

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 34

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Bus Fares and Concessions for Young People
Date of Meeting: 9 November 2009
Report of: Director of Environment
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 At its meeting on 14 September 2009 members of the Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked for information on bus fares and concessions for children and young people.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That members consider this report and decide what, if any, action they wish to recommend.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Local authorities have no powers in respect of bus fares on commercial bus services. They may set fares on bus services which they financially support, but only if this would not undermine the commercial network.

3.2 Locally Brighton & Hove Buses run a commercial scheme to encourage young people to use buses, called "Bus ID". This is a photocard, issued free of charge, and which is valid until 31 October following the holder's 18th birthday. It entitles holders to half price travel up to 6 pm on schooldays, a flat fare of 50p after 6 pm on schooldays, and at any time of day at weekends and during school holidays. It also entitles the holder to travel at a flat fare of 20p when accompanied by a fare paying adult. The holder can also choose to purchase a 7-day ticket for £8, or a 3-month ticket for £69. This scheme is a

purely commercial venture and is not funded by the local authority. It is one of the most generous schemes in the country : in many areas child fares are only valid for young people up to the age of 14. The take up of BusID is very high, and the scheme is well regarded by users.

3.3 There is no national scheme for concessionary travel for young people. It has recently been discussed, but the Government has stated that it has no proposals to introduce such a scheme. There is a current compulsory scheme for free travel within England for all people over the age of 60, and other who qualify on grounds of disability. Although this is a statutory requirement, the costs of reimbursing bus operators for the “foregone revenue” is met at a District, Borough or Unitary level. In 2008/9 Financial Year the cost to the city council was £7.58 million.

3.4 There are localised examples of a local authority funding concessionary travel for young people. For example, West Sussex County Council funds such a scheme, named “Your 3-in-1”. This gives half price bus travel to all students between the ages of 5 and 19. It also serves as an ID card, and gives discounts for retail and leisure activities. Transport for London also has such a scheme, but the costs are not known. There are anecdotal reports of the unintended consequences of the scheme in London : in the absence of anywhere else to go on a wet afternoon, young people travel around on the buses in large groups, rendering the upper deck of double-deck buses “no go” areas to others.

3.5 There are currently no proposals for such a scheme within Brighton & Hove. Were such a scheme to be contemplated, the anticipated costs of issuing 32,150 young people between the ages of 5 and 18 with a free bus pass would be around £8.87 million each year.

3.6 In addition to the Bus ID scheme for young people, Brighton & Hove Buses have a range of discounted offers, particularly aimed at University students. These discounts are not age related, and available to anyone holding an NUS or ISIC membership cards. These discounts include a £10 weekly ticket, £100 for 3 months, or £300 for a year. These discounted tickets are available from shops and post offices, and on-campus. Brighton & Hove Buses are proactive in selling these tickets, and attend “Freshers” week events at the Universities.

3.7 Brighton & Hove City Council and Brighton & Hove Buses have an award-winning Quality Bus Partnership. Amongst other objectives the partnership aims to make bus use as simple, safe and accessible as possible. The measures introduced include :

- Widespread availability of comprehensive timetable information
- “Easy-to-understand” timetable displays at every bus stop
- Timetable information available from several websites
- Real Time Information at 160 bus stops

- CCTV cameras fitted to every bus
- “Text Your Next Bus” details to mobile phones
- Regular visits by bus company staff to schools
- Wide range of discounted tickets
- Innovative publicity schemes e.g. “I use the bus because.....”
- Improvements to service frequencies and service reliability

It is as a result of these, and other measures, that bus patronage within the city has progressively risen, by 50% in the last twelve years, against a general national trend of reducing bus patronage. The city frequently scores highest in the country for satisfaction levels for bus services, and bus service information.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 As this is a report for information only there has been no consultation

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 As this is a report for information only, the financial implications have not been considered.

Legal Implications:

5.2 As this is a report for information only, the legal implications have not been considered.

Equalities Implications:

5.3 As this is a report for information only, there are no equalities issues arising from this report.

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 As this is a report for information only, the sustainability implications have not been considered.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 As this is a report for information only, the Crime & Disorder implications have not been considered.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 As this is a report for information only, the Risk and Opportunity Management implications have not been considered.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.7 As this is a report for information only, the Corporate / Citywide implications have not been considered.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Nil

Documents In Members' Rooms

1. Nil

Background Documents

1. Nil