

Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

6 September 2012

Report of the Post-16 Transport Task and Finish Group

Recommendations

To consider the Task and Finish Group report and forward the recommendations to Cabinet for approval, with any necessary amendments or additions

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A Task and Finish Group of councillors was set up in March 2012 to examine the impact of the changes to the Post-16 Transport Policy agreed by Cabinet in April 2011.
- 1.2 Having considered the evidence from officers, schools, colleges, Members of the Youth Parliament and VOX, the Task and Finish Group has made six recommendations, which aim to improve partnership working between the County Council, schools and colleges, and redress issues of fairness and a lack of flexibility within the current Post-16 Transport Policy.
- 1.3 If agreed by the Committee, the report and recommendations (with any necessary amendments or additions) will then be considered by Cabinet.

2.0 Recommendations

The full report of the Task & Finish Group is appended to this covering report. However, for convenience, the six recommendations are included below:

1. The County Council should provide focused support for institutions in the whole area of post-16 transport, by implementing the following:
 - a) Enable the sharing of good practice and information about local transport arrangements
 - b) There should be greater publicity for the range of educational opportunities for students at the post-16 level, including specific publicity regarding the transport options available to enable those opportunities
 - c) Advise on, and possibly help to coordinate, local transport arrangements provided by the institutions themselves
 - d) Support local institutions in data analysis and research
 - e) In cases where this is relevant, consider offering financial support to institutions to help them provide their own transport arrangements

- f) The application of sub-regional guidelines on the use of the 16-19 Bursary in schools and colleges to ensure a consistent level of support for students between institutions
2. When considering changes to post-16 transport arrangements, the County Council should actively seek the views of the Warwickshire Members of the Youth Parliament and VOX (Warwickshire Youth Council)
 3. The County Council should investigate the possibility of a more flexible approach to the current "closed-door" policy operating on County Council-funded transport. This should include consideration of:
 - (a) Term-based passes
 - (b) 2-or 3-day week passes
 - (c) Payment on a casual basis where there are empty seats

The investigation should include the possible risks and how these might be managed. It should also include consideration of the examples of Worcestershire and Kent County Councils, whose policies are more flexible than the current Warwickshire County Council policy. The findings of this investigation should be reported initially to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4. The County Council should investigate the resource implications of making the Post-16 transport subsidy available to all low-income students. Currently it is only available to students who are able to use County Council buses. The Task and Finish Group appreciate that there will be resource implications, but feel that this is a justice issue.
5. The recent removal of the following routes is causing serious access difficulties, as indicated in the responses from several institutions. The County Council should consider the re-opening of these routes, provided either by a private operator or by the County Council.
 - (a) The cancelled route from Nuneaton to Stratford, via Rugby, Hillmorton and Baginton
 - (b) The shortened 236 route from Rugby to Moreton Morrell College
6. The County Council should take account of the level of isolation faced by some students who live in areas remote from their preferred institution, and take positive steps to redress the balance in terms of the enabling of access to post-16 courses.

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Martyn Harris	01926 412233 martynharris@warwickshire.gov.uk
Chair of the Task & Finish Group	Cllr Peter Balaam	cllrbalaam@warwickshire.gov.uk



Post-16 Transport Scrutiny Review Final Report

*Working for
Warwickshire*

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Executive Summary

- 1.1.1 Warwickshire County Council has traditionally provided a discretionary subsidy for students travelling on the County Council-run post-16 transport service.
- 1.1.2 The County Council centrally commissioned bus services from private providers, with an annual charge payable by the student for a County Council bus pass, entitling the student to two journeys per day on a school bus. Travel on these services was subsidised by the County Council to reduce the costs to students.
- 1.1.3 The Council's Cabinet took the decision in April 2011 to remove the subsidy for post-16 transport, which increased the annual charge to the student from £400 in 2010/11 to £660 in 2011/12. Also as part of this decision, the number of services provided by the Council was reduced, with some services being run directly by private providers on a commercial basis. Of the bus services that the Council continued to provide, some journey times were made longer by increasing the length and geographical coverage of bus routes to preserve access to the network.
- 1.1.4 Some Councillors expressed serious concern at the time that this decision would lead to an increase in the cost of transport, which combined with reduced access to the new network and the increased amount of time spent journeying to school could in turn, provide a barrier to post-16 education.
- 1.1.5 In response to these concerns, a Task and Finish Group was set up in March 2012 to assess the impact of the Council's decision to remove the subsidy for post-16 transport on the opportunities for education and achievement of young people, particularly those in rural areas.
- 1.1.6 Following the completion of the review, the Task and Finish Group identified six recommendations, which aim to improve partnership working between the County Council, schools and colleges, and redress issues of fairness and a lack of flexibility within the current Post-16 Transport Policy.

1.2 Members and Contributors

- 1.2.1 The Members of the Task and Finish Group were Councillors: Martyn Ashford, Peter Balaam (Chair), Richard Chattaway, Tim Naylor, Clive Rickhards and Chris Saint.
- 1.2.2 During the course of the review, the Task and Finish Group met with officers from the Council's Transport Operations Team and Learning and Achievement Team. As Members considered it essential to hear the views of those affected by the changes in policy, consultation exercises were undertaken with the Heads of Sixth Forms and representatives from Colleges. The group was also supported by officers from the Council's Democratic Services Team.

