

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Report

<b>Committee:</b>	Economy, Transport and Environment Select Committee
<b>Date:</b>	14 November 2017
<b>Title:</b>	Concessionary Fares Scheme Update
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Select Committee as to how the change in policy from January 2017 to no longer automatically renew older persons passes that have not been used for 6 months is working and, based on a review of the data, what impact this change of policy has had.

### 2. Contextual Information

- 2.1 The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) is a statutory scheme which allows free off-peak travel on local bus services for older people and for those with certain disabilities. The statutory scheme provides for free bus travel between 0930 and 2300 hours on weekdays and at any time during weekends.
- 2.2 Since April 2011, this has been administered by upper-tier authorities with the County Council administering the scheme in Hampshire. Following a public consultation and a detailed equalities impact assessment, the scheme approved by the County Council included several enhancements beyond the statutory requirements, namely all day travel for holders of a disabled person's pass; a companion pass for those unable to travel unaccompanied; half fare travel for pass holders on Dial-a-Ride and Call&Go services; and vouchers for those unable to use the bus for use on Dial-a-Ride and Call&Go voluntary car schemes and participating taxis.
- 2.3 Passes were initially issued annually, increasing to four years by 2004.
- 2.4 Passes are now issued every five years except where shorter period passes are appropriate on a case by case basis. Expiry dates are now spread throughout the year to avoid a peak of renewals in February and March, as was the case previously.
- 2.5 In 2011, when the County Council was given responsibility for the scheme, there were 194,000 passes on issue, of which 13,000 were classified as for disabled users. 56,000 residents chose alternative, discretionary, concessions such as tokens or railcards. The alternatives, other than tokens for those eligible for a disabled person's pass are no longer available.

- 2.6 As of July 2017, there were 256,857 passes on issue, of which 18,400 are classified for disabled users and 3,517 for disabled users plus companion. 3,855 residents chose the alternative of vouchers.
- 2.7 In the year to July 2017, 9,008 residents joined the scheme.
- 2.8 Since spring 2017, lost or stolen passes can now be renewed online to avoid the need to write or telephone the County Council.
- 2.9 Special schools, or mainstream schools with attached units, are requested to encourage their pupils to apply for a disabled person's pass to promote independent living and travel. A programme to remind schools of this is run each autumn.

### **3. Direction of Travel**

- 3.1 Concessionary travel is budgeted to cost the County Council £13.9 million in the year to March 2018, which equates to around one quarter of all expenditure on Highways and Transport. Therefore the need for further efficiencies is ongoing and this involves assessing all aspects of administrative and operator costs.
- 3.2 Since 2011, passes have been renewed automatically on expiry due to the volume of passes, up to 90,000, expiring in March in a given year. To ease the peak, pass renewals have been spread throughout the year as new applicants join the scheme. This is now being introduced to existing pass renewals so that the 45,000 passes due to expire in March 2018 will be renewed in three batches and their future renewal dates spread over a wider time period.
- 3.3 Before passes are renewed, the list of users is checked against 'Tell Us Once', the multi-agency system which notifies a range of authorities when a resident has passed away. Mortascreen, which adds similar data on a national basis, and the National Fraud Initiative are also used to identify whether a passholder is still alive and resident in Hampshire. This is to avoid possible distress, wasted expense, and the risk of fraud of passes no longer required falling into the wrong hands.
- 3.4 In spite of checks, figures showed that around 1% of passes were returned as 'gone away', while data from other schemes suggested that a proportion of passes issued are never used.
- 3.5 On 3 November 2016, the Select Committee was advised of a proposal, later approved by the Executive Member for Environment and Transport, that from January 2017 older persons' passes would no longer be automatically renewed if they had not been recorded as having been used in the previous six months.
- 3.6 Prior to the change a communications programme was put in place with posters displayed on buses, community transport vehicles and sent to around 1,000 groups in Hampshire to make residents aware that they simply have to make one phone call for the pass to be renewed.
- 3.7 The new approach to renewals does not affect eligibility criteria for a pass. Disabled Persons' passes are unaffected by this change and are still automatically renewed, subject to any future need to review eligibility.

