

## Environment Select Committee

5 December 2018



## Concessionary Travel Funding Consultation Update

### Purpose of the report:

This report outlines the consultation process to date and gives an overview of the responses received so far.

### Introduction:

1. As part of the county council's transformation activities, there are five public consultations running from Tuesday 30 Oct 2018 to Friday 4 Jan 2019.
2. The Strategic Transport Group are currently consulting with the public and stakeholders on the proposals to:
  - Remove free concessionary travel for disabled pass holders before 09.30 and after 23.00 Monday to Friday, which is currently paid for by Surrey County Council. Pass holders would still be able to travel for free after 09.30 and before 23.00 Monday to Friday, which is paid for by the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS). Free travel at any time on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays would be unaffected.
  - Remove companion passes. Pass holders would continue to travel for free, however, their companions would no longer receive free travel. This is currently funded by Surrey County Council.
3. The table below shows the number of concessionary passes issued to Surrey residents as of July 2018.

Pass Type	Number Issued
Older person	157,535
Disabled person	8,065
+C older person	184
+C disabled person	2,557
<b>Total</b>	<b>168,341</b>

4. The eligibility criteria for getting a free bus pass are set out in primary legislation. For older people, this is linked to the

pensionable age. This is rising incrementally to 66 by 2020. The eligibility criteria for disabled and companion passes can be found as Annex 4 to this report, which is taken from the Free Bus Pass pages on the county council website.

5. People's ability to access the ENCTS is based on whether they apply and meet the eligibility criteria. If an applicant meets the relevant criteria for the pass they are applying for they will be issued one. This is unrelated to whether, for example, they may be able to afford to pay for bus travel, are in receipt of transport related allowances on grounds of disability (such as Personal Independence Payments) or whether they ever intend to use the pass.
6. At the end of this report is a table showing the concessionary travel offer made by other local authorities in the region.

<b>Removal of Additional Subsidy for Disabled Pass Holders and Companions</b>
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7. Central Government determines the travel concessions that must be offered as part of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS). This statutory scheme requires that qualifying older and disabled people be allowed to travel for free on buses after 09:30 and before 23:00 Monday to Friday, plus all day on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays.
8. Funding for this statutory scheme is received by the council from Central Government through grant. However, in Surrey we also fund two extra travel concessions:
  - Free travel at any time for Surrey residents who hold a disabled person's bus pass, i.e. free travel before 09:30 and after 23:00 Monday to Friday; and
  - Companion passes (C+), issued to disabled or older person's bus pass holders who cannot travel without assistance. Any C+ pass holder who needs assistance can take someone with them to enable travel, e.g. a friend, carer or relative, with the pass holder and the companion both travelling free.
9. Removal of the council's additional funding for these two extra concessions would mean disabled pass holders would have pay for journeys outside of the statutory scheme, and the companions of C+ pass holder would have to pay to travel.
10. The cost of providing the additional concessions varies year on year based on the number of people using their passes to travel.
11. The reimbursement paid to Surrey bus operators for the revenue foregone by offering free travel also varies based on the Government formula used. The average reimbursement to Surrey bus operators for each concessionary journey is £1.45.

12. Using the average per journey reimbursement figure and the annual number of concessionary journeys, around 180,000 before 09.30 in 2017/18, the amount paid to the Surrey bus operators for those journeys was approximately £260,000.
13. The Strategic Transport Group are also looking to streamline our bus pass issuing processes, including not sending renewal reminder letters and promoting channel shift toward on line applications.
14. It is estimated that combined these proposals could generate an annual saving of £400,000 per year.

<b>Consultation and Engagement Programme</b>
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15. As mentioned previously, the consultation started on Tuesday 30 October and runs until the end of Friday 4 January.
16. The consultation team are targeting specific stakeholders groups with material along with face to face meetings. This is to, as best possible, assess the potential impact of the proposals on the groups affected, should a decision be made to implement the changes.
17. These groups include but not limited to:
  - The Surrey Coalition of Disabled People
  - The Disability Empowerment Networks and the Chairs
  - Action for Carers Surrey
  - Surrey Choices
  - Disability Challengers
  - The Alzheimer's Society
  - Surrey Independent Living Council
  - Surrey Association of Local Councils (SALC)
18. In addition to the role of the committee, some members have agreed to join a Member Reference Group to provide oversight and input into the consultation process. This first met on 13 November.
 

