

PLACES SCRUTINY PANEL

28th November 2013

TRANSPORT TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Report of the Director for Places (Environment, Transport and Planning)

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| STRATEGIC AIM: | Building our infrastructure |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide officer response to the proposals contained in the report of the Transport Task and Finish Group which was submitted to the joint People (Children) and Places Scrutiny Panel on the 21st March 2013.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Panel considers the issues and financial implications for each of the Task Group's proposals as outlined in appendix A and recommend to Cabinet which of these should be taken forward.**

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. The Group's terms of reference was to review home to school, special needs and public transport in Rutland to ensure the Council's contribution to each of these is achieving value for money and the transport needs of Rutland's residents are provided for.
- 3.2 The conclusions of The Group were submitted to a special meeting of the People (Children) and Places Scrutiny Panel on 21st March 2013 (report reference 77/2013).

4. TRANSPORT TASK AND FINISH GROUP'S PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The table in appendix A details all the group's proposals. Besides each proposal any issues or financial implications that need to be considered are given.

5. POST 16 TRANSPORT

- 5.1 On the 15th October 2013 Cabinet requested that Places Scrutiny Panel consider the options for post 16 transport following consultation on a proposal to withdraw the service.
- 5.2 There is no statutory duty on the Council to support transport for students once they are above compulsory school age (i.e over the age of 16).

- 5.3 Whilst there is no statutory obligation on the part of local authorities to provide transport support, the Department for Education have issued guidance that states *“local authorities should ensure young people are not prevented from participating because of the cost or availability of transport to their education.”*
- 5.4 Although the Education and Skills Act (2008) raised the age of participation from 16 to 17 (in 2013) and 18 (in 2015) there has been no change to the compulsory school age, which remains between the ages of 5 and 16.
- 5.5 The cost of providing post 16 transport in the 12/13 financial year was £165k. This was offset by income of £73k leaving a net cost of £92k. The breakdown of income was £27k from student charges and £46k from college agency arrangements.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The consultation was undertaken by Rutland County Council via letters sent to parents of existing pupils obtaining transport support together with letters to the schools. In addition information was placed on the website and in the local paper. The consultation asked for comments on the following proposals:
- a) To withdraw post 16 transport entirely with effect from September 2014. This option would mean that all post 16 transport support would cease after July 2014 including those already receiving transport support.
 - b) To introduce a phased withdrawal of post 16 transport from September 2014. This option would mean that no new students will be given transport support after July 2014 but existing students would continue to receive transport support until the end of their current college placement.
- 6.2 20 responses were received from a variety of different sources. A summary breakdown of the responses and by representative groupings is shown in Appendix B.
- 6.3 9 responses stated that post 16 transport support should not be withdrawn. 4 of these responses referred to the anomaly of the fact that whilst the ‘Raising Participation Age’ has resulted in 17 year olds being required to stay in education, or training, from 2013 (and will rise again to capture 18 year olds from 2015), the compulsory school age for free school transport has remained, in law, at 16 years old. The inference is that many parents feel that the Council has a moral responsibility to provide transport support to 17 year old students who choose to pursue further education.
- 6.4 9 responses stated that should any withdrawal of transport support take place, then the preference would be for it to be done on a phased basis so that students currently receiving transport support continue to do so until the end of their current college placement.

7. NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES

- 7.1 Leicestershire currently provide transport support at a cost of £252 per student/year. With effect from September 2014 this will increase to £425 per student/year. Also from September 2014 a waiver will be introduced from the charge if low income criteria are met.

- 7.2 Peterborough currently providing transport support at a cost of £396 per student/year. There is only one chargeable student per family and free provision if low income criteria are met.
- 7.3 Lincolnshire currently providing transport support at a cost of £399 per student/year.
- 7.4 Northamptonshire currently providing transport support at a cost of £600 per student/year. There is a 50% reduction if low income criteria are met.

| RISK | IMPACT | COMMENTS |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Time | M | If there are changes to post 16 transport provision Students will need to know by May 2014. |
| Viability | M | Some of the recommendations include comprehensive service reviews that will require significant Officer time or external resources. |
| Finance | H | The potential savings and pressures are significant. |
| Profile | H | The potential savings and pressures are likely to generate significant interest in the local press. |
| Equality and Diversity | M | An equality questionnaire has been carried out on the withdrawal of post 16 transport support. All students in the 16-19 age bracket would be affected equally. |

Background Papers

Background File Ref: 231/2013
232/2013
170/2013

Report Author

Sally Killips
Group Manager Transport
Tele no (01572) 758229
skillips@rutland.gov.uk

