

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive (People) to Cabinet

on
9th January 2018

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Agenda
Item No.

Passenger Transport – Policy Changes

People Scrutiny Committee and Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee
Executive Councillors: Councillor Salter, Councillor Moring and Councillor Courtenay

A Part 1 Public Agenda item

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- (i) articulate to members the proposed changes to policies which were recommended as part of the transport review
- (ii) update members on the feedback received from users and stakeholders as part of the consultation in regards the recommended policy changes for passenger transport provision regards eligibility
- (iii) seek approval to proceed with implementing the revised policies for the following areas:
 - Home to School for Pre and Post-16 Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
 - Adults with Learning Disabilities and Older Adults attending Day Centres and Activities
 - Looked After Children
 - Dial-a-Ride
- (iv) endorse the timescales to implement the proposed policies as outlined in 3.3.1 below.

1.2 It should be noted that the recommendations in this report consider feedback captured as part of the consultation process which started on 14 July 2017 and ended on the 10th October 2017.

1.3 This was referred back to Cabinet by the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee on 30th November 2017 for further consideration.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the following proposed policies are now adopted as per the approach identified in 3.1:

- a) Home to School Transport for Pre and Post-16 Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (effective from 1st September 2018) as follows:
 - The Special Educational Needs Travel Assistance Policy (see Appendix A) to be implemented as set out in 3.1.2 a) and 3.1.2 b) below. The provision of 'travel assistance' is to be focussed on the promotion of independence and personalisation. As pupils adopt more independent alternative modes of transport then routes will be optimised.
- b) Adults with Learning Disabilities and Older Adults attending Day Centres and Activities (effective from 1st April 2018) as follows:
 - The Adult Social Care travel assistance policy (see Appendix B) to be implemented as proposed in 3.1.2 c) below. the focus on maximising independence will mean that travel assistance will only be provided by the Council once all alternative transport options have been considered.
 - Where transport is provided by the Council, the contribution from the user is increased to the new charge of £4 per day for a return trip and £5 per day where multiple trips are applicable.
- c) Looked After Children (effective from 1st April 2018) as follows:
 - The looked after children and young people travel assistance policy (see Appendix C) to be implemented as proposed in 3.1.2 d) below.
- d) Dial-a-Ride (effective from 1st April 2018) as follows:
 - The Dial-a-Ride policy (see Appendix D) to be implemented as proposed in 3.1.2 e) below.

3. Background

3.1 Policy Review

3.1.1 The initial stage of the transport review found that a number of policy areas required further investigation:

- The lack of an overall strategy for the provision of passenger transport
- A lack of policies and guidance setting out eligibility criteria and processes for assessing need for and obtaining assistance with transport

- The provision of assistance with transport in excess of the Council's statutory minimum duty
- A lack of understanding of the actual and potential markets for a Dial-a-Ride service.

3.1.2 The second phase produced a series of proposed changes to policy:

a) *Home to School Transport for Pre-16 Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)*

Currently, the majority of SEND pupils who are eligible for travel assistance are transported by SBC on in-house or contracted transport services, with a small number travelling independently following travel training. A mileage cost is available for parents who wish to transport their own child if this is considered appropriate.

Recommended new approach from the transport review:

- Individual assessments around the provision of 'travel assistance' are considered alongside the promotion of independence and personalisation.
- There will be a rationalisation of transport routes as pupils adopt more independent alternative modes of transport.
- Independent travel training will be the first response to a request for travel assistance. Following training:
 - Those deemed capable of independent travel will be provided with a cash amount to purchase a subsidised public transport pass.
 - Those deemed unsuitable or those who do not become independent travellers at the end of the training process, will be offered a travel support allowance –to enable them to make their own travel arrangements.
- Those for whom a travel support allowance is not appropriate will be offered a place on shared transport services provided by the Council.
- A travel support allowance is always offered as a first response to those travelling out of borough (as distances involved result in expensive transport provision).

b) *Home to School Transport for Post-16 Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)*

The current approach is to provide a space on an existing statutory transport service or provide dedicated services beyond the statutory minimum. All services are free of charge to the user.

Recommended new approach from the transport review:

- Independent travel training will be the first response to a request for travel assistance (same as the approach for pre-16 students above).

