

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (GUILDFORD)

DATE: Wednesday 30 September 2015



LEAD OFFICER: David Ligertwood, Passenger Transport Projects Team Manager

SUBJECT: Proposed changes to concessionary travel on Guildford Park and Ride services

DIVISION: All

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

At the meeting of 26 November 2014 the Local Committee (Guildford) agreed that Officers should undertake a consultation on the proposal to withdraw the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) from the Guildford Park & Ride network for people qualifying on age, and the introduction of a charge of £1 per return journey for these pass holders.

This report provides an analysis of the public consultation and recommendations on the way forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Guildford) is asked to agree:

- (i) To note the outcome of the consultation attached as **Annex B** to this report.
- (ii) That the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme is withdrawn from the Park & Ride network, for people qualifying based on age, and a charge of £1 per return journey be introduced for these concessionary pass holders.
- (iii) That free travel for disabled person's concessionary pass holders and companion pass holders on Guildford Park and Ride services is retained.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendations are based on the introduction of a charge on Guildford Park and Ride services for concessionary pass holders that qualify based on age will generate additional fare revenue and will support the continued operation of current service levels. The consultation analysis in **Annex B** identified that a majority of respondents to the consultation supported the proposal.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:
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Guildford Park and Ride services: usage and funding

- 1.1 Surrey County Council (SCC) and Guildford Borough Council (GBC) operate four permanent Park and Ride sites in Guildford. These are Artington, Merrow, Onslow and Spectrum. In 2014/15 a total of 913,000 passenger trips were made on the Guildford Park and Ride services; Artington is the most popular service (373,000 passenger trips) followed by Merrow (256,000), Spectrum (208,000) and the relatively recently opened Onslow (76,000).
- 1.2 The cost to operate the four Park and Ride services in 2014/15 was £1.497m. Around half of this was covered by passenger fare income and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (a grant from the Department for Transport) for the operation of Onslow. The funding for the operational deficit of the Guildford Park & Ride network is currently met through the surplus generated by the SCC on-street Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) in Guildford, which is operated by GBC. A breakdown of this in 2014/15 is summarised in the table below:

Bus contract price	£1.137m
Car park running costs (rent, site maintenance, site guards and other general rates)	£0.360m
Total cost	£1.497m
Passenger fare income	£0.551m
Local Sustainable Transport Fund – Onslow bus and car park operation	£0.305m
Operational deficit	£0.641m

- 1.3 The cost for Park and Ride services in 2015/16 will be £1.311m, as SCC has negotiated a reduced contract price. The grant from the LSTF expired in 2014/15, which will essentially create an additional cost pressure. A breakdown of the expected cost in 2015/16 is summarised in the table below:

Bus contract price	£0.951m
Car park running costs (rent, site maintenance, site guards and other general rates)	£0.360m
Total cost	£1.311m
Expected passenger fare income	£0.551m
Operational deficit	£0.800m

Previous Committee Recommendation

- 1.4 At the meeting of 26 November 2014, the Local Committee (Guildford) agreed that Officers should undertake a consultation on the proposal to remove the ENCTS from the Guildford Park & Ride network for people qualifying on age, and the introduction of a charge of £1 per return journey for these pass holders. This recommendation was based on providing funding to Guildford Park and Ride in the face of funding pressures.

2. ANALYSIS:

Proposed changes to concessionary Travel on Park and Ride services

- 2.1 Of the 913,000 trips made during 2014/15 on Guildford Park and Ride services about 45% (400,000) are made by concessionary pass holders. Of the 400,000 passenger trips about 96% (384,000) are made by older person's concessionary pass holders. The remaining trips are made by disabled person's concessionary pass holders (14,000) and companion pass holders (2,000). Companion passes are issued to qualifying concessionary pass holders, who cannot travel without assistance. A companion pass allows the holder to travel for free and enables them to also take a carer, friend or relative with them for free.
- 2.2 Currently, passengers with a disabled person's concessionary pass can travel for free at any time on any of these park and ride services. Passengers with an older person's concessionary pass can travel for free on any of the services after 9.30am Monday to Friday, and all day Saturday (and Public Holidays if the service is in operation). Before 9.30am Monday to Friday passengers with an older person's concessionary pass are charged half a full fare (between £0.75 and £1.20 depending on the site and service used). It costs the CPZ £0.2m annually to fund free concessionary travel on Park and Ride services.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 The options are to agree to the recommendation, substitute to a modified recommendation or to have no change, as explained below:
- (i) As per the recommendations, to introduce a £1 all day return for concessionary travel on Guildford Park and Ride services for pass holders who qualify based on age only. This would generate an estimated £0.150m per annum in additional fare revenue and would help sustain the services in the face of funding pressures. The public consultation told us that a majority of older person's concessionary pass holders would support this change. Those that oppose the change would still be able to use local bus services for free to travel into Guildford. However, this may not be considered as appropriate by all and some users may choose not to travel at all.
 - (ii) Introduce a £1 all day return fare for concessionary travel on Guildford Park and Ride services for all pass holders. The estimated additional fare revenue that this would generate is £0.155m per annum. However, the public consultation identified that the majority of respondents, who indicated they were a disabled person's concessionary pass holder would oppose the change. They stated it could impact upon some of the most vulnerable people in society.
 - (iii) Don't introduce a concessionary charge for travel on Guildford Park and Ride services. This option would keep travel free for all concessionary pass holders on Guildford Park and Ride services, but it would not address the operational deficit, and may mean service frequency and operation need to be reviewed to reduce operating costs.

