NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Streetscene and Engineering Cabinet Board
22nd February 2019

Urgent Report of the Head of Engineering & Transport
D. W. Griffiths

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All

Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme

Purpose of Report

1 To seek Members' approval for chief officers to enter into an agreement with Welsh Government for Welsh Ministers to act as their agents pursuant to Section 83 of the Government of Wales Act (GoWA) 2006 for the bulk issue of replacement travel concession cards.

Executive Summary

2 The Concessionary Travel Scheme allows residents over 60 and those with a disability to travel free on local bus services.

3 Currently Local Authorities administer the Concessionary Travel Scheme on behalf of Welsh Government.

4 Responsibilities include reimbursement to bus operators for revenue forgone, issuing of new and replacement bus passes, monitoring bus pass usage and investigating any anomalies that may arise from miss use of the scheme.

5 In NPT there are currently circa 38,000 elderly and disabled cards in circulation. The total for the whole of Wales is circa 750,000.

6 Each card has a chip which enables the operator to record when and where the card was used and enables the operator to claim the concessionary fare from Welsh Government via the Local Authority.

7 The chip in these cards will expire on the 31st December 2019; this will leave residents without a bus pass.

8 WG intend to commission an agency to bulk re-issue the 750,000 cards prior to the 31st December 2019.

Background

9 The Concessionary Travel Scheme allows residents over 60 and those with a disability to travel free on local bus services.

10 Currently Local Authorities administer the Concessionary Travel Scheme on behalf of Welsh Government.

11 Responsibilities include reimbursement to bus operators for revenue forgone, issuing of new and replacement bus passes, monitoring bus pass usage and investigating any anomalies that may arise from miss use of the scheme.

12 In NPT there are currently circa 38,000 elderly and disabled cards in circulation. The total for the whole of Wales is circa 750,000.

13 Each card has a chip which enables the operator to record when and where the card was used and enables the operator to claim the concessionary fare from W.G via the LA.

14 The chip in these cards will expire on the 31st December 2019; this will leave residents without a bus pass.

15 WG intend to commission an agency to bulk re-issue the 750,000 cards prior to the 31st December 2019.

16 A letter was received by the Chief Executive from WG requesting an agreement is signed to authorise WG to bulk issue the concessionary cards (Appendix A).

17 There are currently no delegated powers in the Authority's Constitution given to officers which authorise them to enter into an agreement with WG for the bulk reissue travel concession cards.

18 Authorisation is therefore sought from Cabinet Board to authorise the Chief Executive and the Director of Environment to each be

able to enter into such agreements with WG for the bulk reissue of travel concession cards.

Financial Impact

19 There is no financial impact related to the entering of the agreement for the bulk reissue of replacement cards.

Equality Impact Assessment

20 There is no requirement for an EIA or IIA as this proposal relates purely to a card replacement programme for the whole of Wales.

Workforce Impact

21 There are no workforce impacts related to the bulk re-issue of the replacement cards.

Legal Impact

22 Council will be legally bound by any agreement entered into by the Chief Executive or the Director of Environment in relation to agreements of the bulk issue of concessionary cards.

Risk Management

23 The process is being managed by WG officers and their agents.

Consultation

24 There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item

Recommendation

25 It is recommended that Cabinet Board delegate to the Chief Executive and the Director of Environment the power to determine whether or not the Authority should enter into agreement with WG for the purpose of the reissue of concessionary cards and to execute such agreement with WG following any such determination to do so.

Reason for Proposed Decision

26 To allow the bulk re-issue of bus passes.

Implementation of Decision

27 The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

28 Appendix A - Welsh Government Letter to Chief Executive.

List of Background Papers

29 Nil

Officer Contact

30 Mr Peter Jackson, Integrated Transport Manager
Tel: 01639 686091 or e-mail: p.jackson@npt.gov.uk

Appendix A

Ken Skates AC/AM
Gweinidog yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy and Transport

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

To: Chief Executives

Local Authorities

21 February 2019

Dear Chief Executive

Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme

You will have received a letter dated 8 February 2019 from Sheena Hague, Deputy Director, Network Management Division at the Welsh Government about the necessary steps required to renew, enhance and maintain the free Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme in Wales.

As the Minister for Economy and Transport and WLGA Spokesperson for Transport, Environment and Sustainability, we have been liaising on what is needed to ensure that those eligible for concessionary travel continue to receive the full benefits of the scheme without interruption during the renewal process. Following our discussions, we have agreed that a central service is best placed to undertake the bulk issue of replacement concessionary travel cards by 31 December 2019.

In order for this to happen each local authority in Wales will need to grant authority for Welsh Ministers to act as their agents pursuant to section 83 of GoWA 2006 for the bulk issue of replacement travel concession cards by 31 December 2019. A pro-forma for your signature, and agreement in principle, is attached to this letter for return. The appropriate formal agency agreement is in development and will be shared with you as soon as possible.

Please respond as a matter of urgency. All 22 local authorities must respond, granting their authority in principle, in order for this initiative to proceed.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
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Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales

The agency arrangement will not affect any other aspect of concessionary travel administration during or beyond this period of bulk re-application and card replacement. The provision of council's administrative costs of £3 per card will continue to apply throughout 2019/20 and we recognise that a six month notice

period will be given in advance of any change in this administrative payment mechanism.

We wish to work inclusively to optimise arrangements related to administration of concessionary bus travel; eligibility assessment, card issuing/replacement, fraud management and operator reimbursement and look forward to further dialogue and consultation to secure the best outcomes.

Yours sincerely,

Ken Skates AM
Minister for Economy and Transport

Councillor Andrew Morgan
WLGA Spokesperson for Transport, Environment and Sustainability

Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme - Bulk Re-application and Card Replacement

We hereby authorise Welsh Ministers to act as agents pursuant to section 83 of GoWA 2006, subject to appropriate formal agreement, for XXXXXXXXXXXXX Council for the bulk issue of replacement travel concession cards within this authority's area by 31 December 2019.

---------- Signature
An authorised signatory of ……..Council
---------- Name
---------- Job Title
---------- Date

----------Signature
An authorised signatory of …… Council
---------- Name
---------- Job Title
----------Date