

PEOPLE (CHILDRENS) AND PLACES SCRUTINY PANEL

21st March 2013

REPORT OF THE WORK OF THE TRANSPORT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Panel with the conclusions of the Transport Task and Finish Group's considerations and recommendations for the development of transport in Rutland. Subject to the Panel's comments, these will be referred to the Cabinet.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that, subject to consultation, the Council:

- 2.1 Gives no direct financial support to a family for home to school transport to a denominational school unless that school is the nearest school to the child's home and is beyond statutory walking distance or the child is statutorily entitled (see Annex 1); continues to support public transport provision which can be used by children to attend denominational schools and works with public transport providers to extend existing services to enable children to attend denominational schools.**
- 2.2 Provides home to school transport only where statutorily required to do so with the exception of post 16 transport as outlined in paragraph 2.6.**
- 2.3 Ensures that there is only one "pick up" point in any village except Cottesmore where there should also be a pick up at the gate of Kendrew Barracks.**
- 2.4 Reviews all home to school transport so that it links villages to schools and, as far as possible, provides a public service route which can be utilised by young people over the age of 11 rather than a pupil only service.**
- 2.5 Reviews the provision of home to school transport so that when a public service route cannot be utilised by school/college students**

contracts to each school are ordinarily let at the same time and, where possible, no village has more than one bus per school travelling through it. This could mean secondary school and further education students travelling on the same bus.

- 2.6 Reviews home to college transport to establish, as far as possible, public service routes for young people to access rather than contracting student specific services; considers extending the current “8 mile” rule to enable young people to access a wider diversity of courses; considers limiting support to the nearest available course (for example “A” level, BTEC Business Studies, Extended Diploma in Performing Arts etc.); considers limiting support to young people (other than those with a statement of special educational needs) who are progressing to a Level 3 course¹ or to a college based apprenticeship.
- 2.7 Negotiates with the bus companies to encourage them to offer termly season tickets for young people at a reduced rate to daily tickets.
- 2.8 Requires bus companies with whom we contract to check pupil/students bus passes on every journey and undertake a “head count” once a term (i.e. 5 times a year).
- 2.9 Offers parents a mileage rate to transport their SEN children/young people to school/college as an alternative to providing transport for pupils/students who have transport included in their statements of special educational needs (see Annex 1).
- 2.10 Rationalises adult social care and SEN transport budgets so that the totality of each is in one Directorate’s budget.
- 2.11 Negotiates with Translink (and/or other providers) to enhance public transport in Rutland and secure a bus depot in Rutland (possibly at Ashwell).
- 2.12 Maps usage on all bus routes to ascertain whether times could be amended/reduced to release funds to enable a hopper service to be provided in Uppingham to facilitate attendance at the new doctors’ surgery.
- 2.13 Collects data on the number of users on all service buses, including the Oakham hopper, who are fare paying and the number who have concessionary passes in order to determine whether to abolish the “after 9.30” rule (see Annex 2).

¹ Level 3 courses are post GCSE. GCSE is a level 2 course.