- Charges to be imposed for Post-16 SEND to bring it into line with mainstream Post-16 charging arrangements. Students from eligible low income households will not be required to pay.
- Post-16 pupils will be able to purchase a subsidised public transport pass.

Dedicated transport services will only be provided, subject to a charge (which is equivalent to current cost of an annual bus pass), once other travel assistance options have been considered.

c) *Adults with Learning Disabilities and Older Adults attending Day Centres and Activities*

The Council does not have a transport policy for Adults with Learning Disabilities and Older Adults attending day care services. Service users are charged £2 per day for transport to access day services (Viking and Project 49); this is a flat fare regardless of the number of trips required to be made to attend activities during the course of the day. The £2 fare has been in place for approximately 4 years. In addition, certain service users who live in residential care homes are being transported on Council funded vehicles to day care services, rather than being transported by the care home.

The policy needs to consider what action the Council would take if someone refused to pay the transport charge. Options could be:

- Withdraw day care – we would need to be clear about the reasons for attending day care and what effect withdrawal would have
- Owing to individual financial circumstances, it could be agreed to waive the charge
- If there is no valid reason why the charge should not be paid, then further action would need to be considered.

Recommended new approach from the transport review:

- Implement a new policy which formalises current practice and details SBC's expectations of service users (e.g. around the use of Motability cars, etc.).
- That the daily charge for transport should be increased to £4 per day for simple return trips to £5 per day for multi-journeys. Although this would not recover the full cost of providing the transport, it would reflect a more realistic balance, which would still remain considerably cheaper for the client than securing transport in the private market. The charge will be reviewed on an annual basis.

84 clients who attend Project 49 are charged for transport to attend the centre. Increasing the day rate to between £3-£5 per day for these 84 clients would increase annual income by between £11,600 and £34,800.

There may be additional clients attending Project 49 who are not transported to Project 49 by the Council, but they attend other day care and adult education services which are not included in the numbers of paying clients, as charges are only imposed for journeys to those who are transported to and from Project 49 and does not include the additional trips provided during the day.

The potential increase in income assumes that there would be no reduction in client numbers as external market transport costs would still be much higher.

d) *Looked After Children*

Currently, the requirement for transport is treated more as an after-thought to the provision of care services, which artificially inflates the transport element of the process of arranging care. SBC has no policy for Children's Social Care, meaning that elements such as passenger assistant requirements are not formalised.

Recommended new approach from the transport review:

- Devise a new policy which would clarify issues such as notice periods for transport bookings, expectations of carers and parents, passenger assistant standards, venues for contact visits, etc.
- The process of arranging transport, particularly contact transport, should be co-ordinated by the transport function alongside the contact co-ordinator at the contact centre (Allan Cole), with transport availability being clarified and secured with transport colleagues early in the process of arranging care.

e) *Dial-a-Ride*

The Council does not have a formal policy for the provision of Dial-a-Ride, although there are guidelines outlining how the service operates. The Dial-a-Ride service provides transport to essential facilities and services for Southend residents who are unable to use conventional public transport services. The service currently operates using three accessible minibuses which are owned by the Council but due for replacement. The Dial-a-Ride drivers are Council employees. The service operates on a on-demand basis, Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 16:30. Members call the Council's transport team to book a trip and there are no limits on the number of trips that a member is able to make during the course of any given week. All destinations must be within the Southend Borough Council boundary although trips to hospital appointments are not permissible. An annual membership fee of £12 per member is charged and payments per trip are based on return mileage, which is recorded in mileage bands.

The current cost of the service, including three paid drivers, is in excess of £110,000 per year. The scheme currently has 61 members (two-thirds of whom make trips on a regular basis), resulting in a subsidy per member of approximately £1,800 per year. Dial-a-Ride is not a

statutory service and other local authorities, for example Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire County Councils, reviewed and decided to withdraw the provision. In the absence of a local community transport operator in the Borough, the Council is keen to retain the service, but should consider ways of reducing the cost of providing it.

