

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET MEETING
27TH OCTOBER 2005

CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL SCHEME

OPEN	
COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME	Improved Health & Wellbeing
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	Delivering Quality Services
KEY PRIORITY:	Improving Customer Services
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor John Paul Campion
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Head of Financial Services
CONTACT OFFICER:	Keith Bannister, Ext 2100 Jane Kitchen, Ext 2101
APPENDIX 1	Letter from Department for Transport
APPENDIX 2	Letter from Worcestershire County Council - Conditional Grant Offer

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To agree a new Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2006/2007 onwards following the implementation of the new Government free local bus travel.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to **RECOMMEND** to Council:

- 2.1 A new Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2006/2007 onwards after consideration of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel recommendations and the contents of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The current scheme in operation at Wyre Forest District Council is set out as shown in the table on page 2.

Concession	Eligibility	Numbers Issued to date 2005/2006	Cost
<p>Government Transport Act 2000 Bus Pass Scheme (Half Fare Permit) - Half fare rounded down to the nearest 1p. (First have £1.30 flat fare in WF therefore 65p concession fare). This concession allows travel anywhere within the boundaries of Wyre Forest District and is available at any time on a Saturday, Sunday or Bank Holiday and between 9.30 a.m. and 11.00 p.m. on any other day.</p>	<p>60 years of age or fit into one of the following groups: Severe Learning Disability, Registered Disabled/Blind.</p>	<p>503</p>	<p>Nil</p>
<p>Wyre Forest District Council Bus Pass Scheme – For a flat fare rate of 40p. (50p. 1 July 2006) per single journey, travel anywhere within the Wyre Forest District.</p>	<p>60 years of age and work no more than 20 hours per week or fit into one of the following groups: Severe Learning Disability, Registered Disabled/Blind. Also valid for Wyre Forest Dial-A-Ride users on Dial-A-Ride vehicles</p>	<p>3876</p>	<p>£6 per annum</p>
<p>Taxi Tokens – This scheme provides £25 of travel tokens that can be used on taxi journeys.</p>	<p>For those 80+ years of age, work less than 20 hours per week and do not have the use of a car. Also eligible to those with a severe learning disability, registered blind or disabled. Evidence of disability is essential if under 80.</p>	<p>722</p>	<p>Nil</p>

- 3.2 Council as part of the 2005/2006 Budget Strategy, requested Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel to carry out a full scrutiny exercise to investigate moving to the National Scheme and to a County-wide Scheme with effect from 1st April 2006.
- 3.3 HM Treasury budget announcement on 16th March 2005 stated that it was the Government's intention to introduce free local bus travel for people over the age of 60 and disabled people from April 2006.
- 3.4 A letter from the Department for Transport on 20th September 2005, in respect of the Government's proposals is attached as Appendix 1. The Government has not yet

announced the exact amount of funding this Council will received for the new Statutory Scheme

3.5 The Government's proposals are as follows:-

- New Statutory Scheme for people over 60 and people with disabilities – Free travel within the District after 9.30 a.m. Monday to Friday and weekends and Bank Holidays.
- In addition Councils, at their own expense can operate discretionary services in the following areas:-
 - Before 9.30 a.m. travel
 - Cross-boundary travel within county area
 - Cross-boundary travel outside county area
 - Extending scheme to cover Community Transport
 - Transport tokens

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Government will not be announcing the additional funding that the Council will receive to offset the additional costs of the basic scheme until the end of November as part of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) Settlement for 2006/2007.
- 4.2 However under the terms of current legislation which is likely to continue, the new scheme will have to be finalised by no later than 30th November 2005. i.e. four months' notice of changes to the Scheme must be issued to Bus Operators to ensure 1st April 2006 implementation date, (this Notice is not required for Community Transport such as dial-a-Ride).
- 4.3 As part of Worcestershire Joint Members' Integrated Passenger Transport Forum and the Concessionary Fares Sub Group, the County Council have written to all Districts offering grant funding 2006/2007 (subject to review thereafter) towards the cost of Districts extending the statutory minimum scheme to a scheme enable free travel before 9.30 a.m., and travel both inside and outside County area starting or ending anywhere within the County. The proposal also includes the introduction of smart card technology. However, no details are yet available for cost and date of implementation of this technology. These proposals are subject to all Districts entering into a formal agreement with the County Council. A grant of £59,000 is available to Wyre Forest, if the Council and the other five Districts agree to the proposal. See Appendix 2.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The cost of implementing the new scheme has been evaluated by JMP Consultants as part of a county-wide study commissioned by the County Council and the six Districts. The estimated costs for Wyre Forest are as follows:-

Scheme Option	Estimated Costing New Scheme £	Additional Cost Over Current Expenditure £
New Government Scheme for free Bus Travel (from 9.30 a.m. – Monday to Friday and all day weekends and bank holidays)	400,000	140,000
Free Travel Peak Time (before 9.30 a.m.) Monday – Friday	414,000	154,000
Free Travel within Worcestershire starting and finishing in Wyre Forest	417,000	157,000
Free Travel anywhere starting and finishing in Wyre Forest	418,000	158,000
Free Travel anywhere within Worcestershire	463,000	203,000
Free Travel outside County starting and finishing in Worcestershire	464,000	204,000

To include Dial-A-Ride in the free travel scheme, an additional £10,000 per annum over and above the current cost of £25,000.

Note: The reason for the low cost of both inside/outside the County, starting/ending within the District, is due to the absence of bus services. Any increase in providing bus services potentially has a serious impact on these estimates.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council is required to publish the New Scheme by 30 November 2005.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The Council are not fully reimbursed by Government for cost of statutory scheme.

7.2 JMP Consultants have based their estimated costs on current projected usage and bus services.

7.3 Additional bus services will increase travel and increase cost of reimbursement to bus operators.

7.4 The offer of County funding is for one year only subject to review. In the event of County funding not continuing, the Council would have to consider carefully whether to fund the additional cost or reduce the service for future years.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The Cabinet will need to take into account the recommendations of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel, the conditional grant offer from the County, together with the knowledge that the Government will not be announcing the additional RSG subsidy until the end of November.

9. CONSULTEES

- 9.1 See minutes of Task and Finish Group.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Government Transport Act 2000

