

Executive

Concessionary Travel

6 July 2009

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the report and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review into concessionary travel.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the work of the Task and Finish Group scrutiny review into concessionary travel as detailed in Appendix 1;
- (2) To agree the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations regarding concessionary travel as detailed below:

Recommendation 1: Smart Card Reader Scheme

That Cherwell District Council should not pursue the introduction of a Smart Card Reader scheme at this time due to the significant financial investment required and reservations about the current technical capacity of such schemes to meet the Council's needs.

Recommendation 2: Mis-ticketing

That the Portfolio Holder should publicise the importance of checking bus tickets and encourage bus pass holders to submit examples of mis-ticketing. The Portfolio Holder should follow-up examples of mis-ticketing with the bus companies; monitor the scale and value of the problem for the remainder of the financial year; and report on the results and proposed actions to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the spring of 2010.

Recommendation 3: Management Information

That the Portfolio Holder should encourage the concessionary fare service providers to move to a monthly rather than quarterly claim and settlement cycle.

Recommendation 4: National Travel Tokens

That the current arrangements for the issue of national travel tokens should continue for 2009/10 and that the Portfolio Holder should monitor the take up

and use of the national travel token scheme. The Council's continued participation in the national travel token scheme should be reviewed against the findings of the independent research into the provision of community transport schemes in the district (see recommendation 5).

Recommendation 5: Community Transport

That Cherwell District Council should continue to support and promote the provision of community transport schemes across the District. In support of this corporate priority the Portfolio Holder should commission research into the feasibility of introducing alternative community transport schemes in those parts of the district where residents do not benefit from the concessionary bus pass, national travel tokens or the Dial-A-Ride service.

Recommendation 6: Consortium approach

That the Portfolio Holder should open discussions with colleagues at the County Council and the District/City councils with a view to promoting a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of the national concessionary travel scheme, subject to the outcome of the government's consultation on the administration of concessionary fares schemes.

Recommendation 7: Government Consultation

That the Portfolio Holder should be invited to use the work of this Task & Finish Group and the conclusions and recommendations in this report to inform the Council's response to the government's consultation on the administration of concessionary fares schemes.

Recommendation 8: Concessionary Travel Scheme

That the start time for the concessionary travel scheme in Cherwell should not be reviewed again and should remain at 09.30 am, in line with the statutory scheme, until April 2011 when the new arrangements for the administration of the concessionary travel scheme will come into force.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the conclusions of a Task & Finish Group review into concessionary travel at its meeting on 9 June 2009. The findings, conclusions and recommendations are set out in the attached report (Appendix 1). The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to refer the report and its recommendations to the Executive.
- 1.2 The report covers the second phase of a scrutiny review into concessionary travel. The initial scrutiny work conducted in 2008 concentrated on the financial implications to the Council of changing the start time of the concessionary travel scheme within the district. That work was completed in November 2008 but it identified a number of wider issues relating to concessionary travel that the Task & Finish Group agreed to look at in 2009.
- 1.3 Specifically the Task & Finish Group chose to concentrate on the feasibility of introducing a smart card reader scheme to address concerns about management information and data accuracy of concessionary travel and also to broaden the scope of the review to consider the Council's overall concessionary and community travel offering, which accounts for about £1.3M of Council expenditure per year.

- 1.4 In April 2009 the Government issued a consultation paper on “possible changes to the administration of concessionary travel” which clearly had a bearing on the work of the scrutiny review, and is reflected in the final recommendations. Indeed members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have worked with the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural to develop this Council’s response to the government consultation.
- 1.5 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee believe that the provision of appropriate concessionary and community travel schemes across the district has been, and must remain, fundamental to the achievement of the Council’s priorities and aims to be a district of opportunity and a safe and healthy Cherwell.
- 1.6 However, in view of the uncertainty surrounding the government consultation on the future administration of concessionary travel and the current financial climate they consider that it would be imprudent for this Council to invest in either new infrastructure or to extend the hours of the concessionary bus travel scheme in the district at this time.
- 1.7 Nevertheless the Overview and Scrutiny Committee feel that there is scope for the Council to reaffirm its commitment to concessionary and community travel by commissioning further research to explore opportunities for service rationalisation, improvement and potentially expansion.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

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|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Option One | To accept some or all of the overview and scrutiny recommendations. |
| Option Two | To reject some or all of the overview and scrutiny recommendations. |

Consultations

See Appendix 1 for details

Implications

(Financial, Legal and Risk and other implications e.g. Equalities, Human Resources, Data Quality and Environmental where relevant)

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|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Financial: | There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by Denise Westlake, Service Accountant 01295 221559 |
| Legal: | There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. |

Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services 01295 221686

Risk Management: There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer, 01295 221566

Wards Affected

All wards

Corporate Plan Themes

A District of Opportunity
A Safe and Healthy Cherwell

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Morris
Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Street Scene and Rural

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Scrutiny report: Concessionary Travel
Background Papers	
Possible changes to the administration of concessionary travel: consultation paper, Department for Transport, April 2009	
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