Recommended new approach from the transport review:

Implement a policy which

- reduces the hours of operation from 09:00 to 16:30 to 10:00 to 14:30 to minimise the cost of operation
- introduces scheduled, bookable trips to popular destinations such as local supermarkets and central Southend
- removes trips to day care facilities which are provided by Adult Social Care for eligible residents
- reduces the number of trips any one member is able to make, to enable more people to access the service

3.2 Details of the consultation analysis on the proposed policies

3.2.1 Further to 1.2 above, the Council started a consultation process on 14 July 2017 with service users and stakeholders around the proposed changes to the following policies (as set out in 3.1.2):

- a) *Home to School for Pre and Post-16 Students (SEND)*
- b) *Adults with Learning Disabilities and Older Adults attending Day Centres and Activities*
- c) *Looked After Children*
- d) *Dial-a-Ride*

3.2.2 The consultation for the above policies ended on 10 October 2017 and complied with the best practice guidance from the Department for Education.

3.2.3 The results of the consultation are as follows:

a) *Home to School Transport for Students (SEND) Pre and Post-16*

A total of 153 responses were received with 95% of these returns being from parents/carers, and they related to children and young people from the following age groups:

- Post-16 years of age (20%)
- 11-16 years of age (39%)
- 5-10 years of age (38%)
- Under 5 years of age (3%)

Details of consultation responses:

Recommendations for Change	Feedback
Satisfaction with current service offering	97% of the respondents were happy with the current provision
Offer Independent Travel Training (ITT) for older children to make the school journey as a way of promoting independence and life skills	52% agreed that this would promote independent life skills
Offer a Travel Support Allowance if ITT not appropriate	44% agreed that parents are often able to make the best travel arrangements to suit their situation
Charges for Post-16 (not applicable for low-income households)	33% agreed overall (42% agreed when clause added regarding low-income households)

b) Adults with Learning Difficulties and Older Adults attending Day Care Centres and Other Activities

A total of 62 responses were received with a majority of responses from users or representation of users attending activities at Project 49.

Details of consultation responses:

Recommendations for Change	Feedback
Satisfaction with current service offering	97% of the respondents were happy with the current provision
Travel assistance will not be provided if an individual has access to other means of travel, even if they choose not to use them	31% agreed
Those living in residential care homes will not receive assistance from the Council with travel to social care activities as this should be provided by the residential care home	37% agreed. There was some feedback that related to fears of isolation for those in care homes
Increase charges for providing travel assistance to adult social care activities to cover more of the cost of providing it	39% agreed that charges should be increased. There were some concerns that some users may be affected by the introduction of Personal Independent Payments (PIPs) as this is lower than the previous Disability Living Allowance (DLA) meaning they may struggle with the affordability of increased transport costs
Proposal to increase daily charge from £2 to £4 per day (£5 per day for those making multiple trips during the day)	63% considered it unfair to have differential charging rates

c) Looked After Children

A total of 26 responses were received from the following:

- 84% foster carers
- 8% transport operators
- 4% social workers
- 4% other

Details of consultation responses:

Recommendations for Change	Feedback
Foster carers will be expected to take the child in their care to school, leisure activities and contact visits wherever possible	71% agreed that transport should only be provided by SBC after all other options have been considered and discounted
If a carer transports the child in their care to school and contact visits, the Council will reimburse the full cost (based upon the mileage)	86% agreed that SBC should reimburse the travel costs (based upon the mileage)
The Council encourages contact visits at a foster carer's home, especially for babies and younger children, in order to reduce their need to travel	Some responses expressed concerns about having parents in foster carers' homes
Children from same schools can be transported to contact visits in the same vehicle	95% agreed, with the agreement of the parents
The need for a passenger assistant for a looked after child or young person will be decided by the Council and include a full risk assessment	86% agreed

d) Dial-a-Ride

A total of 62 responses were received from the following groups:

- Current DaR members (56%)
- Representatives of destinations or organisations accessed by current DaR members (24%);
- Those who are eligible for this transport provision but are currently not a DaR member (17%)
- Other (3%)

Details of consultation responses:

