



## Minute of Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee

**6 March 2020**

held in 131 St Vincent Street, Glasgow

**contact officer:**

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## **Minute of the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee held in the Board Room, 131 St Vincent Street, Glasgow on 6 March 2020**

- Present** Councillors Dr Martin Bartos (Chair), Malcolm Balfour, Graham Brooks (substitute), Ian Cochrane, Graham Hardie, Alan Lafferty, Cathy McEwan, Marie McNair, Alan Moir, Donald Reid, Jim Roberts and David Shearer.
- Attending** Valerie Davidson, Treasurer/Secretary; Neil Wylie, Director of Finance; Martin Breen, Planning and Projects Officer; Stuart Paul, Chief Accountant; and Tony Jones, Contact Centre Manager.

### **Chair's Opening Remarks**

The Chair advised that he had written to the Cabinet Secretary as per the committees' request and had circulated the response.

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were submitted from Councillors David Wilson and Michael McPake.

#### **2. Declaration of interest in terms of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc (Scotland) Act 2000**

Councillor Moir highlighted that he was employed by Abellio Scotrail, and thus declared an interest in item 6.

#### **3. Minute of previous meeting**

["Click here to view minute"](#)

The minute of the meeting of 20 September 2019 was submitted and approved as a correct record.

#### **4. Performance and Reimbursement Update on 2019/20 Quarter 1 to Quarter 3 Results**

["Click here to view report"](#)

There was submitted a report (issued) of 27 February 2020 by the Treasurer/Secretary updating the Committee of the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme's performance and reimbursement results for 2019/20 financial quarters 1 – 3 (April – December 2019).

After discussion and hearing from Mr Breen in answer to members' questions, the committee noted the contents of the report in particular, the impact of reported increased concessionary demand and operator reimbursement on scheme costs.

#### **5. Revenue Monitoring Report as at 1 February 2020, Period 11**

["Click here to view report"](#)

There was submitted a report (issued) of 20 February 2020 by the Treasurer/Secretary advising members of revenue expenditure incurred at the end of period 11 (1 February 2020), including the projected outturn at the end of the current financial year.

After discussion and hearing from Mr Paul the committee:

- (a) noted the projected outturn position for 2019/20 based on the information available at the end of period 11; and
  - (b) noted the need to further draw on reserves in the financial year 2019/20.
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**6. Proposed Fare Increase and Review of Scheme**

[“Click here to view report”](#)

There was submitted a report (issued) of 27 February 2020 by the Treasurer/Secretary seeking Committee approval that:

- (a) an interim £0.50 increase in basic concessionary single and return fares;
- (b) ferry journeys over 10 nautical miles be charged at twice the basic concession; and
- (c) a review of the scheme, with specific focus on options to ensure its future financial sustainability

After much discussion, and the Committee confirming their agreement and support to the long-term future of the scheme, but recognising the significant affordability issues, agreed to the recommendations as detailed in the report. In addition, the Committee requested that consideration be given to how the NHS could be a partner in the scheme recognising the value the scheme makes to NHS objectives.

**7. Proposed Revenue Budget 2020/21**

[“Click here to view report”](#)

There was submitted a report (issued) of 20 February 2020 and a supplementary report tabled at the meeting by the Treasurer proposing a revenue budget for the financial year 2020/21, outlining the assumptions made in the preparation of the budget, and advising the Committee of the proposed local authority requisitions to support the Concession Scheme.

After consideration and having heard Mrs Davidson in answer to members' questions, the committee:

- (a) approved the proposed budget of up to £4.176m for financial year 2020/21, noting the requirement for approval of the proposed concessionary fares;
- (b) approved requisitions totalling £4.022m, a reduction of 0.44% in comparison to 2019/20; and
- (c) noted an estimated draw on reserves of £0.154m.

**8. Travel Card Unit - Update on Performance and digital enhancements**

[“Click here to view report”](#)

There was submitted a report (issued) of 18 February 2020 by the Treasurer updating the Joint Committee on the performance of the Travel Card Unit and advising of digital enhancements to support administration processing.

After discussion and having heard Mr Jones in answer to members' questions, the Joint Committee noted:

- (a) the contents of the report;
- (b) the progress made in reducing administration workloads and improving the customer experience; and
- (c) the future digital enhancements that will further improve service delivery.

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**9. Concessionary Subway Travel and Smart Ticketing**

[“Click here to view report”](#)

There was submitted and noted a report (issued) of 18 February 2020 by the Treasurer updating the Joint Committee on improvements made by SPT to concession ticketing on the Subway, and the introduction of smart NEC ticketing, welcoming the financial saving and reduction of disposable tickets in circulation.