- 3.2 In addition to this other options are being explored to help move the Park and Ride network toward commerciality, including:
- The provision of guarding services at Artington and Merrow Park and Ride sites to be combined into a single mobile guard between the two sites.
 - Improve advertising of Park and Ride services, especially Onslow, to encourage greater usage.
 - Adoption of a holistic parking strategy for Guildford recognising the relative value of town centre parking and Park and Ride provision.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

Overview of the public consultation

- 4.1 Following the recommendation of Local Committee (Guildford) on 26 November 2014 (as explained in paragraph 1.4) the plan for the consultation was shared with the Guildford Transportation Task Group (TTG) on 7 July 2015. TTG agreed for Surrey County Council to consult on proposals to replace free travel on Guildford Park and Ride services for both older and disabled person's concessionary pass holders, to fully understand the views of both pass holders.
- 4.2 The public consultation launched on 28 July 2015 and ran until 1 September 2015. Residents and stakeholders could participate by filling out a questionnaire (online and paper copy), emailing or writing to the project team or by contacting Surrey County Council's contact centre to request a paper copy of the questionnaire in standard, easy read or large print format. The standard paper questionnaire is attached in **Annex A**.
- 4.3 The consultation was available on the County Council's website; questionnaires and posters were printed and distributed to the Park and Ride sites and on the buses, and at other locations across Surrey. **Annex B** describes further the approach taken to raise awareness of the consultation.

Responses to the public consultation

- 4.4 Over 1,600 residents responded to the public consultation giving their views on the proposal to introduce a concessionary charge on Guildford Park and Ride services. A copy of the consultation report is attached in **Annex B**.
- 4.5 The key findings in the consultation were:
- Almost 9 in 10 (88%) respondents said they were an older person's concessionary pass holder and less than 1 in 30 (3%) of respondents said they were a disabled person's concessionary pass holder.
 - More than half (52%) of the 1615 responses to the consultation questionnaire **supported** the proposal to introduce a concessionary charge. This broken down by pass type:
 - Of the 1430 responses from older person's concessionary pass holders more than half (52%) supported the proposal to introduce a concessionary charge.
 - Of the 140 responses from non concessionary pass holders two-thirds (67%) supported the proposal to introduce a concessionary charge.

- Of the 45 responses from disabled person's concessionary pass holders less than 1 in 5 (18%) supported the proposal to introduce a concessionary charge. In this group 4 in 5 (80%) opposed the proposal to introduce a concessionary charge.
- The majority of respondents who support the proposal to introduce a concessionary charge said it is affordable and will have little or no impact on usage. The majority of respondents who opposed the proposal said it could present financial difficulties to pass holders and could discourage them from using Guildford Park and Ride services.
- The majority of respondents to the questionnaire (97%) said that they use Guildford Park and Ride services. Respondents most used Park and Ride service is the Number 300 from Merrow and the least used is the Number 400 from Onslow.
- Respondents also told us that they predominantly use Park and Ride services either more than once a week or about once a week. Further analysis of this question told us that the more frequently respondents uses Park and Ride services, the more likely they are to oppose the proposal to introduce a concessionary charge.

Guildford Transportation Task Group

- 4.6 The early results of the public consultation were presented to the Guildford Transportation Task Group on 1 September 2015. The group considered the early results of the consultation and their recommendation was to introduce the concessionary charge on Guildford Park and Ride services for pass holders that qualify on age only. They also recommended that free travel on Guildford Park and Ride users be retained for disabled person's concessionary pass holders and companion pass holders.

Legal engagement

- 4.7 Legal advice has confirmed that The Travel Concessions (Eligible Services) 2009 exempts certain services with a special amenity value from the requirements of the ENCTS. Park and Ride Services are likely to fall into the category of special amenity services. This means that an introduction of a charge (or indeed a decision not to offer any concession) is permissible.
- 4.8 The introduction of a charge for concessionary travel on Park and Ride services has already been implemented at other local authorities including Leicestershire, York, Chester, Norwich and Ipswich without challenge.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 A sum of £0.004m has been invested to assist with the production of publicity materials required for the public consultation.
- 5.2 The introduction of a £1 concessionary day return fare on Guildford Park and Ride services for pass holders, who qualify based on age would generate an estimated £0.2m per annum in additional passenger fare income. This would happen if all older person's concessionary pass holders that currently use Park and Ride services continue to travel and pay the charge.

