

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member for Highways Operations
<b>Date:</b>	7 November 2022
<b>Title:</b>	Publication of the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme 2023-24
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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### Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to provide the range of concessions detailed for the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2023/2024 (“the Scheme”).

### Recommendations

2. That the Executive Member for Highways Operations approves the range of concessions detailed within this report for the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2023/2024 and that this forms the basis of the draft scheme to be published on 1 December 2022.
3. That the Executive Member for Highways Operation notes the Passenger Transport SP23 Savings Proposals decision to remove specified enhancements to the Concessionary Travel Scheme in Hampshire and agrees to amend the 2023/34 Scheme accordingly.
4. In order to ensure that the County Council meets the statutory requirements to publish the Concessionary Travel Scheme in December, authority be delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways Operations, to make changes to the scheme to reflect latest guidance from the Department for Transport and the outcome of the Passenger Transport SP23 Savings Proposals decision.

### Executive Summary

5. This paper seeks to set out the background to the scheme and proposes the scheme for 2023/2024.
6. This paper proposes the approval of the existing discretionary enhancements, but notes that there is a separate decision day report which proposes the removal of some of the existing discretionary enhancements. Should approval be given, the 2023/24 Concessionary Travel Scheme in Hampshire will be required to reflect this decision.

7. The paper also proposes that the Director is given delegated authority, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways Operations to enable potential changes to be made to the scheme in light of the expected guidance from the Department for Transport with a view to supporting the wider bus network.

### **Contextual information**

8. This report concerns the administration of concessionary travel, for which the County Council acquired responsibility in April 2011.
9. The published scheme is updated annually, and the County Council is required to publish details of its draft Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2023/24 by 1 December 2022. The final details of the scheme have to be published by 3 March 2023, 28 days prior to implementation on 1 April 2023. This report seeks approval from the Executive Member for Highways Operations for the range of concessions detailed in this report.
10. The statutory scheme provides for free off-peak travel on local bus services for eligible older and disabled persons. Off-peak is defined as between 09:30 and 23:00 on Mondays to Fridays and at all times at weekends and on Bank Holidays. The County Council has not been notified of any changes. Reimbursement rates are calculated by specialist consultants based on Department for Transport (DfT) guidance.
11. Since it commenced on 1 April 2011, the Hampshire scheme has incorporated a number of enhancements for those with disabilities. This followed a detailed Equalities Impact Assessment. These enhancements were approved by the Executive Member for Environment on 19 November 2010.
12. The enhancements to the statutory scheme are currently as follows:
  - **Free travel at all times for holders of Hampshire disabled persons bus passes** on journeys commencing in Hampshire to destinations in England;
  - **Companion travel** – the scheme will allow certain Hampshire pass holders who have been issued with a ‘Companion pass’ to be accompanied by a companion who is eligible for the same free travel benefits as the pass holder. The companion may be anyone whom the pass holder considers appropriate to provide assistance;
  - **Free travel on some Taxishare schemes** for pass holders;
  - **25% discount on Community Transport Services** such as Dial-a-Ride and Call & Go providing that the pass holder meets all relevant eligibility criteria; and
  - **Alternative discretions** – Travel vouchers worth £36 are offered as an alternative concession for those entitled to a disabled person’s pass. These are valid on participating taxis, voluntary car schemes, Dial-a-Ride and Call & Go services.
13. In May 2022, the County Council undertook an eight-week Countywide consultation with residents specifically seeking feedback on how the County Council could implement £800,000 proposed savings from support for passenger transport services, including supported local bus and community transport services. The consultation also looked at removing some discretionary

enhancements to the Concessionary Travel Scheme in Hampshire as well as the possibility of increasing some charges and the contributions made by passengers for their service.

14. The consultation ran from 30 May until 24 July 2022 and in total 2,596 responses were received of which 71 came from organisations.
15. Respondents were asked for their preferences over whether the following enhancements to the scheme should be withdrawn to lessen the amount of service reduction required to balance the budget:
  - a. **free travel on some Taxishare schemes** for pass holders
  - b. **25% discount on Community Transport Services** such as Dial-a-Ride and Call & Go providing that the pass holder meets all relevant eligibility criteria; and
  - c. **alternative discretions** – Travel vouchers worth £36 are offered as an alternative concession for those entitled to a disabled person's pass. These are valid on participating taxis, voluntary car schemes, Dial-a-Ride and Call & Go services.
16. Overall, respondents showed a preference to remove these enhancements over seeing greater levels of service reductions.
17. The Passenger Transport SP23 Savings Proposals report therefore proposes that the enhancements detailed in 15 above, are removed from the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme.
18. Should the decision be made to approve the proposal detailed in 17 above by the Executive Lead Member for Transport and Environment Strategy, it is proposed that the enhancements published within the Concessionary Travel Scheme align with this decision.

