

DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS, STREETSCENE AND BROADBAND - CLLR JOHN THOMSON

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SERVICE

OFFICER CONTACT: Eric Egar 01225 713368 e mail: eric.egar@wiltshire.gov.uk

REFERENCE: HSB-42-14

CHANGES TO CONCESSIONARY BUS PASS SCHEME

Purpose of Report

The statutory national bus pass scheme requires transport authorities to provide a bus pass to elderly and disabled people that can be used from 0930 to 2300 Mondays to Fridays and all day at weekends. Local authorities are empowered to provide enhanced concessions at local expense and in Wiltshire an early morning concession of free travel before 0930 on Mondays to Fridays is provided so that the Wiltshire Bus Pass can currently be used at any time.

Due to financial constraints faced by the Council, and the need to prioritise available resources against competing demands, the Council is looking to reduce the cost of the Wiltshire Bus Pass by changing the start of the free travel to 0930.

Consultation

A public consultation has been carried out to ascertain the views of users and the general public regarding the impact of the proposals. This report includes the responses to the consultation, as well as an Equality Impact Assessment.

Options Considered

- (i) To alter the scheme to discontinue free travel before 0930 on weekdays, or
- (ii) to alter the scheme to discontinue free travel before 0900 on weekdays.
- (iii) To decide whether the alteration (i) or (ii) above should apply to older people and disabled people or just to older people.
- (iv) To decide whether exceptions will be allowed where necessary because the bus service would otherwise provide unacceptably limited journey opportunities after free travel starts. (To be determined by officers based on the availability of alternative journey times for each service and reviewed from time to time in line with bus service changes.)

Reason for Decision

To achieve savings of £180,000 from review of free bus travel before 0930 by elderly and disabled bus pass holders, as identified in the financial plan for 2014-2015.

Modifying the scheme so that free travel is available from 0930 onwards on weekdays will maintain the level of service guaranteed under the national bus pass scheme, whilst maximising the financial savings. The Wiltshire scheme will still provide the extra facility for people who cannot use buses unaided to take a companion free of charge.

There are options that could be applied within Wiltshire to start free travel at 0900, or to make exceptions for disabled users or rural services. These would partially address the impacts on protected groups but there would be significant reductions in the financial savings that could be achieved.

<p><u>DECISION MADE</u></p> <p>I approve that the scheme to start free travel from 0930 on weekdays be altered, except where buses are very infrequent as explained in the report</p> <p>This decision was published on 19 December 2014 and will come into force on 31 December 2014.</p>
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The following supporting documents are attached:

- Report
- Appendix 1 – Provisional list of service exceptions from 0930 start time
- Appendix 2 – Equality analysis evidence Document
- Appendix 2A – Results of consultation

Date: 19 December 2014

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Cllr John Thomson
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for
Highways, Streetscene and Broadband