1.3 Evidence

1.3.1 In order to achieve an understanding of the review topic, the Task and Finish Group considered both primary and secondary evidence from a range of sources. This included:

- “Response to Consultation - Post-16 Transport” report considered by Cabinet, 14th April, 2011 (available from www.warwickshire.gov.uk/cmis)
- Warwickshire County Council Transport Policy Statement 2012/13 (available from <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/transporthelp16-19>)
- Consultation with Warwickshire Members of the Youth Parliament and Warwickshire Youth Council (VOX) (outcomes available from <http://warksdemocracy.wordpress.com/2012/05/18/getting-to-the-heart-of-young-peoples-issues/>)
- Email response to call for evidence, January 2013 (attached at Appendix D to this report)
- Response to questionnaires sent by the Group, to the following:
 - Secondary School Head teachers
 - Chairs of Governors at Secondary Schools
 - Heads of School Sixth Forms
 - Principals of Colleges
 - Heads of Student Services at Colleges
 - Chairs of Community Forums

(a summary of the responses to the questionnaire is attached at Appendix C to this report)

1.4 Dates and Timescales

- 14th April 2011 – changes to Post-16 Transport Policy agreed by Cabinet
- 25th May 2011 – Task and Finish Group commissioned by the Overview and Scrutiny Board
- 14th March 2012 – Initial meeting between the Chair, supporting officers from Democratic Services and officers from Pupil and Student Services and Transport Operations.
- 21st March 2012 – attendance at the Heads of Post-16 Network Meeting to publicise the review with Heads of Sixth Forms and launch questionnaire seeking evidence for the review
- 3rd April 2012 – first meeting of the Task and Finish Group, agreeing the scope of the review
- 9th May 2012 – attendance at the Travel to Learn Forum, to hear evidence from Council officers, Heads of Sixth Forms and representatives from colleges
- 5th July 2012 – final meeting of the task and finish group, to consider responses to questionnaire and agree outline recommendations
- 29th August 2012 - review published

4.2 Overview

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 Local authorities have a duty to provide free transport to school to students under the age of 16 who are considered 'eligible' for free transport, based on their distance from the nearest school and/or whether they have a mobility issue.
- 2.1.2 For students over the age of 16, there is no requirement for the Council to provide free transport to school or college, and local authorities are free to decide what level of support they wish to provide to students to enable them to access education or training. Warwickshire County Council has traditionally provided subsidised transport to school/college for students aged 16-19 attending either mainstream school sixth forms or further education colleges. Subsidised transport has also been available to students aged 16-25 with Special Educational Needs and/or Learning Difficulties and Disabilities attending a post-16 course.
- 2.1.3 As a result of the financial pressures facing the County Council, and the need to reduce spending, a savings target of £170,000 in 2011-12 and £246,000 in 2012-13 was agreed for the Post-16 Transport Budget. In order to achieve this level of savings the Cabinet reviewed the Council's Post-16 Transport Policy and took the decision on 14th April 2011 to remove the subsidy for post-16 transport. This resulted in an increase in cost of 65% to students for post-16 transport run by the County Council (from £400 in 2010/11 to £660 in 2011/12).
- 2.1.4 In order to reduce the burden on low-income families, the charge was halved from £660 to £330 for those who were in receipt of free school meals. In addition, a travel allowance of £110 (£220 if the student was from a low-income family) was made available to enable those students who lived more than two miles from an appropriate bus pick-up point to access the transport network.
- 2.1.5 After discussion with officers, it became clear that the decision to remove the subsidy came at a time of considerable change within post-16 education. The Department for Education (DfE) made the decision in October 2010 to remove Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), which provided young people from low-income families with a means-tested benefit of up to £30 per week, to help them with the costs of staying in post-16 education. EMA was replaced by the "16-19 Bursary" which is paid to some of the poorest students, with school and colleges also receiving funding to distribute to their students who have financial difficulties.
- 2.1.6 In addition, the Government announced in October 2010 that from September 2012, the cap on university tuition fees would be removed from and students could be charged up to £9,000 a year to study for an undergraduate degree. These factors could clearly have had an effect on the levels of participation in post-16 education, as students from low-income backgrounds received less

support and the prospect of increased student debt may make Further and Higher Education a less attractive option for students at 16 years of age.

2.2 Rationale

Councillors expressed concern that an increase in the cost of post-16 transport could present a barrier to young people's educational choices at 16 years of age. There was a concern that young people's choice of institution or course could be compromised, or that there would be an increase in the number of young people who became NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

2.3 Objectives

The review sought to ascertain whether the changes to the Post-16 Transport Policy has disadvantaged young people in Warwickshire, their educational opportunities and/or attainment and if so, to what extent.

The review also aimed to consider the steps that the Council, together with schools and colleges, could take to ensure that transport is not a barrier to post-16 education in the County.

A full outline of the rationale, objectives and key actions for the review is attached at Appendix A to this report.

4.3 History of the Review

During the review, the following approaches were undertaken:

- 3.1 Members of the Task and Finish Group met with Heads of Sixth Forms to understand how the changes in transport policy had affected their students. From this meeting the Group found that students at rural schools experienced the greatest problems in accessing home to school transport, and that access to the County Council school-bus network was an issue for some students.
- 3.2 The Task and Finish Group met with officers from the Councils Pupil and Student Service team and Transport Operations team, to look at why the changes in policy were necessitated, and how the Transport Operations team implemented the changes in conjunction with bus companies. It became clear during the discussion with officers that the decision to cut the post-16 transport budget had meant that officers had to work within smaller budgets, and reconfigure the bus network with the aim to run fewer, but fuller buses, whilst working with the private sector to offer up routes to bus operators that the County Council could not continue to run.
- 3.3 At an early stage it became apparent that it would be difficult for the review to isolate the effects that the change in transport policy had in the context of the other changes to further education and higher education. In order to address this issue, the Task and Finish Group decided to talk directly to schools and colleges, and form conclusions based on the anecdotal evidence available from those working directly with the students. The Task and Finish Group

would then be able to analyse the themes emerging from this evidence and make appropriate recommendations.

- 3.4 The Task and Finish Group attended a meeting of the Council's Travel to Learn Forum, which included representatives from schools, colleges and the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership (CSWP), which provides careers guidance to young people, via the Connexions Service. At this meeting the Group was able to consider how the Council worked with schools and colleges to overcome transport issues.
- 3.5 The Task and Finish Group circulated a questionnaire to all schools (both those with and without sixth forms), colleges, governors of secondary schools, Community Forums and the Warwickshire Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs) and Warwickshire Youth Council (VOX). The questionnaire sought evidence of where post-16 transport had been a limiting factor on young people's educational choices. The questionnaire (attached at Appendix B to this report) asked for information on:
- The number of students whose choice of school/college was affected by the cost of transport
 - The number of students who have trouble accessing post-16 transport, or have long or convoluted journeys to school
 - Whether any courses were under threat due to a reduction in pupil numbers, reducing the level of choice for young people
 - To what extent institutions were making use of the 16-19 Bursary that replaced the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), and whether this was being spent on transport costs.
 - Whether the cost of transport had a negative effect on the attendance of young people at sixth form or college, and whether any young people were at risk of, or had become NEET as a result of the cost of transport.

A summary of the responses to this questionnaire is attached at Appendix C to this report.

- 3.6 The Task and Finish Group held roundtable meetings with support from Democratic Services to discuss the issues raised and consider draft recommendations.

4.0 Recommendations

The Task and Finish Group has made the following **recommendations**:

4.1 The County Council should provide focused support for institutions in the whole area of post-16 transport, by implementing the following:

- a) **Enable the sharing of good practice and information about local transport arrangements.**
- b) **There should be greater publicity for the range of educational opportunities for students at the post-16 level, including specific publicity regarding the transport options available to enable those opportunities.**
- c) **Advise on, and possibly help to coordinate, local transport arrangements provided by the institutions themselves**
- d) **Support local institutions in data analysis and research**
- e) **In cases where this is relevant, consider offering financial support to institutions to help them provide their own transport arrangements**
- f) **The application of sub-regional guidelines on the use of the 16-19 Bursary in schools and colleges to ensure a consistent level of support for students between institutions.**

4.1.1 The Task and Finish Group found examples of effective information sharing and partnership working in the work of the Travel to Learn Forum and in particular the approach taken by the County Council and Warwickshire College to resolve problems with transporting students to the college's Moreton Morrell campus.

4.1.2 Despite this, the Task and Finish Group felt that the Travel to Learn Forum was not used to its full effect, by not meeting consistently enough, and engaging successfully enough with schools and colleges to find solutions to problems faced by the institutions.

4.1.3 The evidence from CSWP, colleges and schools echoed this, and suggested that the County Council should take a stronger role in coordinating the work of the schools and colleges in this area, and that information sharing between institutions and information for students should be improved. The recommendation therefore provides a number of key areas which the Task and Finish Group believes would improve the outcomes for students.

4.1.4 The evidence in the response to our questionnaire shows a lack of consistency in the application of the 16-19 Bursary Scheme across the County. Students who are in care, or have recently left care, those claiming income support or students with disabilities are entitled to £1,200 per year to help with the cost of education. In addition to this, schools and colleges have a discretionary fund which students can apply for. Warwickshire College has had 510 applications for the 16-19 Bursary, in most cases supplying 50% of the money applied for, whereas Brooke School in Rugby has not allocated any money through the bursary scheme. From the evidence at Appendix C, it can be seen that each school or college has used the scheme in a different way. The evidence from CSWP at Appendix D demonstrates that this lack of consistency coupled with a lack of clear promotion has meant that students have been uncertain about whether they would receive a bursary.

4.2 When considering changes to post-16 transport arrangements, the County Council should actively seek the views of the Warwickshire Members of the Youth Parliament and VOX (Warwickshire Youth Council)

4.2.1 In looking at the consultation undertaken before the decision in April 2011, the Task and Finish Group were disappointed that the Members of the Youth Parliament and VOX (Youth Council), as the locally elected representatives of young people, had not been consulted before the decision was made. During the review, the Task and Finish Group consulted with the Youth Council and were impressed by the depth of knowledge, insight and debate demonstrated by the MYPs and VOX. The Task and Finish Group consider that the negative effects of the Post-16 Transport Policy would have been reduced had these groups been involved.

4.3 The County Council should investigate the possibility of a more flexible approach to the current "closed-door" policy operating on County Council-funded transport. This should include consideration of:

- a) Term-based passes
- b) 2-or 3-day week passes
- c) Payment on a casual basis where there are empty seats

The investigation should include the possible risks and how these might be managed. It should also include consideration of the examples of Worcestershire and Kent County Councils, whose policies are more flexible than the current Warwickshire County Council policy. The findings of this investigation should be reported initially to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 4.3.1 The Task and Finish Group found that the increased cost of the County Council pass and lack of flexibility over the "closed door" policy featured highly in the evidence from schools and colleges.
- 4.3.2 With reference to the increased cost, Warwickshire College, in its evidence state that admission numbers have dropped by 15% since 2009, and that the college believes that this is in part due to the cost of transport. The College suggests that if only 10% of these students did not attend because of transport costs, this would represent 97 students. The Task and Finish Group considers this as evidence that the increase in costs since 2009 has had a negative impact on the numbers of post-16 students. The charge for a County Council pass increased 120% from £300 in 2009/10 to £660 in 2011/12. There was an increase of 65% in one year from £400 in 2010/11 to £660 in 2011/12.
- 4.3.3 There is evidence from North Leamington School that the pass is bad value for money for Year 13 students, who due to exam leave and a short summer term, are paying for bus journeys that they will not take, as they have finished their course. The Task and Finish Group consider that a term-based or pro-rata system would allow students to pay only for the journeys they take, reducing the cost to students.

