

### CONCESSIONARY FARES TRAVEL SCHEME

12 January 2009

#### Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

##### PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report contains a referral to the Executive from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

This report is public

##### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- 1) not to change the current arrangements for the Concessionary Fares Travel Scheme at the present time but that the situation should be reviewed again in six months.

##### Executive Summary

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###### Introduction

- 1.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee met on 25 November 2008 to consider the outcome of phase 1 of their review into the Concessionary Fares Travel Scheme. This stage of the review focused on determining how much the re-introduction of the 9.00am start time for the Concessionary Fares Travel Scheme would cost the Council.
- 1.2 The relevant extract from the draft minutes is set out below:

###### **Concessionary Fares Travel Scheme**

Councillor Atack presented the conclusions of the Task & Finish Group which had met with officers on two occasions in November to review the latest financial information relating to concessionary travel. Councillor Atack said that the Task & Finish Group also drew on the information in the report to the Executive on 15 September 2008.

He explained that the Task & Finish Group had been unable to reach an agreed position. Some members of the Task & Finish Group felt that the current arrangements should stand in view of the half-year financial data, the wider budgetary constraints facing the Council and the fact that there was less public comment.

However, other members of the Task & Finish Group believed that the allocation of a government grant for three years and the underspend presented in the Executive report of 15 September 2008 supported the argument in favour of the re-introduction of a 9.00 am start-time for the Concessionary Travel Scheme.

The Chairman then invited the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Reynolds, to comment. Councillor Reynolds explained that the government grant for 2008/09 and the following two years was intended to cover additional costs resulting from the introduction of the national concessionary travel scheme (from 9.30am – 11.00pm on weekdays) and not for any discretionary element introduced by individual councils. He went on to explain that the financial information in the Executive report only covered the costs of reimbursement to the bus companies. The full cost of providing a concessionary travel scheme (bus passes, travel tokens and administration costs) in 2008/09 were estimated at £1.3M. It was expected that costs could be about £1.5M in future years.

The Committee discussed the matter at some length. In summing up the Chairman concluded that although some members of the Committee were personally sympathetic to the re-introduction of a 9.00 am start time the Committee as a whole were mindful of the financial considerations and could not recommend funding the revised start time at the expense of other Council services.

It was proposed and seconded that the Committee should recommend that the Executive should not change the current arrangements for the Concessionary Fares Travel Scheme at the present time but that the situation should be reviewed again in six months.

(Councillor Sibley asked that his vote against the motion be recorded.)

Resolved

- 1) To recommend that the Executive should not change the current arrangements for the Concessionary Fares Travel Scheme at the present time but that the situation should be reviewed again in six months.

## **Conclusion**

- 1.3 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee have set up a Task & Finish Group to conduct phase 2 of the review into the Concessionary Fares Travel Scheme. This phase of the review will investigate options for introducing SMART card technology on bus services in the district. The Task & Finish Group intends to report its findings in April/May 2009.

## Implications

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- Financial:** There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.  
Comments checked by Karen Muir, Service Accountant Environment & Community, 01295 221559
- Legal:** There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. Our statutory obligation is to provide concessionary travel from 9.30 am.  
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 & Insurance Officer 01295 221566

## Wards Affected

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All

## Corporate Plan Themes

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Theme 10: Focus on Cherwell's People

## Executive Portfolio

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Councillor George Reynolds  
Portfolio Holder for Community, Health and Environment

## Document Information

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	<b>Title</b>
Appendix [X]	None
<b>Background Papers</b>	
Overview and Scrutiny agenda and papers, 25 November 2008	
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