

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

8th February 2006

NATIONAL ENTITLEMENT CARDS

Report by Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To advise Members of the current position in respect of the Scottish Executive's plans for the implementation of a "National Entitlement Card" in support of the National Concessionary Fares Scheme.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** At its 12th April 2005 meeting, Policy and Resources Committee was presented with a report by the Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of Corporate Support advising of Scottish Executive plans for the introduction of National Entitlement Cards (NEC's) in support of the National Concessionary Fares Scheme for which budgetary provision is contained within the Council's grant under the 3rd Round of the Modernising Government Fund (MGF3).
- 2.2** This provision amounts to £ 78,000 in 2004/05, and £ 72,000 in 2005/06, to cover the cost of issuing the new NEC to all citizens by 1st April 2006 who qualify for the National Concessionary Fares Scheme, and thereafter to all 12 to 26 year olds.
- 2.3** Through the MGF and Customer First programmes, the Scottish Executive is now advising that the new NEC should ideally be developed as the mechanism for public access to all relevant Council-specific services, and that individual Councils will have the responsibility for managing their issue, and, consequently, should now establish appropriate processes for production, issuing, authentication, replacement / re-issue etc.
- 2.4** The Council will ultimately be responsible for distributing and administering approximately 30,000 NEC's within East Ayrshire, with the initial distribution by the Scottish Executive targeted for 1st April 2006. Hence, customer application, Council authentication, card production and distribution processes require to be established by early 2006 in order for the issue date deadline to be met.
- 2.5** Progress towards the local implementation of the NEC is regularly reported to, and considered by, the Corporate Management Team.

- 2.6** This report provides Committee with an update on the current position in respect of SE plans for the introduction of the NEC, and on work currently underway to ensure that the 1st April deadline is met for initial distribution.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1** The NEC project is being managed by the Scottish Executive's Improvement Service, and discussions on the implementation of the NEC continue between the Scottish Executive, Councils and transport operators. Issues and questions still remain in respect of how the NEC will serve as a dual access card to Concessionary Fares and Council services, and on the long term requirements for authorisation, production, distribution, renewal, etc.
- 3.2** Given that the introduction of the NEC will initially be in support of the National Concessionary Fares Scheme, the Executive Director of Development and Property Services retains the lead role, supported, as appropriate, by the Head of Information Technology, in respect of the local implementation of the Card.
- 3.3** As the first application of the new NEC will be in respect of the National Concessionary Fares Scheme, the Scottish Executive expects local Transport Authorities, such as Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT), to play a major role in their initial implementation. In this respect the 12 West of Scotland Councils have formulated and agreed a set of business processes with SPT to ensure that the Councils meet their obligations for the issue of the NEC cards by the 1st April deadline.
- 3.4** In this respect SPT have agreed to administer the initial card distribution process for the 1st April 2006 deadline. However given the impending re-structuring of local transport organisations and the creation of a new Scottish Transport Agency, it is, at this stage, unclear how the post-April 2006 administration of the NEC Card distribution and management process will operate, although discussions on this matter are currently underway.
- 3.5** It will not be possible to consolidate / include existing Council applications within the Scottish Executive timescales planned for the initial roll-out of the new NEC. Inclusion of local applications will require detailed examination of the technology options, and the availability of the proposed Citizens Identification Number which is still under development as part of the national Customer 1st Programme.
- 3.5.1** At this stage all efforts are concentrated on ensuring the initial roll-out in support of the National Concessionary Fares Scheme is achieved by 1st April 2006. Only after this has been successfully achieved will the Council be in a position to explore the possibilities for the incorporation of additional local Council specific services.
- 3.6** It is envisaged that the initial distribution of NEC's by 1st April 2006 will be based upon the database of recipients of concessionary fares which, in the case of the West of Scotland, is maintained by SPT.

- 3.7** The Scottish Executive has established Bureau based contracts for the initial production of the Cards, and all Councils are required to subscribe to this managed arrangement.