Recommendations for Change	Feedback
Retain a DaR service for Southend	98% agreed
Make DaR more cost effective	100% agreed that Council is right to look at ways of providing DaR in a more cost effective way which lets more people use the service
Introduce scheduled bookable trips, reduce the number of trips per member per week	65% agreed that proposed changes should make the service more accessible to those wishing to use it
Reduced hours and days of operation	60% agreed that the new hours of operation will allow more members to get to the essential services and facilities they need

3.3 Revisions as a result of the Consultation Exercise:

a) Home to School Transport for Students (SEND) Pre and Post-16

Subject to agreement to the recommendations in 2.1 above, the Council would develop communication materials for Independent Travel Training and Travel Support Allowance which provides parents / carers with sufficient information to make informed decisions about the best travel option for their child and the family.

b) Adults with Learning Difficulties and Older Adults attending Day Care Centres and Other Activities

There is a need to ensure fairness in charging for these services and it is no longer sustainable to continue at the current contribution from users and it should be noted that the increased charge is still lower than those imposed by other local authorities. It should also be noted that the increased charge is only a contribution and does not cover the full costs to provide the transport.

To ensure residents do not feel isolated in residential care homes – there is a need to look at how activities can be incorporated for these residents. When considering the operating model for the future provision of this transport, the Council will review whether it can provide transport for care homes in a more cost effective way.

c) Looked After Children

Contact visits being hosted in a foster carers home would be assessed on a case by case basis so that the concerns that were expressed can be addressed.

d) Dial-a-Ride

It is recommend that the revised policy is adopted and implemented. Although, if this provision of transport is transferred to an external provider then the Council could review this again to see if a more cost effective model could extend the hours of operation. The Council will also explore what transport services the voluntary and third sector have in place that could support this requirement.

3.4 Timescales for Implementation

3.4.1 Below is the recommended timescale to implement the revised policies:

Date	Policy
1 st April 2018	Adults with Learning Disabilities and Older Adults attending Day Care
1 st April 2018	Dial-a-Ride
1 st April 2018	Looked after Children
1 st September 2018	Home to School for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The reasons for the above recommendations are as follows:

- a) Home to School (SEND) transport – this recommendation is to approve some changes to the current policy to enable consistency and fairness in decisions regarding eligibility. The proposed changes to current provision offer different types of travel assistance aimed at encouraging independence and well-being, whilst treating each student on an individual basis.

Numerous local authorities, e.g. Dudley MBC, Sandwell MBC and Trafford MBC are adopting the above approach.

Most local authorities are currently considering the provision of Post-16 transport, including SEND. Most are stopping short of withdrawing SEND provision or charging full cost recovery but levelling the playing field in terms of charging, e.g. In April 2014, Herefordshire County Council withdrew the provision of free Post-16 SEND transport.

- b) Adults with Learning Disabilities and Older Adults attending Day Centres and Activities – this recommendation is for approval to have an established policy

that demonstrates how the Council will support individuals by providing travel assistance to access social care activities in a consistent and equitable way.

Other local authorities have increased their charges considerably over recent years. Nottinghamshire County Council for example, increased its £7 per day charge to £8 per day in 2016/17.

All individuals needs will be assessed on a case by case basis utilising the 'reasonable test' attached to the policy.

- c) Looked After Children – this recommendation is for approval to have an established policy to enable fairness in decisions about eligibility. This policy sets out the Council’s approach to providing travel assistance for children and young people in foster care and residential care. It covers travel between home, school, leisure and contact visits.

Other local authorities have begun to recognise the pressing need to adopt a transport policy for Children’s Social Care as this area of care provision comes under increasing financial pressure. *The Independent Advisors* advised Leicestershire County Council to adopt such a policy in work recently undertaken for them.

- d) Dial-a-Ride – this recommendation is for approval to have an established policy to enable fairness. The Council’s proposal is for a Dial-a-Ride policy to revise and formalise established practice. It should be noted that while other local authorities have decided to stopping running their Dial-a-Ride service, Southend has decided that it will continue to offer this service, although it needs to be operated in a more fair and consistent way. The cost of providing the Dial-a-Ride service throughout the day, every weekday, is no longer sustainable. The number of people who use the service is extremely low, which means the cost to the Council is very high (more than £25 per person per trip).