### **Covid Recovery**

19. In 2022/2023, the Hampshire Scheme has reimbursed operators based on the percentage of pre-COVID bus network an operator provides in line with the Department for Transport (DfT) guidance, as outlined in the Decision Day report on 12 May 2022: Concessionary Fares Reimbursement 2022/23 Update.
20. Prior to receiving revised guidance from the DfT, the current proposal is to revert to normalising operator reimbursement payments for concessionary travel in 2023/24. This will result in operators being reimbursed based on passenger numbers. Funding will no longer recognise additional costs carried by operators who are maintaining the bus network despite patronage levels remaining lower than in the years before Covid-19.
21. Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs) have previously been advised to choose the most appropriate method of continuing concessionary fares funding for their local circumstances, at pre-Covid levels to ensure a smooth recovery period.
22. DfT continues to recognise the importance of the funding provided for concessionary fares passengers in helping to support the wider bus network. DfT has also indicated that it will be extending the Statutory Instrument for another year (until March 2024) to enable Local Authorities to legally reimburse operators above actual patronage levels for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS). This indicates that there is a desire for TCAs to use

their discretion to support the wider bus network through concessionary reimbursements, where this will assist the local bus sector to successfully adjust to new levels of patronage.

23. Detailed revised guidance from the DfT for 2023/24 is not expected to be issued until after the 1 December 2022 deadline, the time by which the County Council is required to publish details of its draft Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2023/2024.
24. Therefore, it is proposed that delegated authority is given to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways Operations to make changes to the scheme with consideration to DfT guidance and in response to the local operational environment which will be clearer after winter patronage figures are known.
25. This will enable any decision to be tailored to support the commercial and supported bus networks within Hampshire.

### **Finance**

26. The budget of £11.1m covers both the cost of issuing concessions and reimbursement costs to operators for concessionary travel. The recovery of bus patronage by concessionary pass holders is currently between 60-80% of pre-covid levels, which is reflected in the lower scheme budget for 2023/24 with any recovery playing an important role in helping to support the wider bus network.
27. Operator re-imbursement payments account for the most significant part of the budget and are made by the County Council as advised by consultants who process these claims from operators in accordance with the scheme detail on behalf of the Council. The forecasted demand for concessionary travel for 2023/24 remains lower than pre-covid levels and is affordable within the existing concessionary fares budget allocation.

### **Consultation and Equalities**

28. Under the proposals in this report, Scheme eligibility and the concessions offered for 2023/24 remain unchanged from eligibility in the current year and therefore there will be a neutral impact upon those groups with protected characteristics.
29. The proposed changes to the scheme have been consulted on as part of the broader Passenger and Community Transport 2022 Consultation. As such the impacts of the proposed changes are outlined within the Passenger Transport SP23 Savings Proposals Decision Day report's equalities impact assessment.
30. There are no changes proposed to the scheme that fall outside of the Passenger and Community Transport 2022 Consultation.
31. The proposal to delegate authority for the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways Operations, to make changes to the scheme is intended to support the wider bus network thus mitigating some of the impacts raised previously in the Concessionary Fares and Community Transport Contract Payments report approved by the Executive Member for Highways Operations on 27 January 2022.

32. Specifically, this seeks to minimise the reduction in local bus provision which could have a negative impact on groups with the protected characteristics of age, gender, disability and race, that are proportionally more reliant on off-peak and rural bus networks for accessing services. Also, potentially the characteristic of religion or belief may have been impacted in relation to attending a place of worship on a Sunday, when bus services may be more limited.

### **Climate Change Impact Assessments**

33. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.
34. The tools to assess specific impacts on climate change adaption and mitigation were not considered applicable to the publication of the Concessionary Travel Scheme 2023/24 as it has no physical infrastructure component and is focused solely on the concessions that are to be provided to bus pass holders rather than delivery. However, the Concessionary Travel Scheme administered by Hampshire County Council is a mechanism which incentivises eligible individuals to make journeys using local bus, which when undertaken as an alternative to using a private vehicle is considered an effective approach towards carbon reduction.

### **Conclusions**

35. The proposal to approve the range of concessions detailed within this report for the Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme for 2023/2024, and that this should form the basis of the draft Scheme to be published on 1 December 2022, will ensure the continuation of the statutory scheme and the discretionary enhancements provided by the County Council to Hampshire pass holders.
36. Should approval be given to the recommendations in the Passenger Transport SP23 Savings Proposals report to withdraw some of the discretionary enhancements from the Hampshire scheme, the removal of these elements will be reflected in the draft publication of the Scheme.
37. The proposal that authority is delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways Operations, to make changes to the scheme in view of the expected guidance from Department for Transport, will enable the determination of appropriate support, in view of DfT guidance, to be provided to support the realignment of the local bus network, if the local operational environment so requires after the winter period.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	yes

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Concessionary Fares and Community Transport Contract Payments	27/01/2022
Concessionary Fares Reimbursement 2022/23 Update	12/05/2022
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

Under the proposals in this report, Scheme eligibility and the concessions offered for 2023/24 remain unchanged from eligibility in the current year and therefore there will be a neutral impact upon those groups with protected characteristics.

The proposed changes to the scheme have been consulted on as part of the broader Passenger and Community Transport 2022 Consultation. As such the impact of the proposed changes are outlined within the Passenger Transport SP23 Savings Proposals Decision Day report's equalities impact assessment.