#### **4. Results to date**

- 4.1. Some 40,000 passes were due for renewal in March 2017 and of these 30,000 were the last of the old format cards for which no journey information was available so they could not be subject to the new process. 10,000 cards provided usage information and, of these 3,355 passes (34%) were not automatically renewed due to lack of recorded card use. To date 1,270 passes have subsequently been requested by those people who did not automatically have their pass renewed. A further 34,000 passes due to be renewed in the months before the next bulk renewal in March 2018 are being dealt with in the same manner.
- 4.2. So far this process has only been applied where passes have not been used in the previous 12 months, rather than six months, as analysis of March bulk renewals suggested that a larger than average number of pass holders would be affected and, at that time, the anticipated resulting queries could not be accommodated with ease. It is proposed that six months continues to be the target, to be met once processes are established to accommodate resulting enquiries within acceptable timeframes and standards.
- 4.3. Experience to date, including regular monthly renewals since March, has shown that, on average, 32% of passes are not recorded as being used and that, after subsequent requests for renewal, the total of passes not renewed remains at just over 20%.
- 4.4. There are currently a further 45,000 passes due for renewal in March 2018, and it is proposed that approval not to automatically renew an Older Person's concessionary pass which has not been used during the previous six months will continue for the 2018/19 scheme. As mentioned above, Disabled Persons' passes continue to be renewed automatically subject to any appropriate review of eligibility.
- 4.5. The cost to the County Council of issuing a pass and keeping it active for five years with no travel is £2.40. The change of process has generated an initial saving of £5,000 in production costs, as well as a further saving of £5 per pass where passes are returned by post and records updated manually. This is in addition to avoiding any unnecessary distress for relatives where a pass holder has died, and it also reduces the risk of potential fraud where a pass is used by someone else. Although the average cost of a pass to the County Council is around £50 a year, an extensively used pass, as might be the case if used fraudulently has a potential to cost the County Council over £500 a year.

#### **5. Learning points**

- 5.1 The facility to apply online for replacement passes which have been lost or stolen has been added in 2017. The extension of this to allow online renewal of passes which have expired or are due to expire would provide residents with another option where their pass is not being renewed automatically and would avoid the need for a telephone call.
- 5.2 Passholders registered for Taxi-share have been included for automatic renewal as these journeys are not recorded electronically. Extending this to community transport is currently being investigated.

- 5.3 Journeys made elsewhere in England, outside of Hampshire, are recorded but those made exclusively in London are not passed through to the County Council due to the different system used in London.
- 5.4 The ability to reduce the number of cards on issue, over time, by 20% and to avoid passes being sent out when they are no longer needed will improve the service offered to Hampshire residents. There is also the potential to make a cumulative saving of at least £25,000 in production costs over the five year pass renewal cycle, and reduce the risk of misuse.
- 5.5 A clearer picture will appear as the cycle progresses.

## **6. Next steps**

- 6.1 To achieve further efficiencies during 2018, Hampshire County Council will introduce electronic hotlisting of passes which are no longer valid to reduce the risk of improper use and the resultant costs to the County Council. Hotlisting means that serial numbers of passes which have been replaced through loss or theft are passed to the bus operators in Hampshire so that if such a pass were presented for travel it would be identified by bus' electronic ticket machine. As noted, a misused pass could cost the County Council over £500 a year.
- 6.2 Bus passes will be hotlisted only in the following circumstances:
- the original pass has been reported either lost or stolen and been replaced with a new pass, or
  - a passholder has been written to and the letter has been returned by the Royal Mail indicating the pass holder has moved address, or
  - a passholder has been written to, asking for up to date proof of eligibility or to return the pass and they have not done so.
- 6.3 A pass which is no longer valid will be withdrawn and retained by the bus driver. If a pass is withdrawn and the driver is satisfied that the user is the person identified on the pass, the user will still be able to make that journey. However, subsequent journeys will need to be paid for until either the correct pass is used or a new valid pass obtained.
- 6.4 At present, invalid passes are withdrawn when identified by bus company staff, and this change will utilise the Smartcard capability of the new ticket machines now in use in Hampshire.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 The Select Committee is asked to note this report.

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:****Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	no
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	no
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	yes

**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.)**

Document

Location

None

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

1.1. 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 under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

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

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) 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.

### **1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision, therefore impact assessments have not been undertaken.

### **2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

2.1. Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision, therefore impact assessments have not been undertaken.

**3. Impact on Climate Change:**

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

Impact assessments are undertaken in advance of any formal executive decision. Information about those impact assessments, including equalities and impact on crime and disorder and on climate change, will be set out in the appendices to the relevant decision making reports. This report is an update to the Select Committee and is not proposing any change or decision and therefore, in this case, an impact assessment has not been undertaken.