

Children's Select Committee

Title: Home to School Transport Consultation

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Select Committee on key proposals for changes to the current approach to delivering Home to School Transport in Buckinghamshire.

Activity to progress recommendation following Budget Scrutiny

On reviewing the increasing cost of Home to School Transport, the Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee made the recommendation that the Local Authority offer should meet the national guidance levels, providing only the statutory support required under the legislation.

Benchmarking against other Local Authorities indicated that most have already moved to more innovative models of delivering Home to School Transport. In an effort to improve the financial situation without removing services or requiring major changes to the delivery of transport, updates were made to internal processes, routes, procurement and other supporting areas to improve efficiency.

These changes secured some efficiencies, however longer term changes to the current offer were required as demand is creating unsustainable pressures on the budget. At present we spend £15.1m on home to school transport, with £12.7m spent on provision supporting our statutory duties covered in s.508B of the Education Act 1996. In addition, we also provide transport for 4810 children at a cost of £2.4m in accordance with other statutory transport duties and powers.

The recommendations made by the Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee were clear that any changes ought to be made in consultation with parents, with reasonable notice. The report for Cabinet on 22nd October outlined the drivers for change; financial sustainability, promotion of independence, and the need to mitigate the effects of growth on the environment, and requested authority to consult with residents on:

- Proposed changes to the delivery of Home to School transport with a particular focus on areas of spend that could be delivered differently whilst continuing to meet the Council's statutory duties.
 - SEN Post-16 Free Transport
 - Paid-for Transport
 - Evreham Promise
 - Ivinghoe Promise
- And - Proposed models of implementation for the alternative service delivery of travel assistance provision.

The proposed changes are part of a wider transport transformation programme across council services to improve quality and best support residents' travel needs. This programme aims to ensure a consistent approach in the adjustment to provision that mitigates any negative impact on particular cohorts. The transformation programme and changes to delivery are underpinned by the following guiding principles.

We will:

- Support those most in need
- Promote principles of independence
- Provide the most cost effective travel assistance
- Promote and encourage the use of sustainable travel

The public consultation went live on 31st October, and will run until 4th January 2019. Responses will be analysed, and recommendations will be made to Cabinet in March 2019.

Background Papers

Modernising home to school transport

All of the information for the Home to School Consultation has been published at:

www.buckscc.gov.uk/schooltransportsurvey

Cabinet Report – 22nd October

<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/s123658/Report%20for%20Home%20to%20School%20Transport%20Consultation.pdf>