

Portfolio Holder Decision

Permission to Consult: SEN Home to School Transport Service & Policy

Portfolio Holder	Councillor Kaur
Date of decision	25 November 2022
	Signed 

1. Decision taken

That the Portfolio Holder for Education and Learning agrees to go to public consultation on proposals to change the SEN Home to School Transport Service & Policy as provided for in the Appendices to this Report.

2. Reasons for decisions

- 2.1 As part of the SEND & Inclusion Change Programme, Council officers have been reviewing current arrangements for SEND Home to School Transport. This included an external review.
- 2.2 The SEND Home to School Transport Service is seeing an increase in demand year on year. In addition, costs are increasingly significantly driven by inflationary pressures on transport operators.
- 2.3 A number of changes to internal processes were recommended as part of the review which are being implemented. Three items are proposed for public consultation as two items make changes to the process for a vulnerable group (children with SEND) and the final item is to clarify the Council policy.

3. Background information

3.1 As part of the SEND & Inclusion Change Programme the current arrangements for SEND Home to School Transport have been reviewed. A series of changes are taking place through the implementation project. Three areas of change are proposed for public consultation:

- i. A new Needs Assessment Matrix Framework
- ii. A simplified application process
- iii. Clarifications to the transport policy

3.2 **A new Needs Assessment Matrix Framework (NAMF).** The process in analysing potential

options for transport is based on Risk Assessors knowledge within transport and SEND. A tool is proposed to better aide potential transport options for young people based on their need and ensure consistency of decision-making. Based on the child's needs the tool would identify the appropriate mode of transport (eg. bus, multi-person taxi) and other viable options to be offered (eg. direct travel payments). The tool would also identify if a young person should be considered for independent travel training. The introduction of this tool would help standardise travel options based on needs and ability but also make the decision-making process more efficient.

- 3.3 **Simplified Application Process.** The transport service needs to better manage the demand coming into the service. Currently the process does not allow this as applications come in June – August ready for September. Having such a short timescale means the team cannot review the application, eligibility, need and options sufficiently resulting in increased use of single taxis to going to the same settings.
- 3.4 The new proposed process would remove the need for parents and carers to apply or choose their home to school transport options. Instead, the Special Education Needs transport team would complete the assessments and present the options at a set time in the academic year, following school placements being confirmed in the issuing or update of the EHC plan (by the SENDAR team). This would allow for better management of the demand coming into the service as the process will begin much earlier on in the year. This would contribute to the reduction of the SEND Home to School Transport overspend, increase alignment to preparation for adulthood and provide more efficient processes.
- 3.5 **Clarifications to the transport policy.** It is proposed to clarify the Home to School and College Transport Policy to allow a clear understanding for both Parents/Carers, schools and settings, and Transport internally. In particular, clarity is required on the deployment of passenger assistants (to be subject to a risk assessment) and post 19 policy and implementation.
- 3.6 Council officers are seeking permission to consult on the proposed changes to the SEND Home to School Transport service and policy identified above. Appendix A sets out the Public Consultation Document on the SEND Home to School Transport Service and Appendix B sets out the questions to be asked in the consultation.
- 3.7 The consultation is proposed to run 3rd December 2022 to 26th February 2023 and would run separately, but concurrently with, the consultation on the SEN Service Review.
- 3.8 The consultation will engage with the public and key stakeholders in a number of ways:
- a) Information and an online questionnaire will be publicly available on Warwickshire County Council's consultation and engagement hub
 - b) Drop-in sessions will be held in educational settings
 - c) Meetings will be held with key stakeholders
- 3.9 It is proposed that final proposals will be presented to Cabinet for decision on 26th April 2023 with implementation by 1st September 2023.

4. Financial implications

5. Environmental implications

N/A

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Urgent matter?

Confidential or exempt?

Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?

List of background papers

Appendix 1
Appendix 2

Members and officers consulted and informed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor

Corporate Board –

Legal –

Finance –

Equality –

Democratic Services –

Councillors –

Local Member(s):