

Minutes of Portfolio Holder (Children, Young People and Families) Decision Making Session held on 7th May 2010

Present:

Councillor Izzi Seccombe Portfolio Holder (Chair)

Others present

Officers

Nick Williams (Assistant Head of Service-Pupil & Student, Children, Young People and Families Directorate)

Kevin McGovern (Operations Manager, Transport, Environment & Economy Directorate)

Janet Purcell (Executive and Member Support Manager)

1. General

(1) Members Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Councillor Izzi Seccombe – personal interest as governor of Kineton High School.

(2) Minutes of the Meeting 25th March 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2010 were agreed as a correct record.

2. Post 16 Transport

Councillor Izzi Seccombe, Portfolio Holder (Children, Young People and Families) considered a report of the Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families setting out proposals for revised arrangements for Post 16 Transport which would reduce the level of support provided by the Council over a period of three years.

A cumulative target saving of £1.3 million from the Post 16 Transport budget has been set as part of the medium term savings plan. The target date for the saving is the end of the 2012/13 financial year. The report put forward proposals designed to ensure that the Local Authority fulfils its statutory duty of ensuring students have appropriate access to post-16 education, and with a view to making savings but keeping a level of service continuing. It was noted that, due to the shared nature of much transport, and the loss of revenue from phasing out provision, the total savings from these proposals are likely to be in the region of £795k. Kevin McGovern advised that, in any event, it will be necessary to carry out an ongoing review of financially supported bus services to enable buses to be removed from the network over a phased period.

Councillor Izzi Seccombe referred to the work undertaken with secondary head teachers with a view to minimising the loss this year and that further work would continue for 2011 onwards.

Nick Williams reported that some parents had questioned whether they could pay the increased charges on a weekly basis. This had been considered but the advice was that this would present difficulties in collection and would not be efficient or commercially workable.

The flexibility in the application of the policy to students aged 16-15 with special educational needs (paragraph 2 in the Appendix to these minutes) and approach for students aged 14-16 attending offsite learning (paragraph 3) was noted. The meeting was advised that the proposals for Post 16 Transport and transport for those aged 16-25 with special educational needs would not affect provision for looked after children who will continue to receive funding.

It was noted that further development work will be undertaken on the policy for 2011/12 and beyond with the aim of consulting on future transport policy development in autumn 2010.

Resolved

That the revised arrangements for Post 16 Transport set out in the Appendix to these minutes are approved.

3. Any Other Items

None.

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Portfolio Holder (Children, Young People and Families)

The meeting rose at 12.15 pm

Appendix

Post 16 Transport Revised Arrangements

1. September 2010 - Post 16 students

1.1 Continuing Post 16 students in their 2nd year of study

Payment for transport will increase from £300 to £400 per student per year to allow Warwickshire County Council to continue to subsidise transport. In most cases, students will continue to travel using the same vehicle. Some students will instead receive a travel allowance.

Payment will be made to Warwickshire County Council either in one payment of £400 or termly payments of:

- Autumn - £150
- Spring - £150
- Summer - £100

The annual charge will continue to be waived for Year 2 students from low income families.

1.2 Post 16 Students in their 1st year of study

The charge for transport will be £540 per year which is equivalent to £3 per day. This is intended to be in line with the figure proposed initially by Warwickshire College.

Payment will be made to Warwickshire County Council either in one payment of £540 or termly payments of:

- Autumn - £220
- Spring - £220
- Summer - £100

No daily fare will be available.

No additional help will be available to Year 1 students from low-income families. However, some young people may be eligible for an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

Please note that for students in Year 1 in 2010/11 there can be no guarantee that Warwickshire County Council will subsidise transport costs in future years and that while Warwickshire will do all it can to maintain bus routes in the future we cannot be certain a bus will be available in 2011/12.

2. Students Aged 16-25 with Special Educational Needs

2.1 The Authority has a duty to take a more flexible approach for students aged 16 to 25 with special educational needs. While transport for these students will continue, the annual charge for continuing students in 2010/11 will increase from £300 to £400.

2.2 The annual charge will be waived for continuing students from low income families.

2.3 New applicants in 2010/11 will be expected to pay £540 in line with other post 16 students. There will be no assistance for new applicants from low-income families.

2.4 Students must be attending a full-time course of at least 16 hours per week.

2.5 Students who start a course while under the age of 25, currently continue to receive assistance past the age of 25. It is proposed that new applicants from September 2010 will only receive assistance up until the end of the academic year in which their 25th birthday falls.

2.6 New and continuing applicants from September 2011 will be required to pay the proposed charge of £630.

3. September 2010 - Students aged 14-16 attending offsite Learning Opportunities

3.1 Transport will continue to be provided for those eligible learners on year 2 (in Year 11) of an offsite learning course. The cost of this transport to schools will increase to £100 per learner. We know that schools have found it difficult to manage the changes for September 2010. To assist schools we will continue to operate the policy for Year 10 students. If there is capacity within the current post 16 transport network, eligible learners will be able to apply for a bus pass, at a cost of £100 per learner.

3.2 For Diploma learners this cost will be met from the Diploma Formula Grant and will be paid directly to Warwickshire County Council on the schools behalf. For other offsite learners (NOVA/STAR/SWIFT) this cost will need to be met from the school's own budget.

4. September 2011 - Post 16 Transport

4.1 It is intended that the following arrangements will be introduced in September 2011. There will however need to be a consultation exercise which will be carried out shortly.

4.2 The Council anticipates that transport costs will be set by operators at commercial rates. The rate is likely to be in the region of £630 per annum. There will be no longer be assistance with transport to low-income families, although it is acknowledged that all students with a household income below £30,000 are entitled to an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to support continued education or training.

4.3 Warwickshire County Council will continue to operate a 'Vacant Seats' policy. These seats will be made available to all students attending sixth forms or colleges. Costs will need to be in line with the commercial rate outlined above (£630).

5. September 2011 – 14-16 attending offsite learning opportunities

5.1 For September 2011 schools and colleges will be expected to organise and fund their own pre 16 offsite transport arrangements, for example, school minibuses, or later start times to allow all pupils to attend school before travelling together to offsite learning providers.

5.2 The Access and Transport Coordinator and 14-19 Area Development Officers will take on additional responsibility to support 14-19 Area Partnership working on transport issues.