The topics discussed were:

  - The role of the Member Reference Group
  - The Concessionary Travel Funding Consultation process
  - A brief overview of consultation responses received thus far
  - The programme and next steps
  - The role of the MRG with any future reviews in the Strategic Transport Group
19. Key consultation and reporting dates are listed below,
  - 30 October 2018 – consultation goes live
  - 5 December 2018 – Environment Select Committee
  - Week beginning 10 December 2018 – Update note for Member briefing on all five consultation responses
  - 4 January 2019 – Consultation closes

- 29 January 2019 – Report to Cabinet (covering all five consultations)
20. A high level summary of the number and type of responses, along with some key themes emerging, received so far are annexed to this report. This only covers the responses received as of 22 November 2018 and looks to provide a summary for the Select Committee to consider, whilst the consultation is ongoing.
  21. The full consultation analysis is still ongoing and will be completed for the 29 January 2019 Cabinet meeting.
  22. Should the decision be made to progress after the consultation responses have been considered, the changes could start as of 1 April 2019.
  23. This would mean that as of 1 April 2019 disabled pass holders travelling before 09.30 and after 23.00 and that a companion travelling with a pass holder would need to pay to travel at any time.

<b>Conclusions:</b>
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24. From the responses received so far, the majority of respondents think that:
  - This area of council spend is not appropriate to make savings (around 60% responses), and
  - Savings can be made elsewhere (just over 50% responses)
25. Mitigation options would not available for many people who would be affected by these proposals. An alternative form of free transport will be made available for any children entitled to free home to school transport. In that situation the county council has a legal duty to provide free transport for those individuals. This would most likely be in the form of paying for a season ticket on the bus route they use.
26. For other pass holders and their companions there are no alternative mitigation options that could be offered by the county council.
27. Mitigation options are looked at in more detail as an annex to this report.
28. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been developed for this consultation and is being updated as the consultation progresses.

<b>Recommendations:</b>
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29. That the Committee notes this report and supporting material.

30. That the Committee note the work of Member Reference Group (MRG) that has been set up as part of this process. Future meetings of this group are on 13 Dec 2018 and 14 Jan 2019.
31. Ask that the MRG provide input to Cabinet on this topic for the 29 January 2019 budget report.

<b>Next steps:</b>
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- Continue with consultation up to its close on 4 January 2019.
- Meet the MRG to update and receive input on the consultation process.
- Report back to the MRG in January on the consultation, ahead of the formal report to Cabinet on 29 January 2019.

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**Report contact:** [Paul Millin, Strategic Transport Group Manager]

**Contact details:** [03456 009 009]

**Sources/background papers: the following documents are annexed to this report**

Annex 1- Update of consultation responses as at 12 Nov 2018

Annex 2- Current iteration of the Equalities Impact Assessment

Annex 3- Outline mitigation options appraisal

Annex 4- Acceptable documents for the seven categories of disability to be eligible for a disabled person's concessionary bus pass

## Other Regional Local Authority Offer

Local Authority	Disabled Persons	Disabled C+	Older Persons	Older Persons C+
<b>STATUTORY SCHEME</b>	Mon – Fri 09.30 until 23.00 All day Saturday, Sunday & Public Holidays	No	Mon – Fri 09.30 until 23.00 All day Saturday, Sunday & Public Holidays	No
<b>Brighton-Hove</b>	Enhanced Hours Mon – Fri 09.00 until 03.59	No	Enhanced Hours Mon – Fri 09.00 until 03.59	No
<b>Bucks CC</b>	Enhanced Hours Mon – Fri 09.00 until 23.59 Visually impaired: Free travel at anytime	Yes, with enhanced hours Mon – Fri 09.00 until 23.59 Visually impaired: Free travel at anytime	Enhanced Hours Mon – Fri 09.00 until 23.59	Yes, with enhanced hours Mon – Fri 09.00 until 23.59
<b>Hants CC</b>	Free travel at any time	Yes, with free travel at any time	Statutory Offer	No
<b>Herts CC</b>	Statutory Offer	Yes	Statutory Offer	No
<b>Kent CC</b>	Statutory Offer	Yes	Statutory Offer	No
<b>East Sussex</b>	Statutory Offer	Yes	Statutory Offer	No
<b>West Sussex</b>	Free travel at any time	Yes, with free travel at any time	Statutory Offer	No
<b>London</b>	Free travel at any time	No	Free travel at any time	No
<b>Surrey CC</b>	Free travel at any time	Yes, with free travel at any time	Statutory Offer	Yes