

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Corporate Services

Council – 25 June 2008

Subject: TaxiCard Scheme

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide information with respect to the possible introduction of a TaxiCard Scheme within West Dunbartonshire.

2. Background

- 2.1 At the meeting of Council held on 26 March 2008 a motion by Councillor Bollan concerning the possible introduction of a Taxi Card scheme was approved. A copy of an Excerpt Minute from the Meeting of Council is appended for reference (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 In accordance with the decision of Council, research was undertaken to establish the number of such schemes presently being operated by other local authorities in Scotland, the nature of the schemes and associated costs. A table summarising the responses received from authorities is appended for information (Appendix 2).

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 In those local authorities where a TaxiCard scheme is in operation, the scheme is generally open to residents who are registered blind/partially sighted or have a long term disability which seriously impairs their ability to walk.
- 3.2 The extent of the level of subsidy that is provided by authorities varies quite substantially. In some authorities, TaxiCard holders are restricted to 104 subsidised journeys per year, i.e. equivalent to two subsidised journeys per week, whereas in others, users are allowed 12 subsidised journeys per week.
- 3.3 Preliminary contact was made with representatives of the taxi trade and West Dunbartonshire Access Panel to gauge whether there would be support for the introduction of a TaxiCard Scheme in West Dunbartonshire and positive responses were received. Should the Council agree in principle to the introduction of a scheme, detailed discussions would require to take place with all interested parties regarding the operation of the scheme, eligibility criteria, administration, etc.

- 3.4** On the basis of information provided by the Council's Policy Officer – Disability & Access, it is estimated that approximately 1300 people in the West Dunbartonshire area may be eligible to participate in a TaxiCard scheme. Assuming that the Council agrees to subsidise a maximum of two journeys per week by each TaxiCard holder and that the amount of subsidy per journey is £2.00, the potential annual cost to the Council could be as much as £270,400.
- 3.5** At the present time, no local authorities in the Strathclyde area operate concessionary taxi travel schemes. The reason for this is the existence of the Dial-a-Bus scheme operated by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT). The Dial-a-Bus service which operates in the West Dunbartonshire area helps people who are unable to use or have difficulty in using standard buses, to access their community.
- 3.6** The Council makes an annual payment to the SPT in the region of £800,000, a percentage of which will be attributable to the Council's subsidy of the Dial-a-Bus service in West Dunbartonshire.
- 3.7** The introduction of a TaxiCard scheme in West Dunbartonshire would duplicate the service provided through the Dial-a-Bus scheme to a considerable extent. Should it be agreed to introduce a TaxiCard scheme in West Dunbartonshire, consideration may require to be given to reducing the level of financial contribution that is presently made to SPT in support of the Dial-a-Bus scheme. This would require discussions with SPT given the legal agreements which are already in place with other local authorities. It may also mean that the Dial-a-Bus scheme would no longer be available in West Dunbartonshire.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** As additional work would be involved in administering a scheme, consideration would require to be given to staffing implications.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The financial implications are as indicated in paragraph 3.4. Notwithstanding the possibility of reducing the financial contribution to SPT, should the Council proceed with the introduction of a TaxiCard scheme, there would be a resulting budget pressure which could amount to £150,000 per annum.
- 5.2** In addition, there would potentially be increased staffing costs associated with the administration of the scheme.

6. Risk Assessment

- 6.1** There is no increased risk to the Council associated with the contents of this report.

7. Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended:-

- (a) that the Council considers the viability of introducing a TaxiCard scheme, the potential costs and possible duplication with the Dial-a-Bus scheme;
- (b) that should it be agreed in principle that such a scheme may be viable, officers be authorised to engage in detailed discussions with officials from SPT, representatives of the taxi trade and potential user groups in relation to existing agreements, eligibility criteria, operational arrangements, etc and provide a further report on the matter for consideration at a future meeting of Council; and
- (c) that the potential budget pressure referred to in paragraph 5.1 above be noted.

.....
Executive Director of Corporate Services

GP11
DR 19/06/08

Appendices:

1. Excerpt from Minute of Meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council held on 26 March 2008.
2. Details of provision of TaxiCard schemes by local authorities in Scotland.

Background Papers: None.

Wards Affected: N/A.

Person to Contact: David Rooney, Senior Administrative Officer, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton. Tel. (Direct line) 01389 737224.

*Excerpt from Minutes of Meeting of
West Dunbartonshire Council held on Wednesday, 26 March 2008.*

XX

16. NOTICES OF MOTION

(a) Motion by Councillor Jim Bollan – Taxi Card Scheme

This Council agrees to research and collate information in relation to the introduction of a "Taxi Card Scheme" which can be used by persons across West Dunbartonshire who have severe mobility problems which do not allow them to travel safely or comfortably on public transport. A "Taxi Card" entitles the holder to travel by taxi at a reduced rate.

Officers should look at any other schemes being operated and bring forward a report to the June 2008 Council meeting for consideration. The report should detail how such a scheme may operate within West Dunbartonshire.

In preparing the report officers should consult with all appropriate groups in West Dunbartonshire to seek their views.

In the absence of Councillor Bollan, Councillor Rooney, seconded by Councillor Robertson moved the above motion.

The Council agreed to approve the motion.

APPENDIX 2

Council	Concessionary Travel Scheme
Argyll & Bute	No
Borders	No
East Ayrshire	No
East Dunbartonshire	No
East Renfrewshire	No
Highland	No
Inverclyde	No
North Ayrshire	No
North Lanarkshire	No
Orkney Islands	No
Perth & Kinross	No
Renfrewshire	No
Shetland	No
South Ayrshire	No
South Lanarkshire	No
Western Isles	No
Aberdeenshire	No response
Falkirk	No response
Glasgow	No response
Midlothian	No response
Moray	No response
West Lothian	No response
Fife	Yes - Awaiting information
Aberdeen City	Yes - Funded by Aberdeen City Council. Budget for 2008/09 is £312,480.
Angus	Yes - Funded by Council. Annual budget is £43,073 however there is usually an overspend of between £8,000 - £15,000 each year.
City of Edinburgh	Yes - Funded by the Council. Annual budget of £480,000.
Clackmannanshire	Yes - Funded by Council. Annual budget is £12,500.
Dumfries & Galloway	Yes - Scheme is run by National Transport Tokens. Funded by Council. Annual budget is £42,000.
Dundee	Yes - Funded by the Council. Scheme cost just over £300,000 for the 2007/2008 financial year.
East Lothian	Yes - Funded by Council. Annual budget is £35,000.
Stirling	Yes - Funded by the Council. Budget of approximately £18,000 per annum.