APPENDIX A

TRANSPORT TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

| A - STRATEGIC DECISIONS | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|
| No. | Group's recommendations | Issues to consider | Financial Implications |
| A1 | That the Council provides home to school transport only where statutorily required to do so with the exception of post 16 transport. | Denominational Transport support is being withdrawn on a phased basis see C1 below. Consultation has also been carried out on the withdrawal of post 16 transport (see separate Cabinet paper 171/2013) and a decision on whether this is to be withdrawn is still pending. | Post 16 transport is a discretionary service which costs £92,000 per annum. |
| A2 | That the Council 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 course or to a college based apprenticeship. | The current post transport policy is set up to limit the Council's financial commitment which is an 8 mile boundary and the nearest course to the home address. Extension of the 8 mile boundary would increase the costs to the Council, although difficult to estimate by how much because we do not have data of where the students are going. | Post 16 transport is a discretionary service which costs £92,000 per annum. This cost would increase if the current 8 mile boundary restriction is to be extended. |

APPENDIX A

| A - STRATEGIC DECISIONS | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|
| No. | Group's recommendations | Issues to consider | Financial Implications |
| A3 | That the Council 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. | <p>We have headline data that tells us how much people are travelling in a month but to drill down to the level of information required to complete this map will require significant Officer time or external resources.</p> <p>It is proposed to carry out the review as part of the budget setting process, taking account of localism and the role of the Town Council's in providing town services.</p> | <p>The cost of external support to carry out the detailed analysis is estimated to be £4,000.</p> <p>An Uppingham Hopper service is estimated to cost £91,000 and would be subject to a growth bid which would be independent of any savings found elsewhere within the service.</p> |

APPENDIX A

| B – OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| No. | Group’s recommendations | Issues to consider | Financial Implications |
| B1 | That the Council 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. | The utilisation of secondary home to school transport as a public service is supported in principle. Primary home to school transport would not be suitable for safeguarding reasons. It would not be possible to apply age restrictions to a public service. This review will be carried out as part of the budget setting process. | Staff resource limitations will mean this review will take a significant time to complete. Alternatively this work could be outsourced and completed in 3 to 4 weeks at an estimated cost of £4k. This could be funded from the unallocated non-recurring community transport budget (£77,000). |
| B2 | That the Council extends the RF1 route to include Corby rail station and explores the viability of extending the route to link the villages to the south of Rutland Water to Uppingham. | There is currently an hourly bus link from George St (where the RF1 terminates) to the train station; however there may be a 30 minute wait for some connections. Discussions are taking place with Northamptonshire County Council and Centrebus on areas of improvement to the service. | Implementation Options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend the route and reduce the frequency at no cost. Connections to other services will be affected; • Maintain the frequency but miss out some villages at no cost; • As above, but cover missed villages with additional services (e.g. demand responsive transport at £79k p.a.); • Add a third vehicle to maintain an hourly service at an estimated cost of £60k p.a. allowing additional villages to be served. |
| B3 | That the Council ensures that there is only one pick up point in any one village except Cottesmore where there should also be a pick up at the gate of Kendrew Barracks. | The advantage of having a number of pick up points, particularly in larger settlements is that the students are dispersed along the route rather than a large number congregating at one point. We do receive complaints when a large number of pupils gather at one stop. | The market will be tested to determine if the number of stops influence the price of the contract. |

APPENDIX A

| B – OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| No. | Group’s recommendations | Issues to consider | Financial Implications |
| B4 | That the Council reviews the provision of home to school transport so that when a public service route cannot be utilised by school / college student 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. | <p>The notion of integrating transport requirements for multiple establishments is implemented wherever possible. However, school/colleges are free to set their own opening and closing times and different centre session times has seen a fragmentation of joint routes in recent years.</p> <p>A review of the existing home to school routes was undertaken June 2013 for start in September 2013. It resulted in two buses being stripped out of the network MS349 – serving CBEC and MS371 – serving Uppingham CC. However whilst savings have been made (see financial implications) it has restricted capacity for fare paying students resulting in a number of complaints being received.</p> | <p>A move towards letting the public transport and home to school contracts at the same time is possible but has not been done to date because this would cause an intense spike in Officer work load rather than the current practice of spreading the workload evenly across several years.</p> <p>The removal of the two bus services MS349 and MS371 created a savings of £57,513.</p> |
| B5 | That the Council 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. | Data is collected for overall passenger numbers and concessionary passengers for each service on a monthly basis. We do not have information that tells us how many passengers travelled on a bus at a particular time The Council moved away from accepting concessionary passes before 0930 and aligning with the statutory national minimum times in April 2011. | Adoption of the statutory minimum service was undertaken as a cost saving exercise. |

