



Meeting: **Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

Date/Time: **Thursday, 9 June 2022 at 2.00 pm**

Location: **Sparkenhoe Committee Room, County Hall, Glenfield**

Contact: **Mr. E. Walters (0116 3052583)**

Email: **Euan.Walters@leics.gov.uk**

Membership

Mr. R. G. Allen CC Mr. B. Lovegrove CC
Mr. D. C. Bill MBE CC Mr. K. Merrie MBE CC
Mr. T. Gillard CC Mr. L. Phillimore CC
Mrs. A. J. Hack CC

Please note: this meeting will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's web site at <http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk>

AGENDA

- | <u>Item</u> | <u>Report by</u> |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Appointment of Chairman.

To note that Mr. T. Gillard CC was nominated as Chairman elect to the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the Annual Meeting of the County Council held on 18 May 2022. | |
| 2. Election of Deputy Chairman. | |
| 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022. | (Pages 5 - 10) |
| 4. Question Time. | |
| 5. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5). | |
| 6. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda. | |



7. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.
8. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.
9. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.
10. Special Educational Needs School Transport Service - Provision Briefing. (Pages 11 - 22)
11. Members' Highway Fund. (Pages 23 - 28)
12. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on 1 September 2022 at 2.00pm.

13. Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.

QUESTIONING BY MEMBERS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The ability to ask good, pertinent questions lies at the heart of successful and effective scrutiny. To support members with this, a range of resources, including guides to questioning, are available via the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny website www.cfgs.org.uk. The following questions have been agreed by Scrutiny members as a good starting point for developing questions:

- Who was consulted and what were they consulted on? What is the process for and quality of the consultation?
- How have the voices of local people and frontline staff been heard?
- What does success look like?
- What is the history of the service and what will be different this time?
- What happens once the money is spent?
- If the service model is changing, has the previous service model been evaluated?
- What evaluation arrangements are in place – will there be an annual review?

Members are reminded that, to ensure questioning during meetings remains appropriately focused that:

- (a) they can use the officer contact details at the bottom of each report to ask questions of clarification or raise any related patch issues which might not be best addressed through the formal meeting;
- (b) they must speak only as a County Councillor and not on behalf of any other local authority when considering matters which also affect district or parish/town councils (see Articles 2.03(b) of the Council's Constitution).

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Minutes of a meeting of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 3 March 2022.

PRESENT

Mr. K. Merrie MBE CC (in the Chair)

Mr. R. G. Allen CC

Mrs. R. Page CC

Mr. D. C. Bill MBE CC

Mr. L. Phillimore CC

Mr. Max Hunt CC

Mr. C. A. Smith CC

In attendance

Mr. O. O'Shea CC – Cabinet Lead Member for Highways and Transport

Mrs. M. Wright CC – Cabinet Support Member

35. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2022 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

36. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

37. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

38. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

39. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

The Chairman declared an Other Registerable Interest in agenda item 8: 2022/23 Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme as he was the Cabinet Lead Member for Planning at North West Leicestershire District Council. This item did not directly relate to or affect the financial or other wellbeing of that body to an extent that this prevented the Chairman from participating in the meeting.

Mr. D. C. Bill CC declared an Other Registerable Interest in agenda item 9: Major Road Network – Identification of the next priority corridor as he was the Cabinet Lead Member for Planning at Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. This item did not directly relate

to or affect the financial or other wellbeing of that body to an extent that this prevented the Chairman from participating in the meeting.

40. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

41. Presentation of Petitions.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

42. 2022/23 Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport regarding the proposed 2022/23 Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme and sought comments prior to these programmes being presented to Cabinet on 29 March 2022. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Members raised concerns regarding paragraph 37 of the report which stated that the Authority's funding alone, as well as Government funding allocations, would not be sufficient to provide for all the highways and transport infrastructure and measures that would be needed to meet the requirements of the County's growing population and to fulfil the Council's wider growth agenda. In response the Director gave reassurance that some of the Capital Programme was funded by one-off Government grants for specific purposes therefore the funding for those projects would not be affected by the financial difficulties facing the Department as a whole. However, it was acknowledged that there was a shortage of revenue funding and difficult decisions would need to be made on where funding was most needed. Members asked for their concern regarding this issue to be drawn to the attention of Cabinet.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Director confirmed that a report would be taken to the Cabinet meeting on 29 March 2022 requesting permission to submit a planning application for the extension of the Bardon Link Road which was an element of the A511 Growth Corridor Scheme. Should Cabinet give its permission the planning application would be submitted in April 2022.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed 2022/23 Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme be noted;
- (b) That the comments now made be forwarded for consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 29 March 2022 including the concerns regarding funding for Highways infrastructure.