- 4.3.4 In their evidence, Stratford upon Avon College and Warwickshire College highlight the fact that a number of institutions run full-time courses over three or four days a week, meaning that a bus pass that covers five days a week does not represent good value for money for some students. For these students, a more flexible pass would provide better value.
- 4.3.5 The colleges also state that some of their students struggle to pay for their bus passes in advance, due to financial pressures, and the ability to pay a daily fare would enable them to afford the cost of transport. The Colleges suggest that some County Council buses (such as the 239) are running with a large number of vacant seats, and students would be more likely to use the service if they were able to pay more flexibly. This would provide better value for students and increase income for the County Council.
- 4.3.6 Warwickshire College also state in its evidence that the number of County Council bus passes issued to their students since 2009 has dropped from 700 to less than 300. The Task and Finish Group considers that this is further evidence that the County Council bus pass is less attractive to students who are able to choose private companies. Whilst the increased flexibility of the private companies' service is good for many students, those who are only able use a County Council service are not afforded this flexibility, and so pay more for a service which is not flexible to their needs.
- 4.4 The County Council should investigate the resource implications of making the Post-16 transport subsidy available to all low-income students. Currently it is only available to students who are able to use County Council buses. The Task and Finish Group appreciate that there will be resource implications, but feel that this is a justice issue.**
- 4.4.1 The Task and Finish Group considers that the cost of Post-16 Transport does have an effect on the number of students attending Post-16 education. There is evidence from CSWP that some students in North Warwickshire were not able to afford to attend a Post-16 course due to transport costs and subsequently became NEET. CWSP also has evidence that a small number of students attending Warwickshire College's Moreton Morrell campus have become NEET due to transport costs. Stratford upon Avon College said that 10 of their students have become NEET due to the cost of transport.
- 4.4.2 The current 50% subsidy available to students from low-income families goes some way to mitigate the sharp rise in the cost of post-16 transport. However, it is only available to those students who use County Council operated buses and is not available to the majority who use privately-run buses. As a result of the changes to the transport network, a number of routes are now only served by private operators, and students from low-income families in those areas have no access to a subsidy, and have to pay more for transport.
- 4.4.3 The Task and Finish Group considers that this policy appears to be unjust and to deny access to courses for some students on a rather random basis. To ensure that all students have fair access to the subsidy, the Task and Finish Group recommend that the subsidy should follow the needs of the students, and not be predicated on the provider of the service. The current situation amounts to a "postcode lottery", where students are discriminated

against due to the commissioning arrangements of the Council, rather than being given fair access to subsidies based on need.

4.5 The recent removal of the following routes is causing serious access difficulties, as indicated in the responses from several institutions. The County Council should consider the re-opening of these routes, provided either by a private operator or by the County Council.

- **The cancelled route from Nuneaton to Stratford, via Rugby, Hillmorton and Baginton**
- **The shortened 236 route from Rugby to Moreton Morrell College**

4.5.1 Evidence from Stratford upon Avon College suggests that the cancellation of the route from Nuneaton to Stratford via Rugby, Hillmorton and Baginton has left some students unable to attend the College. Those who do manage to attend have a convoluted route with a number of changes.

4.5.2 Evidence from Warwickshire College has suggested that the shortening of the 236 route from Rugby to Moreton Morrell to reduce costs has led to students having a particularly long and convoluted journey to college.

4.5.3 The Task and Finish Group supports the Colleges and asks the County Council to reconsider these routes in light of the problems experienced by students.

4.6 The County Council should take account of the level of isolation faced by some students who live in areas remote from their preferred institution, and take positive steps to redress the balance in terms of the enabling of access to post-16 courses.

4.6.1 Kineton High School has a large intake of students who travel some distance to attend the school from the surrounding rural area, with some students travelling from as far afield as Banbury and Stratford.

4.6.2 Shipston High School is in a unique situation in a relatively isolated rural position. There is no sixth form or college provision within easy travelling distance. The School feels that its students are disadvantaged in not having a post-16 provision nearby, limiting their access to post-16 education or training. The School feels this puts them at a significant disadvantage both practically and financially to the majority of similar students in the County.

4.6.3 The Task and Finish Group considers that students from Kineton High School and Shipston High School are clearly disadvantaged compared to students attending institutions in urban areas. The Group considers that similar problems are present in the North of the County. The Groups also considers that a number of students have long or convoluted journeys between urban areas. The Group believes that the Post-16 Transport Policy should take account of the fact that access to transport is not equal throughout the County and that some students are disadvantaged educationally simply because of their geographical location.

5.0 Financial and Legal Implications

5.1 Legal Implications

- 5.1.1 The Council has an obligation to provide transport to some students under 16 years of age. The Council does not have an obligation to provide transport to Post-16 students. The recommendations within the report will not affect the Council's provision of services to pre-16 students, and therefore there are no legal implications to the recommendations that need to be considered.

5.2 Financial Implications

- 5.2.1 The changes to the Post-16 Transport Policy were driven by the need to achieve substantial savings targets of £170,000 in 2011-12 and £246,000 in 2012-13. A key part of the mandate of this review was: "...that any recommendations with financial implications will no longer be approved by Cabinet and so for scrutiny be in line with Council priorities and perceived as a useful / credible tool, it needs to be more innovative and look for solutions that will either save money or will improve services without additional costs..." (refer to the comments in Appendix A on how the scrutiny will achieve value for money for council tax payers).
- 5.2.2 A number of the recommendations have the potential to create additional costs or to move costs from one part of the system to another. It is advised that the actual implementation of any suggested initiatives is first made subject to a detailed assessment of the financial impact on customers, the County Council and partner organisations. The financial criteria for implementation being appropriate may be a matter for further consideration but for example some criteria that naturally present themselves include (a) keeping overall costs within the limits set by savings targets, i.e. if new costs are created somewhere, then something to identify and secure the relevant funding has to accompany the proposal that causes the costs, (b) not replacing one financially unfair or perverse situation with another that is also unfair but just in a different way, (c) attaining or retaining simplicity and transparency in how we charge (d) etc

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 In making its recommendations, the Task and Finish Group considered the background information and context surrounding the review, the changes to policy made in April 2011 and evidence gathered from officers, schools, colleges, MYPs and VOX.
- 6.2 The Task and Finish Group considers that its recommendations should go some way to redress some of the impacts of the change in Post-16 Transport

Policy, by improving joint working between the County Council and institutions and helping more students benefit from the 16-19 Bursary.

- 6.3 The Group is aware that the implementation of some of their recommendations could require significant resources to implement, at a time when officers are being asked to meet substantial savings targets.
- 6.4 However, the Group also believes that the recommendations will help to create innovative solutions to transport issues, increasing flexibility and value for money for students on County Council buses, and help students into post-16 education by increasing the number of low-income families who receive help with the costs of post-16 transport.

Scrutiny Action Plan

Recommendation	PfH Comments	Cabinet Comments	Target Date for Action	Lead Officer	OSC Update	Progress Notes
<p>R1</p> <p>The County Council should provide focused support for institutions in the whole area of post-16 transport, by implementing the following:</p> <p>a) Enable the sharing of good practice and information about local transport arrangements</p> <p>b) There should be greater publicity for the range of educational opportunities for students at the post-16 level, including specific publicity regarding the transport options available to enable those opportunities</p>	<p>Comments of the PfH from the informal meeting.</p>	<p>i.e. accepted, rejected and reasons why.</p>	<p>To be set by senior officer during informal meeting</p>	<p>To be assigned by senior officer during informal meeting</p>	<p>Date due for update to OSC</p>	<p>The Lead Officer to include progress updates on the implementation of the recommendation.</p>

	<p>c) Advise on, and possibly help to coordinate, local transport arrangements provided by the institutions themselves</p> <p>d) Support local institutions in data analysis and research</p> <p>e) In cases where this is relevant, consider offering financial support to institutions to help them provide their own transport arrangements</p> <p>f) The application of sub-regional guidelines on the use of the 16-19 Bursary in schools and colleges to ensure a consistent level of support for students between institutions.</p>						
R2	<p>When considering changes to post-16 transport arrangements, the County Council should actively seek the</p>						

	<p>views of the Warwickshire Members of the Youth Parliament and VOX (Warwickshire Youth Council)</p>						
R3	<p>The County Council should investigate the possibility of a more flexible approach to the current "closed-door" policy operating on County Council-funded transport. This should include consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Term-based passes b) 2-or 3-day week passes c) Payment on a casual basis where there are empty seats <p>The investigation should include the possible risks and how these might be managed. It should also include consideration of the examples of Worcestershire and Kent County Councils, whose</p>						

	<p>policies are more flexible than the current Warwickshire County Council policy. The findings of this investigation should be reported initially to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>						
R4	<p>The County Council should investigate the resource implications of making the Post-16 transport subsidy available to all low-income students. Currently it is only available to students who are able to use County Council buses. The Task and Finish Group appreciate that there will be resource implications, but feel that this is a justice issue.</p>						
R5	<p>The recent removal of the following routes is causing serious access difficulties, as indicated</p>						

	<p>in the responses from several institutions. The County Council should consider the re-opening of these routes, provided either by a private operator or by the County Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cancelled route from Nuneaton to Stratford, via Rugby, Hillmorton and Baginton • The shortened 236 route from Rugby to Moreton Morrell College 						
R6	<p>The County Council should take account of the level of isolation faced by some students who live in areas remote from their preferred institution, and take positive steps to redress the balance in terms of the enabling of access to post-16 courses.</p>						

Warwickshire County Council

Scrutiny Review Outline

Review Topic (Name of review)	Post 16 Transport
Task and Finish Group Members	Councillors; Martyn Ashford, Peter Balaam (Chair), Richard Chattaway, Tim Naylor, Clive Rickhards and Chris Saint
Key Officers / Departments	Craig Pratt, Sophie Thompson, Kevin McGovern, Andy Stokes, Yvonne Rose
Lead Scrutiny Officer	Martyn Harris
Relevant Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Heather Timms
Relevant Corporate Ambitions	"Raising educational attainment and improving the lives of children, young people and families"
Type of Review	Evidence gathering through questionnaires, possible visits, possible select committee
Timescales	Review should be completed by 31 st July 2012
Rationale (Key issues and/or reason for doing the review)	<p>A change in post 16 transport policy has meant the complete removal of the subsidy for post 16 transport. From September 2011, students were charged £660 a year to use County Council transport. Members have concern that the charges will impact on the education of young people in the County.</p> <p>The focus of the review is to assess the impact of the changes on the opportunities for education and achievement of young people, particularly those in rural areas.</p>
Objectives of Review (Specify exactly what the review should achieve)	<p>The review should ascertain whether the change in policy has disadvantaged young people in Warwickshire, their educational opportunities and/or attainment and to what extent.</p> <p>The review should consider what steps the Council, along with schools and colleges could take to ensure that transport is not a barrier to post 16 education in the County, and make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet.</p>
Scope of the Topic (What is specifically to be included/excluded)	<p><u>Included</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence gathering from Schools, Colleges, Special Schools, Members of the Youth Parliament (MYP's), the Youth Councils (Vox) and the Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership (CSWP). <p><u>Excluded</u></p> <p>The following falls outside the scope of the review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport for pre-16 students Denominational Transport

Warwickshire County Council

<p>How will the public be involved? (Community Forums, consultation, community groups / clubs, etc)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with heads of post 16 education • Meeting with Travel to Learn Forum • Consultation with students and possibly parents • Contact with other groups such as the Youth Councils.
<p>How will our partners be involved? (Relevant stakeholders, District / Borough reps)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools • Colleges • Transport operators may be involved at a later stage (tbc)
<p>How will the scrutiny achieve value for money for the Council / Council Tax payers?</p>	<p>It is fair to say that any recommendations with financial implications will no longer be approved by Cabinet and so for scrutiny be in line with Council priorities and perceived as a useful / credible tool, it needs to be more innovative and look for solutions that will either save money or will improve services without additional costs.</p> <p>The Review will seek to find ways of working smarter between Council services, relationships with schools and possibly transport operators to find solutions. This should ensure Post 16 students and their parents are getting better value for money, and schools and colleges are not disadvantaged by the change in policy.</p>
<p>What primary / new evidence is needed for the scrutiny? (What information needs to be identified / is not already available?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire responses and other feedback from stakeholders
<p>What secondary / existing information will be needed? (i.e. background information, performance indicators, complaints, existing reports, legislation, central government information and reports)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information regarding the low income criteria used in the post 16 transport policy • Information about how the 16-19 bursary has been distributed amongst students, particularly to cover transport costs • Data from the Warwickshire Observatory relating to Post 16 Students • Information from transport operators on their sales of young person tickets, including term and annual passes
<p>Indicators of Success – (What factors would tell you what a good review should look like? What are the potential outcomes of the review e.g. service improvements, policy change, etc?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review should quantify the impact (if any) the new transport policy has had on the educational opportunities for Post 16 students in the County. • The review should be able to recommend measures which improve access to education for post 16 students
<p>Other Work Being Undertaken (What other work is currently being undertaken in relation to this topic, and any appropriate timescales and deadlines for that work)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is currently work being undertaken on the raising of the participation age for young people, from 16 to 17 years in 2013, rising to 18 years in 2015. This could have a large impact on Post 16 education in the County, as young people will have to remain in school, college or work with training until 17 or 18. This could increase the numbers of students attending post 16 education in the County. • The Council carries out continuing work on NEETS, and the current contract with CSWP for IAG services will be renewed in the near future.

Questionnaire on the effects of recent changes to post 16 travel subsidy

Dear Colleague,

You are no doubt aware of the recent removal of almost all the transport subsidy for Warwickshire post 16 students. Under the new policy, students who travel on WCC services have to pay £660 for the year, those who use commercial services receive no assistance and there is a £110 allowance for students who have no access to public transport at all. There is also a reduced subsidy for students from low income families and for statemented students. At the same time a number of WCC bus services have been discontinued. Concern has been expressed by some councillors about the possible effects of these changes and the County Overview and Scrutiny Board has set up a Task and Finish Review Group to look at these effects.

The Group are keen to hear the views of heads of post 16 in schools, school business managers, teachers, careers advisers, college principals and lecturers as well as others. We would therefore be grateful if you could provide us with some information regarding the questions below. It would be helpful if you could provide evidence to support your answers where possible.

Please send your response to Martyn Harris at martynharris@warwickshire.gov.uk by 30th May 2012

1. By approximately how many (if any) of your students' choice of course and/or institution was affected by the cost of transport?
2. By approximately how many (if any) of your former students are not in education employment or training because of the cost of transport?
3. By approximately how many (if any) of your students experience problems in accessing transport?
4. Do any of your students have a long or convoluted journey as a result of the removal of WCC services?
5. Have any courses been discontinued, or are any courses under threat, because of lower demand in Sept 2011 than before? As far as you are aware, is this connected to the cost of transport?
6. Are you aware of any students whose attendance is poor or have dropped out of their course as a result of difficult journeys or the cost of transport?
7. Since the removal of EMA, and the establishment of the new 16-19 bursary scheme, how many students have received assistance via a bursary? What costs did the bursary cover? Did these costs include transport?
8. Has your school/college made its own arrangements to transport students as a result of the increase in cost of WCC services?
9. Is there anything regarding the new transport policy that you wish the Task and Finish Group to consider as part of their review of the new policy?

