

**Report to Older People and Disabled  
People Task and Finish Panel  
Date of meeting: 2 November 2006**

**Portfolio: Community Wellbeing**

**Subject: Concessionary Travel**

**Officer contact for further information: Bob Palmer**

**Committee Secretary: Simon Hill**



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**Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

There are no recommendations or decisions required. The report is to inform the Panel about the Concessionary Travel services provided by the Council, specifically to update on recent and future changes to the concessionary schemes.

**Report:**

1. The Council has a concessionary fare scheme running in conjunction with Transport for London (TfL). This scheme is unique amongst district councils as no other districts have schemes that involve bus travel so far beyond their boundaries. An agreement was entered into with TfL for the 3.5 years to 1 April 2004; this has subsequently been extended on an annual basis.
2. Under the terms of the TfL scheme pass holders have been able to travel free on busses within the scheme boundaries since 1 April 2005. The area in which the pass can be used includes Edmonton, Tottenham and Enfield in the West to Romford and Ilford in the East and extending as far South as Stratford. A charge of £30, or £10 to those in receipt of benefit, is made for the passes, this is necessary as TfL charge the Council £180 per pass. There are currently approximately 400 passes in issue.
3. The Council also works with Essex County Council and the other Essex districts to provide a county wide concessionary travel scheme. Working together in this way allows the participating authorities to provide a scheme that exceeds the statutory minimum requirements, which are that each district need only provide a scheme that operates within their own boundaries.
4. No charge is made for the countywide scheme passes and from 1 April 2006 these passes have allowed holders to travel free within the scheme boundaries. Prior to 1 April 2006 pass holders were entitled to half fare travel. This change in benefit has proved very popular and pass numbers have increased from around 6,500 at 31 March 2006 to nearly 9,000 now.
5. A significant change was made to the issuing of passes for both schemes from 1 April 2006. The previous system had generated a number of complaints, as individuals wanting passes were required to attend in person. Passes are now issued by post from the Civic Offices.
6. A fundamental change will be taking place from 1 April 2008. As mentioned above, the current countywide scheme already exceeds the statutory minimum scheme, by allowing travel not just within a given district but also across the whole county. The new scheme will allow pass holders to travel anywhere on local bus services, effectively removing all boundaries. This is a significant change as currently one of our pass holders would not be able to use their pass in say Torquay or Blackpool.

7. However, it is important to stress that this applies to local bus services and not national coaches. In theory pass holders would be able to travel long distances using their passes but they would need to change local services a number of times en-route. Central Government announced this change in March earlier this year, but to date have provided little by way of detail on how the scheme will be meant to operate. So far indications are that the Government will require districts to keep managing schemes locally rather than the Government operating one centralised scheme for the whole country.

**Reason for decision:**

No decision is required.

**Options considered and rejected:**

No options have been put forward.

**Consultation undertaken:**

The Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder has been consulted and agrees that the report provides an accurate outline of service provision and current issues.

**Resource implications:**

Budget provision: The 2006/07 budget contains an amount of £923,000 for Concessionary Fares. This consists of £843,000 for the countywide scheme and £80,000 for the TfL scheme.

Personnel: Currently no additional staffing requirement.

Land: N/A

Community Plan/BVPP reference: The 2006/07 BVPP included the aim "To implement a system for issuing bus passes by post in order to reduce inconvenience to users of the countywide concessionary fare scheme."

Relevant statutory powers: Transport Act 2000

Background papers:

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: None

Key Decision reference: (if required) N/A