



AGENDA ITEM: 14

COUNCIL: 13 April 2011

Report of: Director Designate (ACE)

Contact for further information: Ms. K. Webber (Extn. 5005)

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT AND CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL

Wards affected: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To advise Members of a proposed Lancashire County Council area wide approach to transitional arrangements in relation to travel on Community Transport in Lancashire.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Council provide funding of £11,151 to the County Council towards the maintenance of the current facilities for free travel on community transport during a three month transitional period.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 On 23rd February 2011 Council received a report providing the results of the Borough Council's consultation on discretionary travel within the Borough from 1st April 2011, outlining options for the future, together with an Equality Impact Assessment.

3.2 Council discussed the report and resolved that the Assistant Chief Executive be authorised to take all appropriate action to cease investment in the area of travel concessions and, in addition, request Lancashire County Council to use part of the funding transferred to offer eligible West Lancashire elderly and disabled residents a discretionary travel concession in relation to travel on Community Transport.

3.3 In reaching this decision Council took account of the results of a consultation exercise (which demonstrated that the ability to use the bus pass on Community Transport was the most valued of the extra discretions), the equality impact assessment, the fact that the statutory responsibility to provide travel concessions transferred to LCC from WLBC from 1st April 2011, that all the

money currently spent on statutory and discretionary concessions had been removed from the Borough Council's budget by Government, and the limited availability of other bus services within parts of the Borough.

- 3.4 The County Council were subsequently advised of this decision, and this followed earlier correspondence and discussions at various levels on the matter. Since that time the County Council have been in liaison with District Councils and Community Transport operators in the run up to the transfer on 1st April 2011.
- 3.5 Discussions between Lancashire County Council and stakeholders culminated at the end of March 2011 in the County Council proposing to District Councils an approach whereby current service levels in relation to travel on community transport would be retained during a transitional period, whilst a review was undertaken which would inform future arrangements.
- 3.6 As a result, Leaders of Councils within the Lancashire County Council area have given support "in principle" to a three month transitional period, which will see the County Council contributing £100,000 to this arrangement and District Councils a total of £50,000. This would involve a contribution of £11,151 from West Lancashire Borough Council in reflection of past spending patterns.
- 3.7 The County Council has indicated that if this funding is made available it will work with community transport operators and District Councils to ensure a sustainable and affordable approach beyond June 2011. The environmental, economic and social and well-being powers under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 are available to allow the Council to make a contribution. The Council in exercising such powers must have regard to the Community Strategy (see below). An equality impact assessment is appended to the report. In accordance with the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010 in exercising its functions must have due regard to the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

This includes having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The EIA assists these considerations.

4.0 ISSUES

- 4.1 Members are asked to consider the proposed transitional approach and the “in principle” agreement of authorities in the Lancashire County area, together with the associated funding contribution required.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 5.1 Transport is identified as a key issue within the Sustainable Community Strategy. The proposals in the report allow the potential for LCC to review the operation of concessionary travel on community transport in the future, in order to ensure a sustainable approach going forward.

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The contribution requested from this Council towards the cost of the transitional arrangements is £11,151. When Council set its budget in February an underspend across the Council was forecast in 2010/11 and it would be possible to identify funding from this source.

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 County and District Councils in Lancashire have indicated that there is a wish to develop a sustainable approach to concessionary travel going forward. The arrangements outlined in the report aim to mitigate the risks associated with changes to the scheme in the transitional period.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

This decision has a direct impact on members of the public and stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required and is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the recommendations contained within this report.

Appendices

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment

West Lancashire Borough Council
EIA process for services, policies, projects and strategies

Question 1

Using information that you have gathered from service monitoring, surveys, consultation, and other sources such as anecdotal information fed back by members of staff, in your opinion, could your service/policy/strategy/decision (including decisions to cut or change a service or policy) disadvantage, or have a potentially disproportionately negative effect on, any of the following groups of people:

- People of different ages – including young and older people
- People with a disability
- People of different races/ethnicities/nationalities
- Men
- Women
- People of different religions/beliefs
- People of different sexual orientations
- People who are or have identified as transgender
- People who are married or in a civil partnership
- Women who are pregnant or on maternity leave or men whose partners are pregnant or on maternity leave
- People living in areas of deprivation or who are financially disadvantaged

None Identified

Question 2

What sources of information have you used to come to this decision?

- *Previous consultation results as reported to Council on 23rd February 2011.*
- *Published comments from Dial-a-Ride.*
- *Petition received by the Council on 21st March 2011 – Public Funding Dial-a-Ride*

Question 3

How have you tried to involve people/groups in developing your service/policy/strategy or in making your decision (including decisions to cut or change a service or policy)?

Yes, see above

Question 4

Could your service/policy/strategy or decision (including decisions to cut or change a service or policy) help or hamper our ability to meet our duties under the Equality Act 2010? Duties are to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity (removing or minimising disadvantage, meeting the needs of people)
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it

If the recommendation of the report is agreed it will support service continuation at the current level for a transitional period while the Lancashire wide approach is reviewed. This could help meet these duties by enabling a transition to an affordable, sustainable approach to Community Transport provision in the future.

Question 5

What actions will you take to address any issues raised in your answers above?

Officers will continue to liaise with officers at the County Council during the transitional period.