

Home to School Transport Member Working Group

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

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.

The 2023/24 budget also included investment of an additional £8.2m in home to school transport to meet the increasing demand and cost of the service, which has been particularly impacted by inflation.

The budget resolution went on to recognise that continued increases in the level of funding for the service at this level is unsustainable. It was agreed that a Member Working Group would be established, with the terms of reference to be approved by Cabinet by March 2023, to enhance focus on the demand and cost management of home to school transport and the delivery of the home to school budget reductions included in the 2023/24 budget resolution. Initial outcomes from this work would then form part of the 2024/25 MTFS refresh.

2. Objectives

The cross-party Member Working Group will provide support and advice to Cabinet in the development of home to school transport spending and savings proposals for Warwickshire covering both mainstream pupils and those with special educational needs (SEND). In particular its role will be:

- a) to ensure visibility of the background and current status of school transport;
- b) to challenge the assumptions, size and drivers of current and future year costs;
- c) to operate as an advisory group on the development of home to school transport savings proposals and service delivery plans; and
- d) to scrutinise and review plans to improve the capture, use of and analysis of data.

3. Work Plan

The Work Plan for the Group will be determined by the Chair of the Group in discussion with Group members and with Strategic Director(s). The Group will provide input to the overall direction of work on the transformation of home to school transport and will build on the change activity already underway.

It is anticipated the following areas will be covered:

- i. review of WCC's policies against statutory requirements and, if necessary, recommend changes to these and to internal procedures to ensure the consistent application of policy;
- ii. scrutiny and challenge of the current plans and assumptions to mitigate cost pressures and deliver the agreed savings;
- iii. consideration of the extent to which the recommendations from the LGA's paper "Understanding the drivers for rising demand and associated costs of home to school transport" are applicable to and/or already being delivered by WCC;
- iv. exploration of further ideas to mitigate cost pressures, which could include reviewing options identified and rejected historically or learning from other authorities, in order to create a short list of future mitigations and savings proposals;
- v. review of whether the implications for home to transport are sufficiently integrated into pupil place planning, admissions and the EHCP process to deliver cost effective decision-making;
- vi. consideration of the effectiveness of procurement, contract management, compliance and monitoring frameworks in the delivery and continuous improvement of home to school transport;
- vii. exploration of how a stronger approach to managing the whole market more effectively can be achieved;
- viii. identification of improvements to the collection of data and the reporting and management insight generated from that data to aid effective management of the delivery, cost and continuous improvement of the service;
- ix. scrutiny of the approach to route optimisation and the challenges and barriers to its effectiveness; and
- x. helping to inform and shape any consultation proposals which may be required, and which will be the subject of future member consideration/approval.

4. Membership

The cross-party Group will comprise 9 members and in line with our custom and practice that Member Groups will follow the political balance of the Council, in so far as possible, will be constituted as follows:

- 6 x Conservative representatives;
- 1 x Labour representative;
- 1 x Liberal Democratic representative; and
- 1 x Green representative.

Membership of the Working Group will be finalised in discussions with the Leaders of the Council's political groups.

5. Meetings and Meeting Arrangements

The Group is not a formal Committee of the Council.

The Group is intended to be time limited until such time as recommendations are made to Cabinet. It is intended that the Group will meet every 4-6 weeks.

The Group will not be open to the public and the Access to Information regime will not be applicable.

6. Officer Support

Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Democratic Services will provide officer support to the Group and make all the necessary administrative arrangements. Minutes/action notes will be circulated to members of the Group following each meeting.

Officer advice and support will be provided by the following:

- Mark Ryder – Strategic Director for Communities (lead/sponsor)
- Scott Tompkins – Assistant Director, Environmental Services;
- Johnny Kyriacou – Assistant Director, Education Services;
- Richard Sweeney – Service Manager (Transport Delivery);
- Guy Darvill – Team Lead Senior Solicitor – Education;
- Caroline Jones – Finance Portfolio Lead (Communities and Resources);
- Becky Robinson – Lead Commissioner Finance Strategy; and
- other Officers as relevant to the agenda.

7. Timeline

The Group is expected to make its written recommendations to Cabinet in Autumn 2023 to align with the overarching timeline for the development of the 2024/25 Medium Term Financial Strategy Refresh.

The timeframes and/or work of the Group may be subject to change and varied or extended with the agreement of the Chair of the Member Working Group, in consultation with the Strategic Director for Communities.