

Record of Executive Decision**Interim Amendments to Cambridge City Council's Taxicard Scheme**

Decision of: **Councillor Nicky Massey:** Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety

Reference: 20/URGENCY/P&T/03

Date of decision: 22.02.21
Published on: 02/03/21

Decision Type: Non-Key

Matter for Decision: Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety is recommended to:

- i. Agree a proposal to allow members of Cambridge City Council's Taxicard Scheme to use two vouchers on each trip from 1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021. This would allow the user up to £7.60 towards the cost of a taxi trip as opposed to one voucher of £3.80. Recognising members may have financial difficulties as a result of Covid or have additional health problems and are relying on taxis to get them from A to B, it would help to provide additional financial support to Taxicard members (disabled people on low incomes) to help to pay for their taxi journeys.
- ii. Agree for Taxicard members to receive a book of 50 vouchers valued at £3.80 each from 1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021 and to be able to use two vouchers per trip if so choosing to whilst a review of the Taxicard scheme is progressed.

Appendix A

iii. Agree that a further book of vouchers will be made available to Taxicard members during this period if requested. In this event, a proportionate amount of vouchers will be issued for the remainder of 6 the month period

Why the decision had to be made (and any alternative options):

The Taxicard is a Scheme that helps disabled people on low incomes pay for taxi journeys. The scheme operates by issuing members with a book of 100 vouchers running from 1 April – 31 March each year. Each voucher is currently worth £3.70, this figure increases by 10p each year.

Officers are currently carrying out a review of the existing Taxicard Scheme with the aim of increasing usage by its members with the remit of a more flexible Taxicard scheme. Whilst the review is being undertaken it is considered to be prudent to only issue only 6 months of vouchers at this time so that a revised scheme, if approved can then be introduced in 2021/22.

During the covid pandemic and reduced public transport provision on some routes members of the Taxicard scheme may need to use taxi's more. By allowing the use of two vouchers per trip it will provide more support to members but will remain within the overall provision of the scheme. This scheme supports disabled people on low incomes to pay for taxi journeys, this decision would provide additional financial support to its members at this time.

The renewals process for the issue of Taxicards takes place during the months of February and March and therefore a decision is required on this proposal now to link in with the renewals process. The next Planning and Transport Committee is in March and this would be too late to make the arrangements for the new vouchers to be printed and issued and would leave the Taxicard members without provision for a period of time.

Taxi companies will need to be made aware of any approved changes, so they are ready to take two vouchers if presented with them from 1 April. This proposal does not affect the amount the Taxi

Companies receive as their costs will continue to be reimbursed on a monthly basis.

The Executive

Councillor's decision(s):

- i. Agreed a proposal to allow members of Cambridge City Council's Taxicard Scheme to use two vouchers on each trip from 1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021. This would allow the user up to £7.60 towards the cost of a taxi trip as opposed to one voucher of £3.80. Recognising members may have financial difficulties as a result of Covid or have additional health problems and are relying on taxis to get them from A to B, it would help to provide additional financial support to Taxicard members (disabled people on low incomes) to help to pay for their taxi journeys.
- ii. Agreed for Taxicard members to receive a book of 50 vouchers valued at £3.80 each from 1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021 and to be able to use two vouchers per trip if so choosing to whilst a review of the Taxicard scheme is progressed.
- iii. Agreed that a further book of vouchers will be made available to Taxicard members during this period if requested. In this event, a proportionate amount of vouchers will be issued for the remainder of 6 the month period.

Reasons for the decision:

As detailed in Appendix 1 which can be viewed at the link below:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13471>

Scrutiny consideration:

The Chair and Spokesperson of Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee were consulted prior to the action being authorised.

Report:

See Appendix 1 which can be viewed at the link below:

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13471>

Conflicts of interest: None

Comments: The decision will be reported back to the Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee.

Record of Executive Decision – Appendix 1

Interim Amendments to Cambridge City Council's Taxicard Scheme

The Taxicard Scheme is a scheme that helps disabled people on low incomes pay for taxi journeys. To join the Taxicard scheme members must be in receipt of certain benefits set out in the criteria of the scheme for example; income support, pension credit, income based jobseekers allowance, housing benefit, universal credit, attendance allowance etc.

The scheme operates by issuing members with a book of 100 vouchers running from 1 April – 31 March each year. Each voucher is currently worth £3.70, this figure increases by 10p each year. Vouchers can be used on fares of £4.70 or more – with the member paying at least £1 towards the fare. Members are asked to show the driver their voucher before starting the journey.

If the scheme is joined after 1 April members are issued a proportionate amount of vouchers for the remainder of the year. All members are contacted before April each year to confirm their continued eligibility and to arrange a new book to be issued.

In 2019 it was agreed a review was required of this scheme looking at the arrangements in place, usage figures, cost effectiveness, the administration and to identify how best to deliver the scheme going forward. Part of the review is looking at different ways of providing the vouchers in the future, how they are used, the role of Taxi Companies, and discussions will take place with them along with representatives from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Healthwatch, Disability Cambridge and Camsight.

Due to the changes proposed to be made to the scheme as a result of the review, a report will be presented to the Planning and Transport Committee in June 2021 suggesting, if approved, the changes are implemented from 1 September 2021.

However, it is felt that Taxicard members should be supported before September, especially given that their circumstances may have changed as a result of Covid and therefore consideration should be given to Taxicard members being able to use two vouchers per trip from 1 April 2021 as opposed to one voucher which is currently how the scheme works, until any such changes are approved and implemented later in the year.

Therefore Taxicard members would receive a book of 50 vouchers valued at £3.80 each valid from 1 April 2021 – 30 September 2021 rather than 100 vouchers from 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022, but will be able to use 2 vouchers per trip rather than the existing one voucher per trip.

One of the main reasons for this is as a result of Covid-19 and members may need to use Taxi's more, and by allowing the use of two vouchers per trip will reduce the amount Members themselves will have to pay towards the cost. Some members may have been affected financially as a result of Covid and as this scheme supports disabled people on low incomes to pay for taxi journeys, this decision would provide additional financial support to its members at this time.

The renewals process for the issue of Taxicards takes place during the months of February and March and therefore a decision is required on this proposal now to link in with the renewals process. A report to the next Planning and Transport Committee in March would be too late.

Appendix A

Taxi companies will need to be made aware of the change, if approved, so they are ready to take two vouchers if presented with them from 1 April. This proposal does not affect the amount the Taxi Companies will receive as their costs will continue to be reimbursed on a monthly basis.

A report on the findings, next steps and final proposals following the review will be presented to the Planning & Transport Committee on 29 June.