- 5.3 However analysis of other Local Authorities, who have implemented the charge, suggests that we are likely to see about a 20% drop in usage from older person's concessionary pass holders on Park and Ride services. Therefore we are more likely to generate an estimated £0.150m per annum in additional passenger fare income.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 SCC has sought to understand the impact that the proposal could have on those with protected characteristics. A full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out (See **Annex C**).
- 6.2 The EIA has used a variety of data and feedback sources including:
- Responses received during the public consultation.
 - Patronage data provided by Stagecoach (the bus service operator).
 - Review of The Travel Concessions (Eligible Services) Order 2009 and Guildford Business Parking Plan 2015-16.
 - Local information (Surrey-i).
 - Information from other local authorities that have implemented a concessionary charge on Park and Ride services.
- 6.3 Potential impacts were perceived to be negative on the protected characteristics Age and Disability. Introducing a concessionary charge for Guildford Park and Ride services could present pass holders who use these services with financial difficulties, discourage them from travelling and impact the most vulnerable in society.
- 6.4 The original idea was to implement the concessionary charge for all concessionary pass holders on Guildford Park and Ride services. However, based on the consultation results, the final recommendation is to introduce a concessionary charge only to pass holders, who qualify based on age. Disabled person's concessionary pass holders and companion pass holders will still be able to travel for free on Guildford Park and Ride services if Guildford Local committee agree to the recommendation.
- 6.5 Mitigating actions have been developed to ensure the likelihood of any potential inequalities is reduced including providing communication materials in alternative formats and communicating local bus alternatives where appropriate. The EIA will continue to be reviewed during the implementation period.
- 6.6 Whilst older person's concessionary pass holders will still be able to travel for free on local bus services to Guildford, some may consider this as inappropriate alternative to a free park and ride journey, and may choose to complete their journey using another form of transport, travel elsewhere or to not complete their journey at all.

7. LOCALISM:

- 7.1 Using the post codes supplied in the public consultation. Responses from older person's concessionary pass holders have been mapped to identify if they support or oppose the proposal. This map is attached in **Annex D**. Where a respondent has indicated that they oppose the proposal on the map, this may indicate which communities could be impacted by the proposed change.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising from this report
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	Some implication – described below
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report
Public Health	Some implication – described below

8.1 Sustainability implications

It is recognised that some older person's concessionary pass holders, who use to travel on Guildford Park and Ride services, as a result of the proposed change may now drive and park in Guildford Town centre or another town centre, which could increase congestion levels. However, the most likely outcome will be for these pass holders to complete their trips using a free local bus service.

8.2 Public Health implications

Bus travel itself encourages older people to remain active and mobile in visiting shops, friends, and family. It is recognised that some older person's concessionary pass holders, who use to travel on Guildford Park and Ride services may now choose to not travel as a result of the proposed change. However older person's concessionary pass holders will have used a car (driven them self or received a lift) in the first instance to reach the Park and Ride site.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 9.1 The decision to implement a concessionary charge for using Guildford Park and Ride services is supported by a majority (as explained in paragraph 4.5)
- 9.2 The recommendation, which is supported by Guildford Transportation Task Group, will be to introduce a £1 concessionary day return fare for pass holders who qualify based on age. This fare will be applicable all day Monday to Saturday (including Bank Holidays if the service is in operation). This will generate an additional £0.150m in fare revenue and will support the continued operation of the current service. Disabled person's concessionary pass holders and companion pass holders will still be able to travel for free on Guildford Park and Ride services.
- 9.3 Older person's concessionary pass holders, who did use to travel on Guildford Park and Ride services, and opt not to use the service because of the charge, can still use local bus services for free. However it is recognised that some may consider this as inappropriate alternative to a free park and ride journey, and may choose to complete their journey using another form of transport, travel elsewhere or to not complete their journey at all.

10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 10.1 We'll launch a full communication programme from mid October to let residents know in advance about the change. We'll also work with the operator, Stagecoach to begin mobilising in readiness for the change.
- 10.2 The introduction of the concessionary charge to use Guildford Park and Ride services will come into effect from **November 2015** (exact date to be advertised in the communication programme).

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Consulted:

- Guildford Transportation Task Group
- Guildford Borough Council Officers
- Surrey Coalition of Disabled People
- Public and other stakeholders

Annexes:

Annex A – Consultation questionnaire

Annex B – Consultation report

Annex C – Equality Impact Assessment

Annex D – Map of older person's concessionary pass holders and their opinion on the proposal.

Sources/background papers:

- The Guildford Parking Business Plan 2015-16.
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