
EXPENDITURE ON CONCESSIONARY FARES (Min 109/01)

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members to consider the current figures available in respect of Concessionary Travel Pass issues, and budgetary implications.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The current Concessionary Travel Scheme was introduced on 1st April 2001 to meet the mandatory requirements of the Transport Act 2000.
- 2.2 The Scheme is administered as part of the Essex Countywide Concessionary Travel Scheme and is an enhanced scheme to the requirements of the above Act.
- 2.3 All renewals of existing passes issued under the old scheme have been accelerated since 1st April 2001, so that in future all renewals will take place on 1st April of each year. At the time of preparation of this report, 384 renewals originally scheduled for January and February 2002 are being despatched to current pass holders, and will be completed by 1st October 2001.

3. Concessionary Passes Issued

- 3.1 At 31 March 2001, there were 2,409 pass holders in the District.
- 3.2 The number of pass holders in the district, at the date of preparation of this report, is now 4,697.
- 3.3 The original estimate for the take up of passes under the scheme, provided by Essex County Council's consultants, was an increase to 3,100.
- 3.4 It has been observed that during the issue of renewals to existing holders, the number of new applications increases. This is probably due to communication within the qualifying population.
- 3.5 It is difficult to predict the number of passes that will be issued, at present, because the scheme is still in its infancy and the historical data available is therefore limited. The Office for National Statistics Mid-2000 Population Estimates show the number of people in our District who are of pensionable age as 15,900. Potentially all of these qualify for the scheme.

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- 3.6 Rochford, together with Tendring, have experienced a greater "take up" than the other Essex Local Authorities, who appear to be, generally, in line with the original estimates produced.

4. Costs

- 4.1 The cost to the Authority is based on the usage of the Concessionary Passes by the residents of our District and not on the number of passes issued. Essex County Council's consultants, through a Monitoring Survey Programme, assess this usage.
- 4.2 Again, due to the infancy of the scheme, the consultants are unable to provide reliable estimates of the potential usage for either the current or future years. However, the consultants will be undertaking a review at the end of September 2001, and will publish the results as soon as possible afterwards, estimated to be early November 2001.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 There is currently insufficient information upon which to base reliable estimates for either pass issues or usage.
- 5.2 Whilst the number of pass holders is increasing, the number of new applications being received weekly is now falling. Passes issued provide an indication of potential workload but are not indicative of the potential cost to the Authority.
- 5.3 The cost to the Authority can only be based upon usage of the passes. The Authority is reliant upon Essex County Council's consultants for this information.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 To cope with the renewal of passes at a single date, additional temporary staff have been employed, and will need to be provided during March/April of each year.
- 6.2 The actual cost to the authority is difficult to estimate due to the uncertainty about the final number of passes that will be issued or the eventual adjustment of the cost of the pass following the collection of data on usage. However, an additional £30,000 will be included within the revised revenue estimates as the Authority has issued a higher number of passes than originally estimated. This is one of a number of issues which will be reported to the Member Budget Monitoring Sub-Committee on 25 September as part of the half yearly budget monitoring exercise.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- 7.2 That further reports be submitted to the relevant committees as part of the budgetary process.

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Background Papers:

None

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