

Cheshire East Council

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	12 th September 2017
Report of:	Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director – People Frank Jordan, Executive Director – Place and Acting Deputy Chief Executive
Subject/ Title:	Available Walking Routes to School Programme – Phase 2
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr George Hayes – Children and Families Portfolio Holder Cllr David Brown – Deputy Leader of the Council & Highways and Infrastructure Portfolio Holder

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The Available Walking Routes to School Programme, was originally agreed by Cabinet on 14 June 2016 and then confirmed on 18 October 2016.
- 1.2 This report requests authorisation to proceed to Phase 2A of the programme, which will involve community engagement between **20 September and 17 October 2017**, as set out in this report and involves a review of the route between **Mobberley to Knutsford Academy and Mobberley to Knutsford Academy, The Studio**.
- 1.2.1 The route follows Toft Road, Knutsford Road and Mobberley Road through to Middlewalk and then across The Moor to Church Hill and crossing Toft Road at the pedestrian crossing into Bexton Road, across Stanley Road and into Knutsford Academy.
- 1.2.2 The route between Mobberley and Knutsford was an unavailable walking route because of the lack of an obvious pavement between Broadoak Lane and Rockswood Way. A new pavement between Mobberley and Knutsford was completed in April 2017. The formal assessment of the route was undertaken by Cheshire East Highways in April/May 2017.
- 1.2.3 Taking into account the number of children anticipated for September 2017, it is estimated that there will be 60 children eligible to receive free transport and this includes 27 who will continue to be eligible on distance criteria and 33 for whom free transport would cease.
- 1.2.4 Using September 2017 data as an indication, it is estimated that the implementation of this proposal could achieve an annual saving of approx. £29,000.

- 1.3 Parents of pupils whose free transport is withdrawn would be eligible to receive a subsidy payment to mitigate the impact of the decision. The subsidy would be £192 per child for each year the child is expected to remain at the current school (excluding sixth form). This eligibility would include pupils starting at the school in September 2017, but would not be available for those starting at the school in September 2018 as information on the proposal will be shared in September 2017 ahead of the 31 October closing date for September 2018 applications for high school transfer.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Authorise the proposed community engagement on the removal of free transport between Mobberley to Knutsford Academy and Mobberley to Knutsford Academy, The Studio on the basis that the route is now assessed as an available walking route.

3.0 Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The route was unavailable because of the lack of an obvious pavement between Broadoak Lane and Rockswood Way, where a new pavement has now been installed. A formal route assessment has been carried out during April/May 2017.
- 3.2 In accordance with earlier recommendations of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, effective communication and engagement will be a first priority to ensure that anyone potentially affected will have an opportunity to contribute their views before a final decision is made.
- 3.3 The Portfolio Holder for Children and Families, four representatives from Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee and two Local Ward Members, accompanied by Local Authority Highways and Education officers have walked the route to review the way the pupils walk to school. No concerns were raised about the availability of the route; however, it was recommended that routes to school should receive ongoing maintenance. Highways officers in attendance made a note of this and other matters raised on the walk, which included:
- Pot holes in pavements
 - Maintenance of the road
 - Cycles not able to use the new route
- 3.4 Briefings were held for the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 June 2017 and local ward members on 3 July 2017.
- 3.5 On 26 June 2017, headteachers of the Knutsford Academy and local primary schools received information about the proposed community engagement and how they can be involved.

- 3.6 A further meeting was attended by a representative of Knutsford Academy on 19 July to exchange information about the route to school and the engagement process.

Lighting along the route was questioned and clarification was provided that Road Safety GB guidance states that 'on its own the absence of street lighting does not make a route unsafe'. Further clarification was given that the presence of lighting is taken into consideration where pupils need to cross the road and as pupils do not need to cross the road at the location in question, the route was assessed as available.

Emergency services will be contacted through the community engagement process to request their view on the assessment and to provide further data on incidents on the route.

- 3.8 Subject to Cabinet approval, the proposed community engagement process will commence on 20 September and end on 17 October 2017 in line with the planned programme, as set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.9 Other elected members together with key stakeholders will be invited to walk the route and review the way the pupils may walk to school during the engagement period between 20 September and 17 October 2017.
- 3.10 Information will be published on the Council's website during the engagement process, including copies of the final route assessment and associated maps, together with information about how interested parties can share their views on the proposal.
- 3.11 Schools affected will be provided with letters to send out to their parents inviting comments on the proposed change by 17 October 2017. Schools will also be invited to make arrangements for pupil and staff feedback on the changes proposed.
- 3.12 An analysis/summary of the information received during community engagement will be presented to Cabinet for consideration before a final decision is made on the proposal to withdraw free transport with effect from 1 September 2018.

4.0 Wards affected and Local Ward Members

- 4.1 Knutsford Ward:
Cllr Tony Dean, Cllr Stewart Gardiner, Cllr Hayley Wells-Bradshaw

Mobberley Ward:
Cllr Jamie Macrae

5.0 Implications of Recommendation

5.1 Policy Implications

5.1.1 This proposal is in line with Cheshire East Council's adopted policy on Available Walking Routes to School, which was approved on 15 October 2012.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 The Council is required by both the Education Act 1996 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to make suitable travel arrangements free of charge for certain students to attend school. Legislation has determined that local authorities are required to make school travel arrangements where a child, lives under the statutory walking distance to school (currently 3 miles for children of secondary school age) but does not have a route available that can be walked in reasonable safety.

5.2.2 For a route to be available, it must be a route to school, along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety from traffic hazards.

5.2.3 It is for the Council to assess route safety, taking into account the need to create safe walking, cycling and travel routes and encouraging more pupils to walk and cycle to school.

5.3 Financial implications

5.3.1 In accordance with the October 2016 decision of Cabinet, a subsidy was agreed for parents of children no longer eligible to receive travel assistance due to the route becoming available. The subsidy amount is £192 for a secondary school child for each year the child is to remain at their current school.

5.3.2 The subsidy estimate based on the anticipated number of children attending in September 2017 is £11,520. This may be subject to change if pupil numbers at the school change.

5.3.3 The People Directorate's budget for commissioning transport is £8.9m, including £3.5m relating to mainstream school transport. As part of delivering savings in the approved budget proposals in respect of Available Walking Routes are being considered and introduced in Phases; and total annual savings from full implementation of Phases 1A and 1B are estimated to realise £220,000 in a full year. As noted in this report, the introduction of Phase 2A is estimated to realise a further £29,000 (in a full year).

5.3.4 Consideration will be given to the phasing and implementation of existing proposals, and also the prospects for further Phases, in the

updating of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and preparation of budgets for the 2018/19-2020/21 period.

5.4 Equality Implications

5.4.1 A full equality impact assessment has been completed regarding the Available Walking Routes to school programme and is available to view on the Cheshire East Council Website

5.5 Rural Community Implications

5.5.1 This proposal applies to secondary aged pupils whose walking route to school is less than 3 miles. All pupils equal to or over this distance travelling to their local or closest qualifying school would be eligible for transport.

5.6 Public Health Implications

5.6.1 The public health implications will be considered as part of the corporate sustainable mode of travel strategy update, which will examine and promote the healthiest way of travelling to school.

6.0 Risk Management

6.1 Maintaining existing arrangements will result in inconsistency and inequity in the provision of transport across the borough.

7.0 Access to information / Bibliography

7.1 The Cheshire East Council Available Walking Routes to School Policy can be found at:

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/public_transport/available-walking-routes/walking_routes_to_schools.aspx

8.0 Contact Information

8.1 Contact details for this report are as follows:

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