

# PLYMOUTH'S PARK & RIDE

## Scrutiny Panel Report



### 1. Introduction

As part of the Scrutiny Panel investigation into the operation of the City's Park & Ride services, Officers were asked to produce a report on the options for the continued acceptance of Concessionary Travel passes on Plymouth's Park & Ride services and an examination of what other Local Authorities have done. Officers were also asked to report back with more detail on Cambridgeshire County Council's intention to introduce parking charges at their Park & Ride sites.

### 2. Background

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) follows primary legislation to permit free travel on all local bus services within England from 0930 to 2300 Monday to Friday and at any time over weekends and bank holidays for anyone of pensionable age or those who are disabled and meet set eligibility criteria. Each time a journey is made the Local Transport Authority responsible for the area the passenger boards reimburses the bus operator a set fee. As the Park and Ride services in Plymouth are registered as local bus services they have been included in the concessionary travel scheme since it started. However, in 2009 an amendment known as The Travel Concessions (Eligible Services) (Amendment) 2009 was introduced, which clarifies eligible services and gives Local Transport Authorities the option to make changes should they wish to. One of these clarifications is detailed below and explains that a service could be exempt if an amenity element is included within the fare. In the case of Park and Ride's the provision of car parking spaces can be considered an amenity.

#### **Direct quote from The Travel Concessions (Eligible Services) (Amendment) 2009**

*"4.—(1) A service is not an eligible service under section 146 of the Transport Act 2000*

*if—...*

*(e) the fare for the service includes a special amenity element.*

### 3. What has happened elsewhere

Whilst certain Park & Ride services have never accepted ENCTS passholders for free, such as Taunton, there are a small number which have amended entitlement since the Travel Concessions Amendment was introduced in 2009. Two examples are given below.

#### 3.1 Norwich

Norfolk County Council removed free travel for ENCTS passholders in Norwich, following approval from their Cabinet in 2011, on the Norwich Park & Ride service. ENCTS passholders are now charged a £1 flat fee per single journey. The Council reported receiving approximately 30 complaints, and whilst patronage reduced by 2% following the change in entitlement revenue increased by approximately £100k per annum.

### **3.2 Chester**

Cheshire West and Chester Council removed free travel for ENCTS passholders from April 2013. Again there were a number of complaints following the change. No data was available for whether passenger numbers and / or revenue increased or decreased. The service is tendered by the Local Authority.

### **4. Plymouth's Park & Ride**

Following advice from the Department for Transport and a further consideration by Officers of the Travel Concessions Amendment the conclusion is that it appears, in principle, the amenity of car parking provision can be demonstrated for each of Plymouth's three Park & Ride services which would make it possible for the Council to remove ENCTS free travel entitlement from these services. The Council's Legal team have been asked to consider this possible change against the Travel Concessions Amendment.

Additional factors to consider are:

- In certain circumstances, such as Milehouse, Windsor House and the George Park & Ride site, there will be other services departing from the same stop as the Park & Ride which will accept ENCTS passes.
- As the Park & Ride services are operated commercially the Council could not insist that an alternative reduced fare is offered for ENCTS passholders and would instead need to discuss with the relevant bus operators.

### **5. Charging to park at Cambridge's Park & Ride sites.**

This information is derived from a Cambridgeshire County Council Cabinet Report. Cambridge is planning to introduce a £1 car parking charge at its five Park & Ride sites in the city. It is not planned at this stage to introduce charges at the two new sites on the Cambridge Guided Busway.

Park & Ride bus services are provided commercially by Stagecoach (as in Plymouth) but site costs amount to £1 million per annum. Various income streams cover 25% of these costs leaving the Council to fund the shortfall. Consultants Atkins submitted estimates that a £1 car park charge would result in 5.4% fall in patronage but would however deliver approximately £1.5 million income generation per annum. A £1 charge at the Park & Ride site would still represent good value as car parking in the centre of Cambridge is limited and all –day parking costs between £12.50 and £25.00 per day.

Cambridgeshire County Council believes therefore that there will be a quick recovery from any reduction in patronage and they quoted the Oxford example where a £1.50 car park charge had little or no long term effect on patronage. It should be noted that Stagecoach has expressed publicly its strong objection to the introduction of parking charges.