

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 17 January 2012
Report of: Borough Solicitor
Subject/Title: Home to School Transport Task and Finish Group

1.0 Report Summary

1.1 This report encloses the final report of the Task and Finish Group which conducted a scrutiny review of Home to School Transport.

2.0 Recommendations

- a) That the report of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group be approved;
- b) That the recommendations of the Group be endorsed, and referred to the Cabinet for consideration and necessary action, and that Cabinet be invited initially to comment on the details of the recommendations.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 To progress the findings of the Scrutiny Review Task and Finish Group who reviewed Home to School Transport within Cheshire East.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Policy Implications including - Carbon reduction - Health

6.1 Not known at this stage.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 Not known at this stage.

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 Not known at this stage.

9.0 Risk Management

9.1 There are no identifiable risks.

10.0 Background and Options

10.1 With the Council facing unprecedented financial challenges there was a need to examine each area of discretionary activity to clarify whether continued funding could be sustained. It was within this context that a review of the Council's Home to School Transport Policy identified key areas of discretionary activity and support provided by the Council which were deemed no longer sustainable within the current financial climate. These areas included denominational transport and mainstream post 16 provision where it was intended to remove subsidies and/or increase charges, resulting in a projected saving of £0.989m.

10.2 Consequently a number of proposed changes to Home to School Transport Policy went before Cabinet on 4 July 2011. The proposed changes already agreed by Cabinet included retaining the status quo for Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport and for those denominational and post 16 pupils currently in receipt of support. The proposal in 'option 1' of the report was to eliminate discretionary support for denominational and post 16 new entrants. The savings proposed in option 1 of approximately £1 million, (with an upper and lower sensitivity range of £300k from the estimated £1 million savings) were over the period of the financial years 2011/12 to 2016/17.

10.3 Within this meeting a number of Councillors and members of the public in attendance spoke on the implications of the proposals for pupils and their families, for schools, and for the Home to School budget.

10.4 As a result of this meeting, it was resolved:

1. That the motion to implement Option 1 of the report be withdrawn and that the position be reconsidered in one year's time. During the intervening period all available options would be thoroughly investigated with the assistance of the Scrutiny Committees, taking due consideration of the need to continue to provide a stable education system.
2. That for the educational year 2011 – 2012 the parental contribution for denominational and mainstream post 16 transport be raised by 5% to reflect the current rate of inflation.

- 10.5 In a meeting on 26 July 2011, the Children's and Families Scrutiny Committee resolved to establish a Task and Finish Group to examine discretionary policies in respect of Home to School Transport. It was also agreed that as there were a number of overlaps with transport policy, a number of Members from the Environment and Prosperity Committee would be invited to participate.
- 10.6 The group carried out its investigation between September 2011 and January 2012. The group's final recommendations are included in the report attached.

11 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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