4 ADMINISTRATION OF THE INITIAL NEC ROLL-OUT BY 1ST APRIL 2006

- 4.1** Application forms are being issued to all existing SPT Concessionary Fares card holders, inviting them to apply for the new NEC.
- 4.2** Completed application forms with a photograph will be presented by the applicant for the purpose of authentication, to a Post Office or SPT Travel Centre.
- 4.3** Authenticated forms will then be forwarded to the Bureau for the purpose of card production.
- 4.4** The Bureau will then forward Printed cards to Glasgow City Council who will undertake to administer the mailing on behalf of the 12 West of Scotland Councils. The new NEC will be posted to the applicant's home address, probably in February 2006.
- 4.5** New applicants, ie., those not included in the initial mail shot, will firstly apply to SPT for an SPT Concessionary Travel Card, and will then be included in the aforementioned process, as-per existing card holders. It is anticipated that the process of issuing NEC cards to new applicants will take place during January and February 2006.
- 4.6** An example of the design of the new NEC Card is attached for information as Appendix A to this Report.
- 4.7** All publicity, in the form of leaflets, newspaper and radio adverts will be co-ordinated by the Scottish Executive. Relevant information will also be included on the Scottish Executive, SPT and individual Council web sites.
- 4.8** The card design will include an agreed logo to enable it to serve as a "show and go" card for people entitled to concessionary travel within the Strathclyde area. It is anticipated that during 2006 all bus operators will be supplied with card readers in order that the integrated "Chip and Pin" facility can be used for the purpose of validation.
- 4.9** As part of the Bureau facilities, a dedicated Helpline will be established to address public queries and questions about the new scheme, the application process, and on the status of individual's applications for the NEC.

5 COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1** Given that SPT will, on behalf of the 12 West of Scotland Councils, administer the initial card distribution process for 1st April 2006, the Council will however require to address the administrative requirements of the NEC post-April 2006.

- 5.2** Whilst the responsibility for the Concessionary Fares Scheme will ultimately lie with the new Scottish Transport Agency, nevertheless the Scottish Executive expects individual Councils to have business processes in place to manage Cards and Cardholder details through local Card Management Systems, and the Scottish Executive has stated that Councils should develop their own means of supporting and funding the Scheme beyond the initial roll-out phase.
- 5.3** The Council will require to use the Scottish Executive's Card Management System (CMS) which has been procured as part of the Bureau services contract, to administer the local NEC card population post-April 2006.
- 5.4** The Council will be responsible for the delivery of the NEC to individual citizens either directly by mail from the Council, the Bureau, or collection from Council premises, in addition to the management / administration of NEC production, issuing, authentication, replacement etc.
- 5.5** The Council will be responsible for authorising new applicants, replacing lost/stolen Cards etc., and the costs associated with these responsibilities.
- 5.6** Discussions are, however, underway with SPT to ensure that as far as the Concessionary Travel scheme is concerned, the post-April 2006 process will remain with SPT acting on behalf of the 12 Councils. It is anticipated that this agreement will be formalised in the very near future.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Budgetary provision for the initial 1st April 2006 implementation of the NEC which is contained within the Council's grant under the 3rd Round of the Modernising Government Fund (MGF3) amounts to a total of £ 150,000 available within the 2005/06, and 2006/07 financial years.
- 6.2** The financial implications beyond the initial 1st April 2006 roll-out have yet to be fully determined and will depend upon the Executives continued support for the NEC and individual Council use of the card for local applications. These cost implications are the subject of on-going discussions with the Scottish Executive and will be reported to Committee in due course.

7. POLICY / LEGAL / COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The implementation of the NEC is integral to the Improving Opportunities theme of the Community Plan, is consistent with the Council's core value of access, and will play a major part in delivering social inclusion across East Ayrshire.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1** It is recommended that Committee notes the contents of this Report, and that a further report will be presented at a later date once details have been finalised and an estimate of future post-2006 costs are known.

Elizabeth Morton
Depute Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Support
20 January 2006

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

For further information on this Report, please contact
Malcolm Roulston, Head of Information Technology (Tel : 01563 576809)

APPENDIX A

Card Design

National Side of Card :



Local Side of Card :

If found, please contact -
EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

For information relating to Concession Travel,
please contact the Helpline on 0870 428 4910;

For all other services please contact -
EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL on
0845 7 24 00 00 or visit our Web Site

www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk



