

REPORT TO THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S POLICY & SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE OF MEETING: 17TH NOVEMBER 2017

SUBJECT OF REPORT: HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: TERRI KNOWLTON, TRANSPORT OPERATIONS MANAGER

KEY DECISION: NO

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel receives the new Home to School Travel Assistance Policy, taking into account the recommendations of the steering group in March, and the ongoing work of the Integrated Transport Unit.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

Councillor Elfan Ap Rees, Executive Member for Strategic Planning, Highways, Economic Development and Housing, signed off the Decision Sheet for Home to School Travel Assistance Policy on 28 September 2017.

The Policy has been published from September 2017, and this will take effect from September 2018 for parents to make decisions about their child's school or college placements with a clear understanding of travel assistance.

This report provides an update to the recommendations made by the CYPS School Organisation Steering Group on 29th March 2017.

2. POLICY

The CYPS School Organisation Steering Group met on 29th March 2017 to consider the detailed work undertaken by the Home to School Transport Working Group, and produced a report for the Executive Member.

This meets with the corporate aim of enhancing health and well being.

3. DETAILS

The Home to School Travel Assistance Policy includes the following recommendations from the Home to School Transport Working Group:

- The policy reflects the current parameters of living beyond two or three miles from school, dependent on age, and are set nationally. They are there as part of the process of ensuring attendance for school children, and do not in any way prescribe how this transport function is delivered.
- All requests for assistance should only be considered for the closest relevant school to the child's home, be it primary, secondary or specialist. Parents should be made aware of this in any school place application system and it may not match their choice or that of the school or Multi Academy Trust (MAT). This may also mean that the closest school is in another council's area
- All post-16 transport should be chargeable against a published standard concessionary charging structure. (this includes Post 16 at college or a special school)
- Travel training to be considered for appropriate children
- A network of meeting points for pick-up points be established which are checked for safety and accessibility
- Personal budgets for transport of qualifying children. This should be properly clarified and publicised.
- Any parents with mobility vehicles for their children with SEN should be expected to provide transport to school in those vehicles, with the Council funding the fuel and running costs of those journeys. Unless it is more economically efficient to include them on transport already running

The Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) has set up the first Personal Travel Budget for a family to manage their child's travel to and from school whilst also taking into account the child's complex needs which can make the journey more difficult. This has reduced the stress for the family as well as making savings for the home to school travel budget.

There has been a pilot for travel training for two students with additional needs who were transferring to college in September. The ITU will now explore the potential for travel training and how this is accessed.

The ITU have been working with Adult Social Care about the possibility of utilising Meals on Wheels drivers at the beginning and end of the school day. Currently piloting a route with a child who was traveling on his own in a taxi because he can't manage travelling with others. They are travelling in one of the council's electric cars and it has been a very positive experience.

There are pick up and drop off points being identified for children who are added to transport mid-year. Their additional needs are taken into account before doing this. Wherever possible public bus stops are being used.

The ITU are having weekly meetings with the SEND team to discuss any new travel requests or changes in need. This is an opportunity to discuss a school placement and whether it is the nearest one which can meet the specific child's additional needs.

The nearest school, particularly for secondary schools who have first geographical areas, will be explored in more detail by the ITU, and Councillor Donald Davies has agreed to be involved.

4. CONSULTATION

This was an Executive Member decision, so was published on the North Somerset website for the statutory period for councillors and the general public to view and make comment.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This decision will not impact on the current budget or financial position. It is expected to help deliver the future year MTFP savings already committed by Integrated Transport Unit.

There should be continuing opportunities to make savings as we explore travel options further, whilst also taking into account that the growing school population.

6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly.

Sections 508B and 508C of the Education Act 1996 make provision for local authorities to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, where necessary, to facilitate a child's attendance at school. It does not specify the type of travel arrangements

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

The Integrated Transport Unit will still be providing the statutory requirements of home to school travel assistance, but it will be provided in a range of ways which will be a change to current expectations of travel.

We will need to provide training and awareness of this policy, both for North Somerset Council and education staff, to maximise opportunities to encourage parents and carers make their own travel provision prior to approaching the council.

This is a needs-led budget because it is difficult to plan for children moving in and around North Somerset, and how many of those also have additional complex needs requiring a very specific school placement. There is an increasing school population as well as large numbers of houses being built in the area.

When the Council considers new specialist placement provision or proposed school expansion, consideration should be given to the financial impact across all budget areas. Funding may be allocated to complete the new provision for example, but people must also consider the potential impact on other budgets particularly where it is an adverse effect and evaluate this as part of the whole project.

8. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. Further profiling may be required in the light of future stakeholder feedback on the changes recommended. Adjustments will need to be considered with guidance and support from the Equalities Scheme Implementation Group.

9. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Improving outcomes and reducing costs is a priority in the Corporate Plan. The investigation by the Working Group aligned with the values in the Corporate Plan of putting people first and working with and involving others. The work of the Integrated Transport Unit is also compliant with this.

10. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

If the Home to School Travel Assistance Policy was not updated, the Integrated Transport Unit would not be able to explore more efficient ways of providing travel assistance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Home to School Travel Assistance Policy |

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report of the CYPS Home to School Transport Policy Scrutiny Working Group dated 29th March 2017 - <http://apps.n-somerset.gov.uk/cairo/docs/doc28207.pdf>