



EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REPORT OF: Executive Member for Regeneration

LEAD OFFICERS: Deputy Chief Executive

DATE: 13th September 2018

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED: Regeneration

WARD/S AFFECTED: All

SUBJECT: Discretionary Concessionary Travel

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council has recently undertaken a consultation exercise with Blind and Disabled NoWCARD holders to increase the discretionary charge for travel before 9:30am Monday to Friday from 50 pence to £1.

The majority of respondents either expressed no preference or supported the proposals. The consultation process has fed into an Equality Impact Analysis and this report presents the findings.

Approval is sought to amend the Joint Lancashire Concessionary Travel Scheme and introduce the revised pre 9:30am fare later in financial year 2018/19. The statutory entitlement to post 9:30am "free" off peak travel for all NoWCARD holders is unaffected.

The increase in fare will allow the Council to continue to offer a discretionary enhancement to Blind and Disabled NoWCARD holders.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Member for Regeneration:

1. Approves an increase to the charge made to Blind and Disabled NoWCARD holders for travel before 9:30am Monday to Friday from 50 pence to £1.
2. Authorises Council Officers to amend the Joint Lancashire Concessionary Travel Scheme and liaise with bus operators to ensure that the necessary arrangements for collection of the fare are made.

3. BACKGROUND

The Council operates the mandatory English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) through the Joint Lancashire Concessionary Travel Scheme, called "NoWCARD". The NoWCARD is a partnership between the authorities of Lancashire County Council, Blackpool Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and Cumbria County Council.

The NoWCARD scheme allows free bus travel for NoWCARD pass holders from Mondays to Fridays between 9:30am and 11pm and all day on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.

As a discretionary addition to the national statutory scheme, the Council also allows holders of a

Disabled Person's NoWCARD to travel at a 50 pence flat fare on local bus services that begin before 9:30am on Mondays to Fridays.

There has been no increase of the 50 pence charge for over 10 years.

There are currently 3485 Disabled NoWCARDs on issue in Blackburn with Darwen, and a further 15,328 Elderly NoWCARDs on issue.

The Council consulted on proposals to increase this charge from 50 pence to £1, for six weeks between 5th July 2018 and 17th August 2018 with the outcome of the consultation presented to the Executive Member for Regeneration for final approval.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

The public consultation ran for 6 weeks between 5th July 2018 and 17th August 2018. In total eleven completed questionnaires were returned.

Paper questionnaires were made available at the Blackburn Visitor Centre. The consultation questionnaire was also made available online at www.blackburn.gov.uk and via the Shuttle e-newspaper at <https://theshuttle.org.uk> at <https://theshuttle.org.uk/consultation-on-proposed-changes-to-concessionary-disabled-travel-card-scheme/>

The Lancashire Telegraph also featured an article on the consultation which was published on the 9th July 2018 <https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/16341305.mooted-price-rise-for-disabled-travel-card-scheme/#comments-anchor>

The questionnaire covered two topics:

- Respondents use of the Disabled Person's NoWCARD
- Respondents views on the proposals to increase the flat fare per journey for Disabled Person's NoWCARD from 50 pence to £1 for travel before 9:30am Monday to Friday.

The Council asked whether respondents "agreed or disagreed with the proposal to increase the flat fare per journey". Only 18% of respondents (2 out of the 11 responses) disagreed with the Council's proposals.

The implications for accepting the recommendations of this report are as follows:

- Disabled NoWCARD holders who rely upon bus travel before 9:30am will need to pay £1 instead of 50 pence. The 50 pence charge has not been increased for over 10 years and has not followed the increases in bus fares over this period of time.
- Lancashire County Council and Blackpool Council also operate a discretionary 50 pence charge as part of the Joint Lancashire Concessionary Travel Scheme. Lancashire County Council, at their Cabinet Meeting of 9th August 2018 agreed to increase to the discretionary 50 pence charge to £1.
- A communication plan will be required for bus operators and pass holders to ensure the change is made clear for users.
- The reconfiguration of commercial bus operator's ticket machines will be required, to take account of the new fare.