Councillor Peter Balaam
Chair, Post-16 Transport Task and Finish Group

Summary of Responses to Questionnaire – Post 16 Transport

1. Colleges:

Warwickshire College (Campuses in Leamington, Morton Morrell, Henley-in-Arden, Pershore, Rugby and Warwick)

- Cost of WCC transport has increased sharply over the last 3 years up from £300 in 2009/10 to £660 in 2011/12
- Number of WCC bus passes issued to College students has dropped from 700 to less than 300 over this time
- WCC pass is expensive for students who attend 3 or 4 days a week.
- Worcestershire operates a pro-rata pass scheme
- The 50% subsidy does help those on benefits, but not those with low incomes, and is only available for WCC passes. This discriminates against those who cannot use WCC transport.
- Comments on the closed door policy, and not being able to pay a daily fare.
- After changes to the service produced significant problems for some students, the Council and the College have shared the costs of running a specific mini-bus to transport these students.
- Admission numbers have been dropping since 2009, and the college believes this is in part due to the cost of transport. There has been a 15% drop in student number since 2009. The college surmises that if only 10% of that 15% did not attend due to transport, that represents 97 students.
- The college believes that transport cost, access and journey times are having an effect on early drop-out rates, but admit they don't have evidence of this.
- 510 students have applied for a 16-19 bursary to fund various things, including transport. In most cases they have tried to supply 50% of the cost, but in some cases have supplied 100% of the cost.

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College (Campuses in Atherstone, Nuneaton, Bedworth, Polesworth, Hinckley)

- Some students from N.Warks travelling out of county to Tamworth for post 16 courses due to transport difficulties
- Unknown number of students unable to access education due to transport.
- Some students from N.Warks have a long and convoluted journey to college
- 128 16-18 students supported via college bursary fund, costing £34,000. Have supported transport costs by refunds for bus/train fares, purchase of scholar passes for Arriva or stagecoach buses or paying a mileage allowance.
- College expects demand on the bursary fund to increase next year. They state there has been a marked increase in the number of students identifying the cost of transport as being an issue.

Stratford upon Avon College

- Few students live in Stratford, so many travel in from surrounding rural areas. Those from the east of the County experience more problems than others

- Approx 200 students experience problems accessing transport, and the college estimates around 10 students have become NEET due to the cost of transport.
- More than 20 students have dropped out so far this year, but the college does not say why this is, or whether this an increase on previous years
- 244 students have claimed the 16-19 bursary. 25 of those were entitled to the guaranteed maximum bursary. The majority of students used their bursary to cover the costs of transport.
- The college points out the cancellation of a bus route from Nuneaton via Rugby, Hilmorton and Baginton has resulted in problems.

2. Schools

Stratford upon Avon School

- The school does not have answers to a number of the questions.
- The responses they did provide did not specifically relate to transport.
- The school did state that the majority of their post 16 students moved up from year 11, and that those coming from other schools were more likely to have transport difficulties.

Stratford upon Avon Grammar School for Girls

- 184 students live outside of the District, and so will have some form of transport consideration. The school does not qualify this statement with particular concerns/considerations.
- A number of courses were being discontinued this year, but the school did not say that transport was the cause behind this.
- Journey times to school have been longer this year than in previous years, but the school does not say for how many students.
- The 16-19 bursary is currently being paid to 9 students in year 12. The eligible year 13 students are still in receipt of EMA.

North Leamington School

- The school has not had problems with transport to/from school. Students coming from further afield have been able to access the relevant buses.
- Some students who travel to other schools/colleges to access courses have had problems. The school is unable to offer all course options on their site.
- Year 13 students leaving at half term in the summer term still have to pay for a year pass. A pro-rata system or weekly passes and payment would be better. The school would like to see better flexibility in the system.
- 12 students have been given the 16-19 bursary, but do not use it to pay for WCC buses.

Kineton High School

- In 2011, one student from Banbury, and in 2012 one student from Barford did not attend the school due to the cost of transport.
- There is no evidence of students becoming NEET. However, there are three current year 11 students who could become NEET as the cost of transport (even including the FSM subsidy) is too prohibitive. Transport would have to be free to overcome this.

- Approximately 10 students have problems accessing transport. 2 students have problems with long journey times.
- The school suggests that WCC should better publicise to year 11s the transport options available for post 16 students.
- Further subsidies should be made available to those from low-income backgrounds, and these should be advertised proactively to disadvantaged year 11s.
- Quality of service – transport operators use lower-quality buses for school transport. With costs increasing, the value of the service delivered is decreasing.
- Students and parents believe that they are disadvantaged compared to those in urban areas, and their choices are being compromised.
- There are some students who choose Kineton High rather than their catchment school. This means that they are not eligible for funding for their transport, even though the distances between Kineton and their catchment school are very similar. This is difficult for parents to swallow, and undermines parental choice.

Bilton School, Rugby (does not have post-16 provision)

- Students attending local sixth forms do not encounter problems. Those who go on to attend Warwickshire College have problems accessing courses, as a number have moved from the Rugby site to the Leamington site, so they pay the £660 WCC cost. This has happened in the past at short notice, once the students have made their choices and do not hold any other offers. Some have dropped out as a result of this. The college needs to take account of this if changing the offer at a campus.

Alcester Grammar School

- Approximately 20-30 students have not attended this year due to transport costs. Of those who have enrolled, around 25 have transport problems.
- 3 courses have been removed in 2012 due to low numbers – 2 are niche courses (Applied Art and Moving Image Arts), which have attracted as they are not commonly offered.
- Attendance in the summer term is affected as students do not wish to buy a private term pass to only attend exams.
- 25 students have requested assistance with costs, primarily transport.
- The school expresses concern about the raising of the participation age to 18 in 2013 and 2014. The school feels that, in the future, 16-19 transport should be free on the same terms as 11-16 education currently is.
- The school requests greater flexibility with WCC bus passes, especially around the summer term.

Shipston High School (does not have post-16 provision)

- The majority of their students travel to Stratford for their 16-19 education.
- The area has very few NEETS, the school does say that a number of students have dropped out of colleges that were their second or third preference, which they only chose due to accessibility.
- The school feels that the collapse of the 14-16 SWIFT scheme has implications on post 16 education, as students that attended often continued to attend courses linked to this.

