondays to Fridays and at all times at weekends and on Bank Holidays. The County Council has not been notified of any changes. Reimbursement rates are calculated by specialist consultants based on Department for Transport (DfT) guidance.
10. Since it commenced on 1 April 2011, the Hampshire scheme has incorporated a number of enhancements for those with disabilities. This followed a detailed Equalities Impact Assessment. It also extended the concession offered for all passholders on some community transport services and Taxishare schemes. These discretionary elements were included in the scheme, which was approved by the Executive Member for Environment on 19 November 2010.
11. The enhancements to the statutory scheme are currently as follows:
 - **free travel at all times for holders of Hampshire disabled persons bus passes** on journeys commencing in Hampshire to destinations in England;
 - **companion travel** – The Scheme will allow certain Hampshire pass holders who have been issued with a ‘Companion pass’ to be accompanied by a companion who is eligible for the same free travel benefits as the pass holder. The companion may be anyone whom the pass holder considers appropriate to provide assistance;
 - **25% discount** on Community Transport Services such as Dial-a-Ride and Call & Go providing that the pass holder meets all relevant eligibility criteria; and
 - **alternative discretions** – Travel vouchers worth £36 are offered as an alternative concession for those entitled to a disabled person’s pass. These are valid on participating taxis, voluntary car schemes, Dial-a-Ride and Call & Go services.
12. As part of its response to Covid-19, the County Council agreed in February 2021 a temporary change to the automatic renewal of Older Person’s Concessionary Bus Passes. This ensured that bus pass holders who were regular service users in the year prior to Covid-19 had a valid bus pass to use when they returned to these services. This was achieved by extending the automatic renewal period from those used in the last 12 months to 24 months. Embedded within this temporary decision was a commitment to review this as part of preparing the scheme details for 2022/23.
13. Approximately 80,000 older person’s bus passes are due for renewal in 2022/23. Based on the bus pass renewal numbers for April and May (33,802 bus passes), 59% of these would be eligible for automatic renewal if the 24-month renewal policy was maintained. This compares to 38% under the standard auto-renewal period of 12 months. These figures do not reflect anyone who will use their bus pass for the first time between September 2021 and their

bus pass renewal date. These figures do not reflect the annual data cleansing exercises that will take place in January, which removes those individuals identified as no longer eligible.

14. Public bus use by Concessionary Pass holders is now at 60% of pre-Covid levels, and although it is gradually increasing over time, is not expected that all those who were previously regular bus users will return to bus travel. Reverting back to the standard automatic renewal period of 12 months will still capture all those who are currently regular bus users whilst avoiding automatically issuing bus passes to those who are currently not regularly using their pass.
15. A 24 month renewal period from April 2022 (and therefore dating back to April 2020) will no longer capture the pre-Covid position, and will risk incurring cost for issuing passes that are no longer needed or wanted. It is therefore considered appropriate to revert to a 12 month renewal period (covering the months between April 2021 and April 2022 in the first instance) to ensure the most up to date information informs automatic renewal, including post lockdown data for travel by concessionary pass users.
16. When a pass holder with an expired bus pass wishes to return to using local bus services, they will be able to contact the Council to request a new bus pass. There is no charge for bus pass renewals. Approximately 51% of renewal requests are now made via the online self-service customer portal. Alternatively, a bus pass renewal can be requested by telephone.

Finance

17. The overall size of the budget is £13.1million. This covers the cost of issuing concessions and reimbursement costs to operators for concessionary travel. Operator re-imburement payments account for the most significant part of the budget and are made by the County Council as advised by consultants who process these claims from operators in accordance with the scheme detail on behalf of the Council. The proposed scheme is affordable from within the current budget provision.

Consultation and Equalities

18. Under the proposals in this report, Scheme eligibility and the concessions offered for 2022/23 remain unchanged from eligibility in the current year and therefore there will be no further impact upon those groups with protected characteristics.
19. The proposal to end the temporary change to the automatic renewal of Older Person's Concessionary Bus Passes and change back to a 12-month auto renewal period may have a low-negative impact on a small number older people, who will no longer be eligible for an autorenewal. These individuals can renew their bus pass by contacting the Council.
20. Disabled bus pass holders all receive an automatic bus pass renewal when their bus pass expires, so are not impacted by this proposal.

Climate Change Impact Assessments

21. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.
22. The tools to assess specific impacts on climate change adaption and mitigation were not considered applicable to the publication of the Concessionary Travel Scheme 2022/23 as it has no physical infrastructure component and is focused solely on the concessions that are to be provided to bus pass holders rather than delivery. However, the ENCT Scheme administered by Hampshire County Council is a mechanism which incentivises eligible individuals to make journeys using local bus, which when undertaken as an alternative to using a private vehicle is considered an effective approach towards carbon reduction.

Other Key Issues

23. In July 2021 the Department for Transport launched a consultation on the Concessionary Travel Covid-19 Recovery Strategy. This sought views on the implementation of a phased Concessionary Travel Recovery Strategy from 6 April 2022.
24. Subsequent DfT guidance on Concessionary Fares funding for 2022/23 indicates that amendments may be required to the scheme during 2022/23 in response to changes to the conditions in the local bus operating environment.
25. It is therefore recommended that Authority is delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways Operations, to make changes to the Scheme as deemed necessary by Department for Transport to support

Conclusions

26. The proposal to approve the range of concessions detailed within this report for the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2022/2023, and that this should form the basis of the draft scheme to be published on 1 December 2021, will ensure the continuation of the statutory scheme and the discretionary enhancements provided by the Council to Hampshire pass holders.
27. The proposal to reduce the automatic renewal period for Older Person's Concessionary Bus passes from 24 months to the original 12 months from 1 April 2022 will still ensure regular bus users automatically receive a renewed bus pass. The alternative, to maintain the 24 month auto renewal period from April 2022 (therefore dating back to April 2020), will no longer serve its original purpose of ensuring that bus pass holders who were regular service users in the year prior to Covid-19 have a valid bus pass to use when they return to these services. It will also potentially result in unwanted bus passes generated at public cost. Those who no longer receive an automatic bus pass renewal can renew their bus pass by contacting the Council.

28. The proposal that Authority is delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways Operations, to make changes to the Scheme as advised by the Department for Transport will help facilitate the continued Covid-19 recovery of local bus services.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

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| Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity: | no |
| People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives: | yes |
| People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment: | no |
| People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities: | yes |

Other Significant Links

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| Links to previous Member decisions: | |
| <u>Title</u> Publication of the Concessionary Travel Scheme 2021/22 Concessionary Older Person Bus Pass Renewals | <u>Date</u> 8 October 2020 11 Feb 2021 |
| Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives | |
| <u>Title</u> Transport Act 2000 as amended by the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007 | <u>Date</u> 2000, 2007 |

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| Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents | |
| <p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p> | |
| <u>Document</u> | <u>Location</u> |
| None | |

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

Under the proposals in this report, Scheme eligibility and the concessions offered for 2022/23 remain unchanged from eligibility in the current year and therefore there will be no further impact upon those groups with protected characteristics.

The proposed reduction to the automatic bus pass renewal period will reduce cost in generating unwanted passes but still ensure that regular users receive a new pass. Eligible residents can also obtain a pass free of charge by contacting the County Council.