


Decision Record – Home to School Transport Policy changes 2017/18 onwards

Cabinet Portfolio Holder taking the decision	Cllr Colin Hayfield Education and Learning
	
Date of Decision (not before 16 September 2016)	16/09/2016

Decision Taken

That the Portfolio Holder approves the request to consult on home to school transport changes for the 2017/18 academic year as set out in appendix 1 of the published report.

Reasons for Decisions

The Council's Constitution requires approval to be given by the relevant Portfolio Holder before a consultation exercise can be undertaken.

Background Information

Under the Education Act 1996 and associated statutory guidance, the Local Authority is required to provide free transport for all pupils of compulsory school age (5-16) if:

- their nearest suitable school is beyond 2 miles (if below the age of 8); or beyond 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16);
- they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs (SEN/EHCPs) or disability; or
- they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to the nearest suitable school because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk.

Under its Home to School Transport Policy, in addition to providing free transport for eligible children who attend their nearest qualifying school Warwickshire County Council also provides free transport for pupils who attend their priority area school, even if this is not the nearest school.

The Local Authority (LA) is responsible for setting priority areas for all maintained Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools. Academies, Foundation and Aided Schools are responsible for consulting and setting their own priority areas. Academies, Foundation and Aided schools have generally followed the Local Authority's existing priority areas, but there is no certainty that they will continue to do so. New schools are being built and Free Schools being opened within existing schools' priority areas as new developments progress and this represents a risk in terms of transport costs.

A number of 'guiding principles' have traditionally been used to set the pattern of priority areas and effort is previously been made to adhere to as many of the following as possible:

1. primary schools serve immediate local area around their building;
2. secondary schools all have bespoke priority areas normally within a reasonable walking distance from the school, unless a rural school;
3. shared priority areas are normally within walking distance of one school;
4. priority areas follow existing transport routes where possible

A number of new Academies and Free Schools are due to open in the next few years across various areas in Warwickshire and two Free Schools have already opened in Rugby. The Rugby Free Secondary School has already set its priority area as the whole of Rugby town. This could increase costs if families choose to attend this school rather than schools that are closer to their home address.

It is proposed to consult on amending the transport policy, in line with other Local Authorities, so that transport will not automatically be available for all pupils living within a priority area, if there is a school nearer to home within statutory walking distance via a safe walking route.

During the consultation period further discussions will be carried out with neighbouring authorities to align our policy as much as possible. The consultation responses will be summarised fully and presented to Cabinet in December 2016 with an implementation date of 28th February 2017 if cabinet approve the recommendations.

Financial Implications

None specified at this stage

Report Author	Sarah Mills
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Strategic Director	Monica Fogarty
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Colin Hayfield

Checklist

Urgent matter?	No
Confidential or Exempt? (State the category of exempt information)	No
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	No

List of Reports considered

Link to published proposed decision report:

<https://democratic.warwickshire.gov.uk/cm55/CalendarofMeetings/tabid/128/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/645/Meeting/3728/Committee/555/Default.aspx>

List of Background Papers

None

Members and officers consulted or informed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor Colin Hayfield
 All Strategic Directors
 Legal – Jane Pollard
 Finance – Chris Norton, Virginia Rennie
 Equality – Claire Bonnet
 Democratic Services – Paul Williams

Children & Young People OSC – party spokes:

Councillors Dave Parsons, Julie Jackson, Clive Rickhards, Chris Williams