

Cabinet

16 March 2023

Member Working Group – Home to School Transport

Recommendation

That Cabinet:

- a) approves the Terms of Reference for the Member Working Group on Home to School Transport, attached at Appendix A; and
- b) authorises the Strategic Director for Resources to establish and initiate the Working Group.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. The agreement to set up a Home to School Transport Member Working Group was part of the 2023/24 budget approved by full Council on 7 February 2023.
- 1.2. The 2023/24 budget included investment of an additional £8.2m in home to school transport next year, to meet the increasing demand and cost of the service, which has been particularly impacted by inflation. The investment brings the total budget for home to transport in 2023/24 to £30.1m. The remaining four years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) includes indicative additional investment of another £5.7m and the delivery of £2.2m savings.
- 1.3. The investment in 2023/24 aims to put the budget for the service onto a sustainable footing. However, there is a real risk that the continued growth in the funding need for this service is unsustainable. Particularly so if demand and costs continue to increase at the levels seen this year. The Education Sufficiency Strategy predicts that continued growth in school places will be needed to address housing growth which is likely to result in around 4000 more pupils at schools in Warwickshire between now and 2027. Increased housing

development in the county also increases in-year placement pressure. This can result in an increased number of pupils who cannot be accommodated at their nearest school and may need to be transported to the next nearest school with space if this is beyond the statutory walking distance. Any increase in school places (and therefore pupils) is likely to result in increased demand for home to transport, meaning the longer-term financial risk is real and requires monitoring and mitigation.

- 1.4. In light of this risk, the 2023/24 budget resolution agreed to set up a Member Working Group. The Group will enhance focus on the demand and cost management of home to school transport and the delivery of the budget reductions included in the 2023/24 budget resolution.
- 1.5. The Working Group is expected to make its written recommendations to Cabinet in Autumn 2023. This will ensure alignment with the overarching timeline for the development of the 2024/25 MTFS refresh. The Group will also connect with the Home to School Transport Improvement Project.
- 1.6. Cabinet is asked to approve the Terms of Reference for the Member Working Group attached at **Appendix A**.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1. There are no direct financial implications for the Authority from the report, although the findings and recommendations of the Working Group may have implications for the 2024/25 MTFS refresh.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1. There are no direct environmental implications from the report, although the findings and recommendations of the Working Group may have wider environmental implications which will be considered as part of the Working Group's report(s).

4. Background Papers

- 4.1. None.

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Local Members consulted

Not applicable

Other Members consulted

Group Leaders consulted as part of the development of the report to identify representatives for the Working Group.