

Report to: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 11th September 2014

Lead Member / Officer: Lead Member for Education/
Head of Customers & Education Support

Report Author: Head of Customers & Education Support

Title: Home to School Transport Policy

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This report is to outline proposals for the revised policy for Home to School Transport

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 At the Freedom & Flexibilities Workshop on 17th June 2014 Elected Members gave approval to undertake a review of the existing transport provision and to undertake consultation on a revised policy.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 That Members consider the contents of the revised policy and make recommendations to Cabinet for them to consider.

4. Report details.

4.1 The Council published a consultation on the proposed new policy on 11th August 2014. The new policy must be adopted by 1st October 2014 to ensure the regulations are met. This is in accordance with the Learner Travel Information regulations 1.105 where it states that:

If a Local Authority decides to change or remove the discretionary transport provision it provides, it must publish the information before the 1st October of the year preceding the academic year in which the changes will come into force

4.2 There are no specific requirements regarding consultation however the proposals were published on Denbighshire County Council's website and social media pages with a hard copy distributed directly to every parent of a child who currently receives School Transport. This includes new Nursery pupils planned for September 2015 and existing year 11 pupils that may leave after the current academic year. Email copies of the consultation documentation were also distributed to relevant officers and all Elected Members via email.

4.3 On the day of the consultation being published the following received either a hard copy or were emailed a link to the Denbighshire County Council website;

- *Conwy County Council;*
- *Flintshire County Council;*
- *Wrexham County Council*
- *The Church in Wales Diocese of St Asaph and the Wrexham Roman Catholic Diocesan Authority;*
- *Headteachers;*
- *Chairs and Clerks of Governors of all schools;*
- *All Denbighshire County Councillors;*
- *All Assembly Members and Members of Parliament;*
- *Internal Staff;*
- *City, Town and Community Councils;*
- *Welsh Strategic Group;*
- *School Business & Finance Managers*

4.4 It should be noted that current Home to School Transport Policy is not a clear and concise policy so considerable work has been done within the new policy to make it a fit for purpose document. This has resulted in anomalies existing in the current eligibility process.

4.5 Members need to consider:

1. The outcome of enforcing the new policy to remove all historic anomalies in the eligibility process
2. Implementation of central pick up points as detailed in paragraph 4.2 of the policy - there will be approximately 232 secondary pupils and 352 primary pupils directly affected by this change

4.6 In determining changes to policies the Learner Travel Information (Wales) 2009 regulations state that Local Authorities must:

- *Assess the travel needs of learners in their authority area*
- *Provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory age attending primary school who live **2 miles** or further from their nearest suitable school*
- *Provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age attending secondary school who live **3 miles** or further from their nearest suitable school*
- *Assess and meet the needs of 'looked after' children in their authority area*
- *Promote access to Welsh Medium Education*
- *Promote sustainable modes of travel*

4.7 The Timeline in *Appendix 1* outlines the full process undertaken for the review

4.8 The flowchart in *Appendix 2* outlines what the new process for transport eligibility will be.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1 The policy supports the priority of **“Improving Education”** whilst also ensuring that cost effectiveness and value for money are maintained

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1 The proposal will have a direct impact on the Passenger Transport Service. It is estimated that there will be a saving in the region of £303k as summarised in the table below. The full details of the proposals are shown in Appendix 3-5.

			Cost per day £	Potential Saving per day £
Appendix 3	Removal of Secondary Home to pick up point taxis	per day	671.50	671.50
		per year	127,585.00	127,585.00
Appendix 4	Removal of Secondary Home to School taxis	per day	1,298.49	762.99
		per year	246,713.10	144,968.10
Appendix 5	Removal of Primary Home to School taxis	per day	3,057.94	160.75
		per year	581,008.60	30,542.50
Total Cost/Saving per day			5,027.93	1,595.24
Total Cost/Saving per year (190 days)			955,306.70	303,095.60

6.2 Please note that these savings may be subject to change depending on the outcome of the review of hazardous routes and from any payments made to parents for journeys as an alternative to providing free transport

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

7.1 The EqIA undertaken in relation to the new policy demonstrates that no group is disproportionately disadvantaged as a result of these changes. The full EqIA can be found in *Appendix 6*.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1 Full consultation has been undertaken with all stakeholders detailed in Section 4 above and the findings from the Formal Consultation period will be presented to Cabinet on the 30th of September 2014.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 As shown in Appendix 1 Elected Members agreed to review the Transport Policy at the Freedoms and Flexibilities Members Workshop held in June this year. It was explained that as the service is currently overspending the review would aim to make savings in order to help bring the service into a break-even position. As such the possible savings identified in Section 6.1 will be kept

within the service in order to rectify the ongoing budget deficit. The position will be monitored closely and any savings over and above that needed for the service to break-even will be identified as corporate savings in future budget rounds

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- 10.1 There is a strong possibility that the proposal could result in adverse publicity for the Council and in adverse public comments. To minimise this risk the Council will seek to ensure clear communication with all stakeholders.
- 10.2 If we do nothing then there will be an increased cost of School Transport with no mechanism for reducing what is already an overspent budget. If we do not adopt the revised policy then the overspend will certainly increase.

11. Power to make the Decision

- 11.1 School Standards and Organisations (Wales) Act 2013
Education Act 2002
Learner Travel Information (Wales) Regulations 2009
Article 6.3.3(a) sets out Scrutiny's powers with respect to policy development and Article 6.3.4(b) details scrutiny's powers with respect to performance in relation to policy objectives.

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