

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	6 February 2012
Report of:	Children and Families Scrutiny Committee
Subject/Title:	Home to School Transport
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Hilda Gaddum

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report encloses both the final report of the Task and Finish Group which conducted a Scrutiny Review of Home to School Transport and the Minority Report which was endorsed by the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee on 17 January 2012.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That both reports be received and the Cabinet Member for Children and Families undertake to come back to a future meeting of Cabinet with a formal response to each recommendation.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To progress the findings of the Home to School Task and Finish Group and the Minority Report of Councillor Louise Brown.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All

5.0 Policy Implications

- 5.1 Not known at this stage

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Not known at this stage

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 Not known at this stage

8.0 Risk Management

8.1 Not known at this stage

9.0 Background and Options

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 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.
- 9.4 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.
- 9.5 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.

- 9.6 The group carried out its investigation between September 2011 and January 2012. The group's final recommendations, along with a Minority Report by Councillor Louise Brown, were presented to the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee on 17 January 2012. It was resolved that it would be the Minority Report that would be endorsed by the Committee but that both reports would be put forward to Cabinet for consideration. It is worth noting that as the Minority Report was submitted after the statutory deadline, it was not subject to same internal consultation with Council officers and Portfolio Holders as the majority report had been through.
- 9.7 The final report of the Task and Finish Group and the endorsed Minority Report are now attached for Cabinet's consideration.

10.0 Access to Information

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

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