

Committee: Environment
Date: 16th September 2008
Title: Concessionary Travel
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Agenda Item

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Item for
information

Summary

1. This report provides an update on the concessionary travel scheme and amendments negotiated between the partners and providers. The key points are:
 - The core hours of the Essex scheme will be 9.00am to midnight Monday – Friday and any time weekends and Bank Holidays.
 - The reimbursement rate paid to the bus companies will be increased, with the companies withdrawing their appeal claims for 2007/08.
 - Official notice of the revised scheme will be issued to providers shortly, with a start date to be agreed but probably by the end of October.
 - The 2008/09 original budget should be sufficient to meet the financial requirements.

Recommendations

2. None

Background Papers

3. None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	The revisions to the scheme have been consulted and communicated between all partners and providers. The basis of the changes are as a result of feedback from service users
Community Safety	No direct implications.
Equalities	No direct implications.
Finance	The budget available should be sufficient to meet the requirements in 2008/09.
Human Rights	No direct implications.
Legal implications	No direct implications.
Sustainability	No direct implications.

Ward-specific impacts	No direct implications.
Workforce/Workplace	No direct implications.

Situation

4. The new Essex scheme came into effect on 1 April 2008. The core hours were in accordance with the government guidelines of 9.30 – 23.00 Monday to Friday and any times weekends and Bank Holidays.
5. Whilst the old scheme ceased to exist on 31 March 2008 a number of providers had appeals lodged for additional payments as, in their opinion, the scheme did not fully cover the cost of the service. The partnership had appeals totalling almost £7million.
6. The partnership has been working with the providers to try and resolve the outstanding appeals and to avoid a similar situation arising for the 2008/09 year.
7. The primary outcomes of the negotiations are that:
 - The Essex scheme operating times have been extended and the bus passes can now be used between 9.00am and midnight Monday to Friday and any time weekends and Bank Holidays. Registered companions are also covered by the changes.
 - The reimbursement rate paid to the providers has increased.
 - The providers have withdrawn their 2007/08 appeals.
8. The Essex scheme remains in its infancy and full annual costs will not be known for another 8 – 10 months. However, whilst the increase in the reimbursement rate will in itself mean an increase in the budget this should be offset by no longer needing to use budgets identified for settlement of appeals.
9. In addition, the final figures for the 2007/08 year under the old scheme have now been calculated and this council has received a refund of £60,000 which has been set aside and will, if necessary, be used to support the scheme over the coming 3 years.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The actual spend exceeds the budget	2	4	Regular review and monitoring is being undertaken and early indications are that the budget is on track.