**10. Pilot Project for Application Identity Verification**

[“Click here to view report”](#)

There was submitted a report (issued) of 18 February 2020 by the Treasurer advising the Joint Committee of the proposal to engage with the Improvement Service to implement digital National Entitlement Card application identity verification on a pilot basis.

After discussion and having heard Mrs Davidson in answer to members’ questions, the Joint Committee noted:

- (a) the progress made and that a small scale pilot will be implemented; and
- (b) that a full assessment will be undertaken before full roll out, and reported to a future Committee.

**11. SPT & GCC – Supporting Applicants with a life-Limiting Cancer Diagnosis**

[“Click here to view report”](#)

There was submitted a report (issued) of 18 February 2020 by the Treasurer updating the Joint Committee on an improvement to the National Entitlement Card application Process to support people with a life-limiting cancer diagnosis.

After discussion and having heard Mr Jones in answer to members’ questions, the Joint Committee noted the report, and welcomed this significant process improvement.

4 December 2019



**BY EMAIL**

Michael Matheson MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Transport,  
Infrastructure and Connectivity  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

**Our ref:**  
**Your ref:**  
**Direct Dial:** 0141-333-3316  
**Email:** Martin.Bartos@spt.co.uk

Dear Michael

**Review of Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme**

At the last meeting of the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee, a revenue budget paper highlighting increasing financial pressures being experienced by the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme (*hereinafter referred to as the Scheme*) was presented. It was reported that, in its present format, the Scheme is not financially sustainable in the long term without either an increase in funding from constituent local authorities, a contribution from government, amendments to the Scheme's structure or substantial increases in fares charged. In light of this, the Committee were asked to note that a review of the Scheme would be undertaken.

The Scheme complements the National Bus Scheme providing a travel option alternative, essential when no bus services exist in an area or a genuine link to the mainland and essential services for those on islands. More than 5million concession journeys are made per annum, at a cost in excess of £4.5m. This is only possible by charging a fare, but even with this the scheme is facing real challenges. The Scheme takes in the entirety of the former Strathclyde area, meaning travel discounts are also offered to people living in more remote rural and islands communities such as Coll, Tiree, Colonsay, Islay, and Jura and for whom longer journeys and travel to the mainland is often a necessity.

On behalf of all the councils in the West of Scotland, all options are now being considered by the Joint Committee, including significant fare increases and simply stopping the Scheme altogether. I know many other authorities have simply closed schemes to save money, but to do this will have significant impacts on more than 500,000 card holders who rely on the Scheme to access services including healthcare.

The purpose of my letter is simple – I am writing to advise you of the current situation and to seek your support in financial terms to ensure this essential travel scheme can continue. Relatively small sums of support would make a significant difference in this area.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Bartos', is positioned below the 'Yours sincerely' text.

**Councillor Dr Martin Bartos**  
**Chair, SPT**

cc Council Leaders & Council CEOs,  
Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee Members,  
Valerie Davidson, SPT & Martin Breen, SPT

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Councillor Dr Martin Bartos  
Chair  
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GLASGOW  
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Martin.bartos@spt.co.uk

Our ref: 2019/0032811  
20<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Dear Martin

Thank you for your letter of 4 December 2019, seeking additional financial support for the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme.

The Scottish Government consistently faces calls from a wide range of stakeholders to expand the National Concessionary Travel Scheme for Older and Disabled People in Scotland to more people. As you are aware we have committed to maintaining the current scheme and eligibility. This year we are providing more than £210 million in reimbursement to bus operators for journeys made under the national scheme. We also provide local authorities with block grant to prioritise spend to the best effect to support local needs, meaning that funding the Strathclyde Scheme is entirely at their discretion.

I understand that budgets are constrained and more is being expected from public services in the face of poverty and inequality. We have committed, with the Scottish Youth Parliament, to take forward a review of extending discounts on public transport to those under 26. This review also seeks to address two other commitments, a cost and benefits appraisal of extending free bus travel to those under 26 following a parliamentary debate on free bus travel; and the transport commitment under the Child Poverty Delivery plan to explore how all areas of transport, including travel concession schemes, can best support the delivery of the child poverty reduction targets.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
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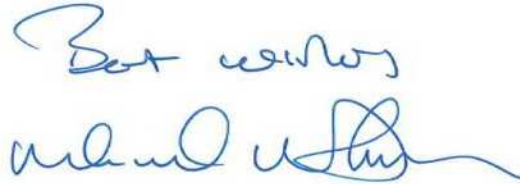
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I am committed to exploring ways of making transport more affordable and available to those who need it most. However, Scottish Government resources have been constrained by a decade of UK austerity. Our discretionary resource budget for 2020-21 will be 2.8% lower in real terms than it was in 2010 (even including the effect of the UK Spending Round). Against this backdrop, the Scottish Government is not in a position to provide further financial assistance to the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme.

Kind regards



**MICHAEL MATHESON**

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