APPENDIX A

| B – OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| No. | Group's recommendations | Issues to consider | Financial Implications |
| B6 | That the Council encourages VAR / Community Spirit to meet in order that an agreement is reached on the mileage rate paid to volunteer drivers | Opportunities will be taken by Officers to encourage this to happen. | |
| B7 | That the Council provides information on every bus stop in large print. The information should include the bus timetable and the bus company number to ring and check if the bus is running. | Large print timetables have already been introduced into Uppingham and have been well received. The timetables will be rolled out across the rest of the County during 2013/14. | The provision of these timetables is estimated to be £5,000 to be funded from the 2013/14 Highways Capital Programme. |
| B8 | That the Council develops a mechanism for direct payments to users of adult social care for their transport needs as an alternative to providing the transport itself. | This is supported subject to the direct payment being cheaper than transport provided directly by the Council. | |
| B9 | That the Council consults with Leicester hospitals to reduce short notice cancellations | Opportunities will be taken to raise this issue. | |
| B10 | Invites Whissendine Parish Council to present to the Parish Council Forum on its community transport scheme | This will be carried out. | |

APPENDIX A

| C – ACTIONED RECOMMENDATIONS | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| No | Group’s recommendations | Issues to consider | Financial Implications |
| C1 | That the Council 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; continue 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. | Cabinet approved the phased withdrawal of support for transport to denominational schools unless that school is the nearest school to the child’s home. (see separate Cabinet paper 172/2013). | This is a discretionary service which costs £84,000 per annum. |
| C2 | Negotiates with the bus companies to encourage them to offer termly season tickets for young people at a reduced rate to daily tickets. | Centrebus already offer reduced value season tickets or discount season tickets for term time travel. | |
| C3 | Requires bus companies with whom we contract to check pupil / student’s bus passes on every journey and undertake a “head count” once a term (i.e. 5 times a year). | Operators are instructed by us to operate a “no pass no travel” philosophy. In addition an officer from the Council inspects each contract vehicle at least once per term and includes a head count at the same time. There is no potential cost saving from an audit of bus passes because the service will still be provided for the numbers of students that qualify for a bus pass. | |

APPENDIX A

| C – ACTIONED RECOMMENDATIONS | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|
| No | Group’s recommendations | Issues to consider | Financial Implications |
| C4 | Offers parents a mileage rate to transport their SEN children/young people to school/colleges an alternative to providing transport for pupils / students who have transport included in their statements of special educational needs. | We already offer the option of paying parents a mileage rate as a solution to journeys where there is a special need to implement a bespoke journey or the requirement cannot be integrated into another existing route. However many parents are unable to take this option up. | |
| C5 | Rationalises adult social care and SEN transport budgets so that the totality of each is in one Directorate’s budget. | The Adult Social Care and SEN transport budgets are held in the People Directorate and the Places Directorate procure the service on their behalf and recharge costs back to the People Directorate. | |
| C6 | Negotiates with Translink (and / or other providers) to enhance public transport in Rutland and secure a bus depot in Rutland (possibly Oakham Enterprise Park) although this would only be possible if the bus company was able to demonstrate a growth as a result. | Early indications are that this would help to encourage bus companies to tender for services in the Rutland area. To comply with the requirements of Oakham Enterprise Park it would need to be demonstrated that this would contribute towards economic growth. To date no providers have been willing to develop a business case; however dialogue is continuing. | |

Appendix B

Post 16 Home to School Transport –Results of Consultation Exercise

The table below summarises comments received from each of the respondents:

| Response no: | Respondent Type: | Option 1: (Immediate withdrawal) | Option 2: (Phased withdrawal) | Other comments: |
|--------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Parish | | Yes | Understands pressure on public purse. |
| 2 | School | | Yes | Need for sensitivity to disruption for students. |
| 3 | College | No | No | Policy conflict with Participation Age. Council should support Post 16 transport within County. |
| 4 | Parish | No | No | Would prefer Council to make no change. |
| 5 | Student | | Yes | Suggests means testing to continue support for less well off. |
| 6 | Other | No | No | Costs of transport for low income family's needs addressing. |
| 7 | Parent | | Yes | Affirms need to support current cohort. |
| 8 | Other | | Yes | Unfortunate course but understands constraints. |
| 9 | Other | | Yes | Must allow students to finish placement. |
| 10 | Parish | | Yes | |
| 11 | School | No | No | Strongly oppose any withdrawal of transport. Policy conflict with Participation Age. |
| 12 | Other | No | No | Policy conflict with Participation Age. Provision for SEN students should be maintained. |
| 13 | Diocese | | Yes | Understands Council constraints. |
| 14 | Parish | No | No | Policy conflict with Participation Age. |
| 15 | Other | No | No | Need to support young people in further education. Provision for SEN students should be maintained. |
| 16 | Parish | No | No | Critical of Council move to withdraw support. |
| 17 | Parent | | | No overall recommendation but supportive of Council proposal as long as SEN are catered for. |
| 18 | Parent | | | No option selected but commented that access to further education should be supported. |
| 19 | Parish | No | No | Need to support young people in further education. |
| 20 | Parish | | Yes | Strongly oppose withdrawal for current cohort. |