- 2.14 Extends the RF1 route to include Corby railway station and explores the viability of extending the route to link the villages to the south of Rutland Water to Uppingham.**
- 2.15 Invites Whissendine to present to the Parish Council Forum on its community transport scheme (see Annex 3).**
- 2.16 Encourages VAR/Community Spirit to meet in order than an agreement is reached on the mileage rate paid to volunteer drivers.**
- 2.17 Provides information on every bus stop in large print. The information should include the bus timetable and the bus company number to ring to check if the bus is running.**
- 2.18 Develops a mechanism for direct payments to users of adult social care for their transport needs as an alternative to providing the transport itself.**
- 2.19 Consults with Leicester hospitals to reduce the number of short notice cancellations.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1** The Transport Task and Finish Group (The Group) made up of representatives of the Places and People (Children) Scrutiny Panels met 14 times between May 2012 and March 2013.
- 3.2** The Group received representations from VAR, a local transport operator (Centrebus), the Rural Community Council, Welland Procurement and St George's Barracks (see Annex 3).
- 3.3** The Group received data on bus usage and costs (both public service and contracted) and reviewed the current home to school transport policy (see Annex 1) and the STAR consultants report, a Feasibility Study for a Social Enterprise Minibus Service in Rutland, undertaken in May 2011.
- 3.4** The Group also surveyed schools and parish and town councils (see Annex 4).
- 3.5** The Group was kept aware of the development of a Transport Hub in Oakham, a tourist bus to link Oakham, Uppingham and Rutland Water and an employees' bus and recognises these developments may overcome some of the issues raised through consultation.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 Consultation indicated support for increasing public transport provision (see Annex 4). This was particularly relevant in Uppingham as moving the doctors' surgery will cause difficulties to some residents. A possible "call connect" service in this area will not necessarily solve this problem because the bus must be booked in advance (thus it will not deal with same day appointments) and at specified times (so will not be available where doctors or nurses are not running to time). Also, a bus can only be provided at the time requested if one is free to be in the area at the requested time. The Group therefore considered any opportunities to save money on existing provision by more efficient commissioning and bus timing should be explored in order to release funds for additional services such as an "Uppingham Hopper".
- 4.2 Consultation also indicated a desire from some residents to use their bus passes before 9.30am and anecdotal evidence indicates some buses are significantly underutilised before 9.30. A systematic review of bus usage would enable a reflective consideration of abolishing time restrictions on bus pass usage.
- 4.3 The Group felt that Home to School transport was not as efficient as it could be, that there was scope to rationalise services and that there was also scope to develop public service routes which could be used by secondary and further education students (see Annex 2).
- 4.4 The Group felt that whilst it was reasonable for the Council to subsidise public service routes which young people could use to go to school and college, including to denominational schools outside Rutland, it was not reasonable to provide additional financial support to families in the form of subsidies to attend school above and beyond the general route subsidy. These are difficult financial times.
- 4.5 The Group recognised that the unwillingness of bus operators to tender for services in Rutland was due in part to the cost of getting buses to Rutland and maintaining them once here. A bus depot within Rutland would solve this.
- 4.6 The Group recognised that, now Corby Station is open, it is used by Rutland residents but there is no public transport link to it. Equally, public transport to Uppingham is limited from the villages south of Rutland Water yet those villagers use Uppingham for medical and dentistry services. A review of existing provision may enable an expansion of some services such as the Rutland Flyer 1.
- 4.7 Discussion with VAR and the Rural Community Council (who are the umbrella body for Rutland Community Spirit) led the group to conclude that there are inconsistencies between the two organisations as to how much is charged for transporting residents but that the lessons learnt in

Whissendine about establishing a Good Neighbours Scheme could usefully be disseminated to other parish and town councils in Rutland.

- 4.8 The Group recognised the complexities of home to school transport for students with special educational needs. It also recognised that direct payments were becoming more common and felt parents should be offered a mileage allowance rather than a taxi for their SEN children (see Annex 2). In addition, RCC funds some transport for adults receiving social care support. Typically these adults contact VAR who recharge the transport costs to RCC, thus adding an additional administrative level. Direct payments to users would reduce bureaucracy and also be in keeping with social care developments nationally.
- 4.9 Consultation revealed a need to provide large print signage at bus stops and also a contact telephone number for the bus provider. At present the number given is RCC's transport office who will not know if a bus has been cancelled. Users need to be able to contact the bus operator direct if a bus has not arrived at its designated time.
- 4.10 It became apparent during this work that some bus drivers are not diligent in checking young people's bus passes. It is important that passes are checked, especially on public service routes used by young people where RCC is not the only source of tickets, as failure to renew a ticket in terms 2 and 3 but still travel will reduce income to the bus company which will lead the company to request a higher subsidy to maintain the route.
- 4.11 The Group concluded a social enterprise transport service was not viable because most of the demand for such a service would be from the Council, there would be limited scope for it to generate additional income to that provided by the Council, and it would not be introducing a competitive element to transport provision locally so costs would not necessarily be driven down. Further, the Council would be likely to incur support costs as the service was established.
- 4.12 Annex 1 contains some facts considered by the Transport Task and Finish Group during the course of its deliberations and Annex 5 is a map showing bus routes (a large version of this will be available for members to view).

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

| RISK | IMPACT | COMMENTS |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Time | Medium | Some of the recommendations have time pressures if the proposals are to be in place for the start of the new academic year. |
| Viability | Medium | Some of the recommendations require a review of the home to school provision which will implicate on resources. |
| Finance | Low | The recommendations propose savings and efficiency improvements. |
| Profile | Medium | The recommendations are topics of interest in the community |
| Equality and Diversity | Medium | There may be impact on some groups within these recommendations. |

Background Papers

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A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.