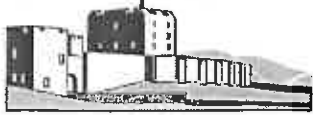


AI(b) refers

**CARLISLE
CITY COUNCIL**



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REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

**PORTFOLIO AREA: POLICY, PERFORMANCE, MANAGEMENT,
FINANCE AND RESOURCES**

Date of Meeting: 20 December

Public

Key Decision: Yes

Recorded in Forward Plan: Yes

Inside Policy Framework

Title: CONCESSIONARY FARES SCHEME ENHANCEMENT UPDATE

Report of: Head of Revenues and Benefits Services

Report reference: RB11/04

Summary:

This report updates members of issues raised on the Concessionary Fares report to the Executive on 8 November 2004 (RB8/04) and scrutinised by Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 November 2004.

Recommendations:

See 7.1 of report.

Contact Officer: Peter B Mason

Ext: 7270

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

CITY OF CARLISLE

To: The Executive
Date: 20 December 2004

RB11/04

CONCESSIONARY FARES SCHEME ENHANCEMENT UPDATE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In the report to the Executive of the 8 November 2004 (scrutinised by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 November) on the Concessionary Fares Scheme, the Executive were advised that due to the poor response rate when consulting pensioners on their preferences for improvements to the Scheme i.e. less than 50 responses, further consultation had been undertaken under the November 2004 Citizens Panel arrangements.
- 1.2 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny committee also requested information on the cost of extending the Concessionary Fares Scheme to the unemployed and recipients of Incapacity Benefit.
- 1.3 This report updates members on these issues and early observations from the Christmas/New Year 2004/05 free travel promotion.

2. RESULTS OF SECOND SURVEY

- 2.1 The second survey undertaken as part of the November's Citizens Panel consultation arrangements was far more successful in canvassing pensioners and disabled peoples views with 191 responses. The results indicate that 84% of passholders would prefer a 60% concession whilst only 16% would prefer a Christmas/New Year fares holiday.

3. EXTENDING CONCESSION TO OTHER GROUPS

- 3.1 Statistics available suggest that there are 4,467 Carlisle residents (under 60) on Incapacity Benefit (August 2003 Statistics) and 1,081 residents (August 2004 statistics) on the unemployment register.
- 3.2 The cost of extending the scheme to these groups would be approximately £200,000 - £300,000 pa depending on take up and mobility of this group of residents i.e. how many bus journeys they would undertake each week.

3.3 If the Council is minded to investigate this option further detailed investigations including surveys will have to be undertaken to establish more accurate costing estimates. Also on what help is already available for these groups from Jobcentre Plus for attending job interviews.

4. CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR 2004 FREE TRAVEL PROMOTION

4.1 Passholders are far more aware of the Christmas/New Year promotion this year than last year i.e. lots more telephone calls and some complaints about how far a passholder can travel on the bus.

4.2 The main problem is the Newcastle route run jointly by Arriva and Stagecoach. Under the annual scheme Stagecoach allow concessionary travel (at a cost to the Council) all the way to Newcastle whilst Arriva due to bus congestion issues at the Newcastle end of the route are only able to allow concessionary travel to the Cumbria border.

4.3 Under the Christmas pilot Passholders have been able to get to Newcastle free (on Stagecoach) but requested to pay for their return journey (on Arriva). To avoid confusion Stagecoach drivers are now advising passholders that if they return on an Arriva bus they will have to pay to the Cumbria border.

4.4 If the Council decides to run the free Christmas promotion in future years, to avoid confusion, it is suggested that free travel should be restricted to bus travel in the Carlisle District. Under the normal scheme passholders can use their pass to travel on any Cumbria bus or buses to neighbouring towns (Dumfries, Newcastle, Annan etc). Pass holders are complaining that whilst they can get to Keswick free they have to pay for the bus from Keswick to Windermere. It was never the intention to bring every Cumbria Bus operator in on Carlisle's free Christmas travel promotion.

5. SUMMARY

5.1 In summary as advised in my report of the 8 November

i) The cost of increasing the Council's concession from 50% to 60% of the full bus fare is £70,000 p.a. * This is included in the draft budget proposals already being considered.

ii) Introducing a free (four weeks) Christmas/New Year travel concession on an annual basis would cost £75,000 per annum or £56,250 for a three week promotion. *

* Note: Due to current recurring underspend of approximately £55,000 cost of increase from 50% to 60% concession is £70,000 i.e. full cost £125,000 - £55,000. This underspend was utilised in financing the 'pilots' in 2003/04 and 2004/05. Figures are based on no increase in pensioner ridership or above inflationary increases in bus fares.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation to Date.

See 2.1 of report.

6.2 Consultation proposed.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The Executive's views are sought on whether they now have enough information to progress the resolution made at Full Council on 12 February 2004, as part of the 2005/06 budget deliberations i.e. 'any further enhancements to the Concessionary Fares Scheme will be subject to the results of the (Christmas 2004 free travel) pilot and a consultation exercise to be undertaken with pensioners.

8. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

9. IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources – Not Applicable
- Financial – Not Applicable
- Legal – Not Applicable
- Corporate – Not Applicable
- Risk Management – Not Applicable
- Equality Issues – Not Applicable
- Environmental – Not Applicable

- Crime and Disorder – Not Applicable
- Impact on Customers – Not Applicable

Peter B Mason
HEAD OF REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICES

Revenues & Benefits
Carlisle
17 December 2004
PM/EL/RB11-04