The increase in fare will allow the Council to continue to offer a discretionary enhancement to Blind and Disabled NoWCARD holders.

It should be noted that holders of older persons NoWCARDs pay full fare before 9:30am, and these fares have increased substantially since 2008, with most rising significantly more than 50 pence per journey.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Joint Lancashire Travel Scheme accords with the Council's Local Transport Plan 3 2011 – 2021 strategy.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The increase in charge detailed in this report will reduce the cost of Blind and Disabled NoWCARD travel by £5500 in 2018/19 and by £22,000 in 2019/20 onwards. This takes into account forecasted passenger numbers, and a 5% reduction in passenger uptake on pre 9:30am travel due to the cost increase.

There will be a cost of up to £5000 associated with the reconfiguration of the bus ticket machines by the bus operators. This will be funded jointly with Lancashire County Council from the Concessionary Travel Budget for 2018/19.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Provision for travel concessions in England is contained in five pieces of primary legislation: the Transport Act 1985, the Transport Act 2000, the Travel Concession (Eligibility) Act 2002 and the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007.

The Council in its capacity as a Travel Concession Authority (TCA) has a statutory duty to administer and fund the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme under the Transport Act 2000 as amended by the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2010. Eligibility for mandatory concessionary travel is dependent on age (this is tied to the pensionable age of women) or to 7 categories of disability set out section 146 of the Transport Act 2000.

Concessionary Travel is a mandatory scheme and the Scheme provides the statutory level set out in the Transport Act 2000 as amended by the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007 and also continues to provide certain enhanced concessions. This document covers the reimbursement arrangements for both the Transport Act 1985 wider Scheme as well as the statutory minimum introduced under the Transport Act 2000 as amended by the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007.

Changes will need to be made to the Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and Blackpool Council "Joint Lancashire Concessionary Scheme".

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Growth and Development Department's revenue budget 2018/19 includes provision to meet the costs of the Concessionary fare reimbursement to operators and the contribution to Lancashire County Council for the cost of administering the scheme.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

In total eleven completed questionnaires were returned, with the key findings from the consultation are summarised below:

- Q1: 10 of the 11 respondents had a current Disabled Person's NoWCARD
- Q2 NoWCARD use: 3 respondents use their Disabled NoWCARD every or most days, with 2 using it a few times a week. 2 used it a few times a month, and 1 less often.
- Q3: Pre 9:30am NoWCARD use: 2 respondents use their Disabled NoWCARD for travel before 9:30am Monday to Friday every or most days, 1 a few times a week, 3 a few times a month and 2 never.
- Q4 Pre 9:30am NoWCARD spend: 4 respondents spend 50 pence on pre 9:30am travel, with 1 spending £1 and 1 spending £1.50.
- Q5 Reason for travel: 2 respondents travel pre 9:30am for work, 1 for caring duties, 1 for education, 2 for medical appointments and 2 for leisure.
- Q6 Agreement to the proposals: 1 respondent strongly agreed, 5 tended to agree, 3 neither agreed nor disagreed and 2 strongly disagreed. Only 18% of respondents disagreed with the proposals.
- Q7: The Council asked people how the proposals would affect them. Responses ranged from "It won't" to "Travel costs will double", but other comments were received saying "Didn't know they could", "it will reduce the number of people standing on busy buses", and "it will affect me as I have to get to Burnley Hospital for 9am".
- Q8 Would you travel by bus less often: 4 respondents said yes they would travel less often, and 7 said that this would not affect them.
- Q9 Importance of paying with one coin: 3 respondents said that it was important to be able to pay with one coin, and 6 said it was not important.
- Q10 Respondents were asked if there was anything else to consider: A response was received "make the start time of 9:30am a strict rule to reduce driver discretion and potential abuse of the system".

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded and published if applicable.

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| VERSION: | 0.01 |
| CONTACT OFFICER: | Mike Cliffe, Strategic Transport Manager, ext 5310 |
| DATE: | 13 th September 2018 |
| BACKGROUND PAPER: | None |