

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....11th February 2010

1. Title of Item/Report

English National Concessionary Travel Scheme Update

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet was provided with a report that provided advice on the progress of the introduction of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) since its introduction on 1st April 2008 and the financial implications of operation of the scheme for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council in 2010/11. The report acknowledged the findings of the Scrutiny review of this service area approved by Cabinet in November 2009. It also addressed previous Cabinet requests for a review of the way in which disabled entitlement to ENCTS passes were assessed and updated Members on progress towards future pass issue from libraries.

It was noted that, in January 2009, Cabinet had approved a local enhancement in the Tees Valley that removed all restrictions on the time of travel. This would operate for the year ending 31st March 2010. In March 2010 agreement was reached with operators on continuing the fixed payment system in 2009/2010.

In November 2009 Cabinet agreed recommendations of the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee that included that 'officers enter into dual negotiations for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme concession 2010/11 subsidy with the alternative option of introducing a reduced fare for pass holders travelling before 9.30am Monday – Friday'.

It was, therefore, recommended that Cabinet approve that the Council seek continuing participation in the Tees Valley enhanced scheme, for 1 year commencing 1st April 2010, offering free travel within and between the areas covered by Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Councils at any time of day.

It was further recommended that this be subject to the continuing participation of the other local authorities in the scheme, available budgets and any agreed system of nominal charges for trips before 9.30am as previously approved by Cabinet.

Members noted the position surrounding vetting applications on the grounds of disability and were informed that the introduction of an assessment system, based on the use of occupational therapists, was unlikely to be possible within the following two years. Given that the next mass renewal of passes would be for 2012/13 it was recommended that any new system was not adopted until 2012.

Since Cabinet agreed to introduce charges for lost/stolen passes in January 2009, the demand for replacement passes has fallen from over 70 a month to just over 20 a month it was therefore recommended that the charges for replacement passes remain at their present level.

In January 2009 Members were informed of proposals to extend the number of outlets at which ENCTS applications can be made to all libraries in 2009. Although the new customer contact centre at Thornaby was now processing ENCTS applications, it had not been possible to add any more outlets at this stage. Following discussions with ICT it was apparent that adding more high bandwidth network connections in libraries will be difficult and expensive. It was agreed that rather than add new computers to undertake the task, the use of existing computers to process ENCTS would be preferable. However, the existing equipment in libraries does not meet the minimum standards needed to process ENCTS applications. Therefore, £20,000 will be used from existing resources in 2010/11 to provide libraries with new computers, cameras and software to enable them to process ENCTS applications.

RESOLVED that:-

1. approval be given to seeking continuing participation in the Tees Valley wide enhancement to the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) offering free travel within and between the areas covered by Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Councils.
2. the Council enters into dual negotiations with the bus operators for 2010/11 based on either continuation of the any time of day enhancement or a nominal charge for journeys made before 9.30am under the enhanced scheme.
3. any agreed continuation of the enhancement enabling travel at any time of day operates for a one-year period commencing on 1st April 2010.

4. any changes to the administration system for vetting applications on grounds of disability be deferred to 2012.
5. charges for replacement passes remain at £5 for the first pass and £10 for subsequent passes.
6. new computers be provided in all main libraries, commencing at Stockton and Billingham, plus cameras and software to enable them to register residents for the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS).

3. Reasons for the Decision

The decision of Cabinet to consider a report reviewing the operation of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) six months after the commencement of its operation.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Lupton declared a personal non prejudicial interest in the item entitled English National Concessionary Travel Scheme Update as he held a current pass under the ENCTS and proposals in the report would allow him to claim for a pass during 2010/11. Councillor Mrs Beaumont also declared the same interest as she also held a current pass under the ENCTS and proposals in the report would allow her also to claim for a pass during 2010/11.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Proper Officer  
15 February 2010