

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

## DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport

## DECISION NO:

13/00095/2

For publication

**Subject: New Young Person's Travel Pass including Post 16 Transport**

### Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport, I agree to introduce a new Young Person's Travel Pass for 11-16 year olds for the academic year commencing September 2014. The new Pass will cost £200 per annum and will replace the current Freedom Pass Scheme which currently costs £100 per annum. Usage of the Pass will be limited to Monday to Friday 06:00 to 19:00 and from the start of the academic year to 31<sup>st</sup> July. An option of two six monthly payments will be offered.

I also agree to set the cost of the Young Person's Travel Pass for pupils entitled to free school meals at £100 per annum. Looked After Children and Young Carers will receive the new Pass free of charge.

I agree to reduce the cost of the Kent 16+ Travel Card from £520 to £400, this card will have unlimited travel use.

As a result of the views expressed at the Cabinet Committee, I further agree that the Young Person's Travel Pass scheme be reviewed 6 months after implementation.

### Urgency:

In order that the scheme could most accurately reflect the will of members and of members of the public, whilst also meeting necessary budgetary requirements, a long process of proposal, consultation, amendment, debate, consultation and further debate has taken place. This process has eaten so significantly in to the time required for the administrative tasks of implementation to be undertaken that any further delay to the decision could risk the implementation of the scheme for 2014-15. Furthermore, parents making important decisions about schooling via the offers and appeals system urgently need the information in order to make informed choices. Therefore it has been agreed that the decision will be taken as urgent.

*Richard Brazier, Chairman South Kent Committee*  
17<sup>th</sup> May 2014

### Reason(s) for decision:

The County Council considered a petition signed by around 16,000 people last year seeking a similar travel benefit for post 16 students to that provided through the Freedom scheme for 11-16 year olds. Simply to extend the current Freedom Pass arrangement is not sustainable financially as it would add an estimated £6m to the budget. Therefore, to provide an equitable way forward, a review of concessionary travel for all academic year groups was carried out. This decision recognises the distinction between the two schemes.

The Young Person's Travel Pass is for pupils aged 11 -16 to access the local bus network in order to travel to school. This matter was considered by members at the meeting of the EHW Cabinet

Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013 where an "e-purse" stored value scheme was supported for further investigation. During subsequent discussions and engagement with pass users, bus companies and Members the proposed scheme was revised to overcome a number of operational risks and to ensure that access to school was available to all.

An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken together with wide ranging consultation particularly targeted at the parents of students using the current Freedom scheme. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport considered representations very carefully and has agreed the revised scheme as consulted upon.

The Kent 16+ Travel scheme is for the use of young people accessing further education or apprenticeships, for which they may receive some payment. Furthermore, at the age of 16, people travelling on public transport are classed as adults and consequently the County Council must reimburse bus operators for journeys made at a higher rate than for under-16 year olds. The government made no changes to transport legislation that would enable funding to be made available for this group by the Local Authority when it raised the participation age. Those learners facing genuine hardship can seek bursary funding support from their learning providers to help with the cost of the card. This funding replaced the Education Maintenance Allowance and sits with schools and colleges to support their learners in a range of ways including, where appropriate, with transport costs.

#### **Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

This matter was debated by Members at full County Council in February 2014 as part of the overall budget setting discussions.

This scheme was prepared following discussions held at the Environment, Highways and Waste Cabinet Committee in December 2013.

A full public consultation has taken place, the results of which will be carefully considered by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport.

On 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014 the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee recommended that the Cabinet Member agree to:

- Introduce a Young Person's Travel Pass for 11-16 year olds providing free bus travel from 6am to 7pm on Monday to Friday commencing with the start of the academic year through to 31st July.
- Set the price of the pass at £200 reducing to £100 for those entitled to free school meals and having no charge for young carers and looked after children.
- Arrange for an option of two six monthly payments to be offered
- Reduce the price of the 16+ Pass from £520 to £400 and continue to offer unlimited bus travel in Kent.

The Cabinet Member should have regard, when considering the decision, to the fact that the endorsement of the decision was not unanimous. The vote was as follows: For (7), Against (3), Abstentions (3). Furthermore, an amendment was put to remove bullet point 4 of the recommendations and instead agree to a further review of the 16+ scheme (the complete text of the amendment is contained within the report). The amendment fell by one vote. Voting was as follows: For (6), Against (7). Those members who requested that their names be recorded are contained within the minute.

In accordance with procedures set out for urgency in the council's constitution, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and relevant Senior Manager have agreed that the decision cannot reasonably be deferred, and the Chairman and Group spokespeople of the relevant Cabinet Committee and the Group spokespeople of the Scrutiny Committee were informed that the decision would be taken urgently and asked for comments. Two comments were received, from Mr Latchford and Mr Cowan; both strongly disagreed with the use of urgency procedures. The full comments were forwarded to the Cabinet Member.

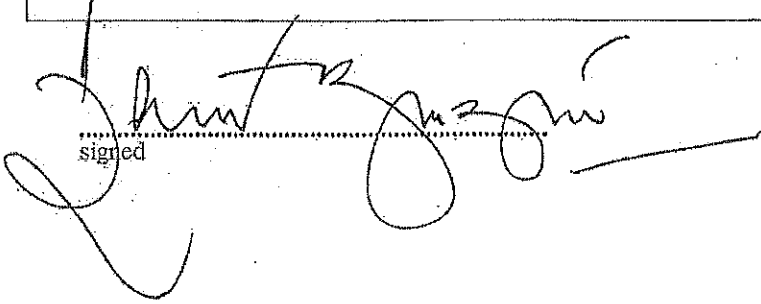
Two petitions have been received, both of which were reported to the Cabinet Committee, where there was an opportunity for discussion. The petitions requested that the scheme be extended to 16-19 year olds and that the process for children in receipt of free school meals be reduced to £50, they received 3114 and 1986 signatures respectively.

**Any alternatives considered:**

A range of alternative schemes were considered as an alternative, however, all had practical or operational obstacles to the smooth operation of the scheme.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**

None

  
signed

7/5/2014  
date

