

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Corporate Director of Children & Learning
to

The Cabinet and all Members of the Council

on
15th March 2011

Report prepared by: Anne Igoe, Transport Entitlement
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and Learning Infrastructure

**Agenda
Item No.**

Home to School Transport Policy
Children & Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee
– Executive Councillor: Councillor Hadley
A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed changes to home to school policy.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That Cabinet approve the proposed amendments to the Home to School Transport Policy.**

3. Background

- 3.1 One of the findings from the “Your Southend, Your Say” budget consultation during September and October 2010 was that respondents indicated that one of the more acceptable areas to reduce Council provision was in the area of home to school transport.
- 3.2 A report to Cabinet on 2nd November 2010 outlined the rationale for change to the home to school policy. In summary this is that :
- The current policy is outdated, having been agreed in 2007.
 - The Education and Skills Act 2008 raised the participation age so that from 2013, young people will be required to stay in education or training until they are 17 and from 2015 until their 18th birthday. This could lead to a potential 150 more young people in post 16 learning claiming travel costs.
 - The pattern of births across Southend in recent years has been increasing and approximately 250 more children will require places at schools in 2011/12 (births in 2006/07) compared to admissions in September 2008 with the trend upwards for several more years. This is likely to increase transport applications.
 - The current financial climate.
- 3.2 The November report also outlined options and made recommendations for changes to the policy as set out in section 4 below.
- 3.2 On 2nd November 2010 Cabinet agreed to provisionally approve the proposals, undertake a public consultation and to reconsider the proposals following the consultation.

3.3 Consultation was carried out between 16th January 2011 and 16th February 2011. Details of the responses to this consultation are set out in appendix 1.

4. Recommendations

After considering the consultation responses the recommendations remain those that were that were made in the Cabinet report on 2nd November 2010 and as set out below.

4.1 Primary School Transport

4.1.1 It is recommended that we adopt a consistent 2 mile walking distance for all primary aged pupils. This will avoid difficulty for parents who have children of different ages at the same school and will not add to administrative time. 80% of respondents to the consultation agreed with this change.

4.1.2 Whilst the above changes will be currently cost neutral, it will bring us in to line with national guidance for infants and ensure that we minimise potential budget demands as numbers and pressure on local school places rise.

4.2 Secondary School Transport

4.2.1 It is recommended that:

- Home to school transport is provided for children from low- income to attend any Southend selective school at which they secure a place if they meet the distance criteria of over two miles. This will assist in our Children and Young People's Plan priority to narrow the attainment gap for children from low-income families by making the widest possible access to selective provision where the admission criteria are met. 82% of respondents to the consultation agreed with this change.
- That the option of a cycle allowance is made available, paid to pupils termly in arrears, based on school attendance. This would be instead of providing a bus pass for Secondary pupils who are eligible for transport. Training to level 3 Bikeability will have to be completed before payment of the allowance is made. An annual allowance of £180 would give a cost saving of £240 per annum per pupil. 82% of respondents to the consultation agreed with this change.

4.3 Post-16 Transport

4.3.3 It is recommended that:

- Transport to post 16 establishments within the areas of Southend is only provided to young people from low-income families who live more than 3 miles from the establishment attended.
- For all young people where the nearest relevant course is only available outside the area of Southend it is recommended to implement a charging policy for the first £420 per annum (the equivalent cost of the borough-wide Octopus pass). This charge would be waived for those from low-income families or who are learners with a Learning Difficulty or Disability. 55% of respondents to the consultation agreed with this change.
- That the option of a cycle allowance is made available, paid to students termly in arrears, based on attendance. This would be instead of providing a bus pass for post 16 pupils who are eligible for transport. Training to level 3 Bikeability will have to be

completed before payment of the allowance is made. An annual allowance of £180 would give at least a cost saving of £240 per annum per student. 82% of respondents to the consultation agreed with this change.

4.3.4 It is estimated that these post-16 changes would deliver cost savings in the region of £50,000 per annum, whilst still providing choice and transport funding for students from low-income families. This charging policy would be in line with Essex County Council and the rate will be set annually at the cost of an Octopus card.

4.4 **Special Education Needs**

4.4.1 No changes to the policy are proposed in respect of pupils or students with a statement of special education needs as this is already linked to an individual assessment of need.

4.5 **Parent/Student preference**

4.5.1 The current policy is that transport is only available to the nearest school or post-16 provider. It is recommended that for post-16 students who are eligible for transport to their nearest provider, we may provide transport to a provider further away as long as there is no difference in cost.

4.6 **Other changes**

4.6.1 No changes are proposed to any other aspect of the home to school transport transport policy.

4.7 **Implementation**

4.7.1 All home to school transport has to be applied for on an annual basis before the start of each academic year.

It is recommended that:

- All new applications are assessed under the revised policy.
- All current pupils and students who are in receipt of transport at July 2011 will continue to receive the same provision, as long as they remain eligible under the existing policy, until the end of year 6 (age 11) for primary and the end of year 11 (age 16) for secondary. Post-16 students who have completed one year of a two year course or two years of a three year course will continue to receive any existing transport arrangements until the end of the course they are currently studying.

5. **Options**

5.1 These recommendations are those agreed in principle by Cabinet from the options presented on 2nd November 2010.

5.2 There is the option to make no changes to the current home to school policy. This would deliver no cost saving and would not position us well to deal with future demand.

5.3 There is the option to make alternative changes as long as these are not in breach of The Education and Inspection Act 2006. These alternatives were considered at the Cabinet on 2nd November 2010 and not supported.

6 Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

Providing transport to eligible children within the borough helps contribute to the educational achievement of vulnerable children from low income families.

6.2 Financial Implications

These recommendations would reduce home to school transport costs as identified in the report and are required to meet the 2011/12 savings targets for home to school transport.

6.3 Legal Implications

Recommendations are compliant with the Education and Inspection Act 2006.

6.4 People Implications

None

6.5 Property Implications

None

6.6 Consultation

See 3.3. above

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

Home to school transport particularly assists children with special education needs and those from low-income families.

6.8 Risk Assessment

None

6.9 Value for Money

The recommendations achieve best value for the resources available and reduce the budget impact of increasing future demand.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

None

6.11 Environmental Impact

There may be a positive impact if more young people chose to use cycle.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - outcome of public consultation

8. Background Papers

Cabinet paper "Proposed changes to home to school transport", 2.11.10
Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance, DES, 2007
The Education and Inspection Act 2006