WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
21st AUGUST 2008

Review of Travel Token Conditions

OPEN	
COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME	**Stronger Communities**
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	**A Well-Run and Responsive Council**
CABINET MEMBER:	**Councillor Mrs A T Hingley**
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APPENDICES	**None**

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To consider the current conditions in relation to the eligibility for Travel Tokens, and to propose an amendment.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

   Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council that:-

2.1 **The rules of the current Transport Token scheme be amended to remove the car use condition.**

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 For many years the Council has operated a Travel Token scheme which runs along side the Concessionary Travel scheme.

3.2 The current value of the Travel Tokens is £35 per year, and these can be spent on taxis. During the budget considerations for 2007/08 it was approved that this level should increase by £5 per year to reach £50 per annum by 2011/12. Accordingly an additional £3k per annum has been added to this budget area to cover the increased value.

3.3 There are three basic conditions that currently have to be satisfied in order to become eligible for the transport tokens, these are summarised as follows:

   • Applicants have to be aged over 80, **or** are registered disabled and in receipt of Higher Disability Living Allowance;
   • Applicants can have either the Concessionary Bus Pass **or** Transport Tokens;
   • Applicants are not eligible for the scheme if they have use of a car.

3.4 The definition for the use of a car is as follows:

> "Car use – an applicant is deemed to have the use of a car under the following circumstances:
> (i)   the applicant owns and drives a car OR
> (ii)   the applicant is permitted to drive a car belonging to someone else living at the same address as the applicant OR
> (iii)   the applicant is regularly driven by someone else"

3.5   The Council has recently received a number of complaints surrounding the car use condition, which has prompted a review as to the appropriateness of this criterion. The main reason for the complaints being that although elderly residents maybe living with family or friends who own vehicles, they are not necessarily available for the use of the applicants.

3.6   The number of issues for travel tokens for the last four years is as follows:

- 2004/05 – 818
- 2005/06 – 748
- 2006/07 – 644
- 2007/08 – 612

(It is suggested that the reduction in number of issues relates to the additional benefits at that are available with the bus passes.)

3.7   As from 1 April 2008 the new national free fare concessionary bus pass has been implemented. There are significantly additional benefits under this scheme and the Council has seen an increase of over 20% in the number of pass holders during the last few months.

3.8   The Council issues transport tokens annually from 1 July; it is too early to say with any degree of certainty for the 2008/09 issue of transport tokens what the impact will be of the new bus pass. However, there has been a noticeable reduction so far in the number of Transport Tokens issues compared to previous years, as there was in 2006 when countywide free bus travel was implemented.

3.9   If the Council removed the rule in relation to the use of a car this is likely to increase the number of applicants for transport tokens, given that bus transport is not an option that is available to all. However, it is difficult to predict the level of any increase, however, if all over 80's applied the maximum increase in cost would be around £26,000 per annum. This can be explained as follows:

- Total population aged over 80 – 4,262 (census 2001)
Of which
- Number of over 80's with a bus pass – 2,863
- Number of over 80's already claiming Transport Tokens – 612

This leaves a further **787** over 80's who are currently not claiming either the Bus Pass or the Transport Tokens. Budget exists for a further 45 successful applications, however, it is impossible to know how many of the 787 residents who are currently not claiming are dissuaded by the car use rule, if they all applied then the budget would be exceeded by the £26,000 quoted above.

3.10   In reality, given the additional benefits of the bus pass scheme it is envisaged that this rule could be amended and the additional costs accommodated within the overall

concessionary transport budget. However, this position would need to be reviewed in time to inform the 2010/11 budget.

4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 This report proposes a change in the current conditions of the travel token scheme. It is envisaged that this will encourage additional applications, however, given the implementation of the National free fare bus pass it is anticipated at this stage that this could be accommodated within existing budgets. However, this position would need to be kept under constant review and reported back to the Cabinet if the situation changed.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The financial matters have been fully discussed within the report, the worst case would lead to an additional budget requirement of £26k per annum if all over 80's applied. However, this is felt to be an unrealistic scenario given the reduction in the number of travel tokens issued in 2006, along with the additional benefits that the new 2008 bus pass provides.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This report is proposing a policy change in relation to the eligibility of the Transport Token scheme.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 As discussed within the report it is not possible to determine with any certainty the financial impact of this proposal. However, given the increase in the number of bus pass issues, and the reduction in the number of transport tokens issued as a result of the 2006 free fare Countywide Bus Pass, it is envisaged that these additional costs can be accommodated within existing budget.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The report recommends the removal of the car use condition from the Travel Token scheme.

9. CONSULTEES

9.1 None.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

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