5. Corporate Implications

5.1 Contribution to the Council’s Vision and Corporate Priorities

This project will contribute towards the following Council Priorities:

Safe	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look after and safeguard our children and vulnerable adults.
Clean	To: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote the use of green technology and initiatives to benefit the local economy and environment. • Encourage and enforce high standards of environmental stewardship.

Healthy	<p>To:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the life chances of our residents, especially our vulnerable children and adults, by working to reduce inequalities and social deprivation across our communities.
Prosperous	<p>To:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the town is 'open for businesses' and that new, developing and existing enterprise is nurtured and supported.
Excellent	<p>To:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with and listen to our communities and partners to achieve better outcomes for all. • Enable communities to be self-sufficient and foster pride in the town. • Promote and lead an entrepreneurial, creative and innovative approach to the development of our town.

5.2 Financial Implications

- 5.2.1 The expectation is that financial efficiencies will be delivered through the adoption and application of the proposed new and revised policies and thus there will be a contribution to the Council’s savings targets in future years.
- 5.2.1 The level of potential savings that could be achieved through the implementation and adoption of suggested policies will be determined on the decision whether or not to adopt the proposed changes as recommended in section 2.

5.3 Legal Implications

- 5.3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide home to school transport; other elements of adults and children social care also fall under this duty. The proposed policies are not recommending to remove this duty but is recommending policies that assess eligibility around fairness as well as the maximising of independence.

5.4 People Implications

- 5.4.1 A full consultation was undertaken as per 1.2 with all stakeholders and users.
- 5.4.2 If the application of the revised/new policies leads to a reduced need for the in house transport provision, this could lead to a redundancy situation. In this instance a full consultation with the affected staff and the trade unions will be undertaken in accordance with the relevant legislation.

5.5 Property Implications

- 5.5.1 There are no property implications.

5.6 Consultation

5.6.1 Consultation on the proposed policies started on 14 July 2017. The consultation period ended on 15 September 2017, except the home to school (SEND) consultation which concluded on 10 October 2017. A copy of the full consultation report can be made available on request.

5.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.7.1 Equality Analyses have been initiated on the basis of the proposed policies and these will need to be finalised.

5.8 Risk Assessment

5.8.1 As the choice of alternative options to conventional minibus transport for the school journey is voluntary, there is a risk that parents will not opt to change their travel arrangements. It will be important to promote the benefits of independent travel training via targeted publicity materials, to ensure that parents have the required information to enable them to make properly informed choices.

5.9 Value for Money

5.9.1 The SEND travel proposals aim to enhance value for money through reducing the number of current external contracts and in-house services. They also aim to deliver value for money in the longer-term as SEND pupils who learn independent travel skills retain and develop those skills in the future, thus reducing the requirement for transport services to be provided by Adult Social Care. In addition, renumerating parents for making their own travel arrangements should also deliver value for money, particularly for those currently travelling on higher cost transport.

5.9.2 The Dial-a-Ride proposals aim to deliver value for money by offering a service to meet the travel needs of a greater number of people who are unable to use conventional public transport, rather than providing unlimited travel to a small number of current members.

5.9.3 The proposals to increase the charge for Adult Social Care transport will ensure that the transport provided covers a greater proportion of its costs than has been the case over recent years.

5.10 Community Safety Implications

5.10.1 Community safety implications will be addressed.

5.11 Environmental Impact

5.11.1 Independent travel training will reduce the need for pupils to be transported to school and enable them to walk, cycle or use public transport, thus reducing the impact on the environment in the short and longer term.

- 5.11.2 Improved route planning and the requirement to transport fewer children in minibuses would lower the environmental impacts generated by the current arrangements, although the provision of a travel support allowance (which would increase personalisation and choice) could serve to increase the number of cars used to transport children to school and have a negative environmental impact.
- 5.11.3 The inclusion of scheduled Dial-a-Ride services to popular destinations should help to reduce the number of trips made by the minibuses, thus having a positive environmental impact.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 None.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A – Special Educational Needs Travel Assistance Policy
- 7.2 Appendix B – Adult Social Care Travel Assistance Policy
- 7.3 Appendix C –Travel Assistance Policy for Looked After Children and Young People
- 7.4 Appendix D - Southend on Sea Borough Council Dial-a-Ride Policy