- The school believes it is in a unique position in an isolated rural area, without post 16 provision. The School believes that this puts students at a distinct disadvantage compared to others. The transport policy treats students as if there is a level playing field, when this is not the case.

3. Special Schools

Woodlands Special School, Coleshill

- 23 students' choice of course has been affected by the cost of transport. 10 students experience problems in accessing transport
- Cost is the main problem that students face
- There is an issue with students who are under 16 travelling on services for free, and the students travelling on the same service over 16 being charged.
- A particular situation arose when the whole bursary available to students was basically taken up by one student in care, and others lost out.
- The school points out that the current situation is unfair to some students.

Round Oak School, Warwick

- The removal of the subsidy has meant that some students that would have stayed on at 16 longer attend school.
- One particular student travelling from Stockton has to take two buses, and the timetables mean that they cannot get to school until 11:15am every day.

Brooke School, Rugby

- Four students did not stay on as post-16 students. Of these, two were due to the cost of transport. Of the current post-16 students, four experience difficulty in getting to school.
- The school has not allocated any money through the 16-19 bursary scheme.

Emails Received from Schools/Colleges in Call for Evidence, December 2011:

Warwickshire College

With regards to your request for feedback I can provide the following information from Warwickshire College;

1. We do believe that the level of charge for bus passes now is quite high and that many parents/carers we speak to are put off by the £660 charge especially on some services when it can only be used on specific daily journeys and not on other services. Clearly having the 50% subsidy was very helpful although I am waiting for information from Education Transport regarding numbers of our students WCC have subsidised this year. The College has also offered a 50% subsidy which has a more generous criteria than WCC's because it is based on net income too as well as benefits. This means we may have picked up some students that WCC could not subsidise based on the WCC criteria, which may have added to our costs.
2. The introduction of the closed services has definitely affected some students who struggle to pay in advance and especially those who only attend a couple of days a week. There are buses that are half empty yet the policy is still not to let people pay daily yet I am sure that the extra income would be appreciated e.g. 239 into Moreton Morrell. I appreciate your reasons for the closed service policy but surely if WCC know how many passes they have sold this term after the first 3 weeks they know they have plenty of space and the rules could be relaxed? It would increase your income too. We have also had some 'older students' often special needs who want to travel to Moreton Morrell but cannot cope with travelling via Leamington, again if there is space surely they could be sold a bus pass which as well as increasing your income it also helps them and saves a complex query.
3. Clearly the taking off of some services such as the No. 236 (North Warwickshire to Moreton Morrell) had a detrimental affect at the beginning of the year until we put on the College mini buses and I believe this put people off as the journey was going to be 6 buses a day and 5.5 hour journey - this clearly was not acceptable and (27 travelling this year). Clearly your financial contribution has been very welcome but the decision to not run services or reduce their length e.g. 236 (not running full route) has affected students decisions to study at some centres where the route is over long and complex.
4. Going forward into next year we believe from Andy Stokes that there is not going to be any changes that will affect our students, but lack of certainty for students already looking at next year is an issue, for example not knowing if the subsidy will be in place and concerns that there may be changes that will affect them. Certainty, clarity and a longer term strategy does help students in making their decisions and many make their choices this early in the year.
5. Relationships with ourselves and WCC and Stagecoach are very good despite these changes, we have worked together to ensure the best outcome we can for our students. In saying this there was a lot of change last year at quite a late stage which gave us problems and uncertainty which we believe did affect students' decision making.

Trinity Catholic School

It is difficult to ascertain the factors affecting swings in numbers attending secondary schools.

We have not only been hit by generally increased transport charges, the removal of grants/subsidies for those attending their nearest faith school but also reductions in EMA funding.

Traditionally we have had a very wide catchment area with a number of parents taking advantage of choosing a faith school and not having to find travel expenses. We estimated that we might be affected by one form of entry through these changes.

There are complex issues behind choices at 11 and 16. There are also implications when other local secondary schools can freely expand their intake numbers.

We have witnessed a clear reduction in our intake numbers, particularly in year 7.

Stratford upon Avon College

We would like draw to your attention the following issues, on behalf of our students, with regard to the above Transport Policy:

- A. The cancellation of the 270 bus from the Rugby area has had a noticeable impact on the number of students that are able to study at Stratford upon Avon College.
- B. At the beginning of the 2011 Autumn term there were not enough seats on the 235 bus from Rugby which was intended to accommodate some of the students who used to catch the 270 bus. Some students had to reconsider their place at College due to transport issues.
- C. We had many complaints about the 'closed door policy' in operation by Warwickshire County Council; our courses are not always timetabled for five days a week.
- D. Clearly, the cost of transport was and continues to be a major consideration for students wishing to study at Stratford upon Avon College.

Warwickshire's new Post 16 Education Transport Policy has had an impact upon both our current and prospective students

Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership

We have clients who are NEET in North Warwickshire and Nuneaton who claim that had they been able to receive a full EMA that would have enabled them to afford the transport costs to provision.

Various providers are making young people aware of the bursaries available, but this information [either](#) is not sufficiently clear or promoted sufficiently well, or there is a real uncertainty by young people that they will actually receive a bursary, unlike the EMA, where there the rules were very clear and transparent.

Appendix D

We have examples of Year 12 students at Warwickshire College who have ceased attending Morton Morrell due to high transport costs.

Similarly we have examples of students in Year 9 at Studley School who used to access Stratford College SWIFT courses but now don't, because of the transport cost issues.