43. Major Road Network - Identification of the next priority corridor.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport relating to the study work carried out to identify the County Council's next priority Major Road

Network (MRN) corridor and proposing that the A6 North (N) corridor between the Leicester boundary and Kegworth (including A6004/Epinal Way in Loughborough), be the County Council's next priority MRN corridor. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

In presenting the report the Director explained that Major Road Network schemes were required to have a minimum of 15% match (non-government) funding which could come from developer contributions or the County Council. It was also emphasised that the proposal that the A6 North (N) corridor between the Leicester boundary and Kegworth (including A6004/Epinal Way in Loughborough), be the County Council's next priority MRN corridor did not imply that other roads in the County did not have challenges. The A6 north/A6004 route had come top of the scoring table which meant that it best fit the criteria set by Midlands Connect for priority Major Road Network corridors.

The Committee was in receipt of written representations from Dr. R. K. A Feltham CC and Mr. P. King CC which raised concerns that the A6 South had been classified as very low priority for any improvements and as inter-urban and requested the Committee ask for the A6 South to be re-assessed using updated annual average daily traffic flow (AADF) measurements and considering air pollution. Copies of the representations from Dr Feltham and Mr King are also filed with these minutes. It was noted that Cllr. Simon Whelband, Harborough District Council, representing the Kibworths Ward had written to the Committee in support of the representations. In response the Committee had received a written explanation from the Director of Environment and Transport which clarified that the study work had covered traffic issues and air quality. The Director further clarified that any reassessment of the A6 South route would yield the same results therefore there was no benefit in carrying out a further assessment. The Committee agreed with this view and supported the proposals within the report.

Mr. M. J. Hunt CC asked for it to be recorded that he was against the majority view of the Committee. He believed that the proposals would result in increased traffic through the centre of Loughborough and insufficient regard had been given to alternative routes. Mr. Hunt stated that he was in support of the representations from Dr. Feltham and Mr King and he believed it was worth carrying out a reassessment of the A6 South route.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposal for the County Council's next priority Major Road Network corridor to be the A6 North (N) corridor between the Leicester boundary and Kegworth (including A6004/Epinal Way in Loughborough) be supported.
- (b) That the comments now made be forwarded for consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 26 April 2022.

44. Highways Initiative - Delivering for Parishes and Communities.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on the Highways Initiative – Delivering for Parishes and Communities. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

Concerns were raised that areas of the County which did not have Parish Councils were at a disadvantage because they did not have a formal group to represent them which made it difficult them to compete for funding and take part in consultations. Parished areas also had the ability to raise money via a Precept which could be used to top up

schemes funded by the County Council whereas non-parished areas did not have this ability. It was noted that non-parished areas had the lowest car usage. In response the Director acknowledged the concerns and reassured that the Department was continuing to consider how it could better work with non-parished areas but noted that core highways funding was allocated according to need based on evidence rather than whether an area was parished or not.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the Highways Initiative – Delivering for Parishes and Communities be noted.

45. Road Casualty Reduction in Leicestershire.

The Board considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on road casualties in Leicestershire. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

The Board also received a presentation from Graham Compton, Road Safety Officer, Leicestershire Police on the approach of the Force to Road Safety.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) Improved design of vehicles with regards to safety had played a significant role in the reduction in road casualties.
- (ii) Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in less vehicles on the roads which had helped reduce the overall casualty rate, the lack of cars on the road had encouraged some vehicles to drive at higher speeds and therefore there had been more casualties as a result of high speed incidents.
- (iii) There were still a number of drivers not wearing seatbelts which meant that minor road incidents often resulted in more serious injuries. Publicity campaigns regarding wearing seatbelts were required.
- (iv) In response to a query as to whether the road casualty statistics took into account the population growth in Leicestershire the Director of Environment and Transport agreed to give this issue further consideration.
- (v) Members raised concerns about accidents being caused by electric vehicles due to pedestrians/cyclists not being able to hear them coming and asked for future reports to contain a breakdown of how many accidents involved electric vehicles.
- (vi) It was illegal to use e-scooters on public roads or pavements unless as part of a government-backed rental trial scheme and none of these schemes were in Leicestershire. Should Leicestershire Police encounter an e-scooter on a public road for the first time the owner would receive a warning and for any subsequent incidents the e-scooter would be confiscated by the Police.
- (vii) A member raised concerns regarding the increase in casualties for pedal cyclists and noted that by encouraging the public to use bikes rather than cars there was a risk that there would be more casualties involving cyclists. In response the Director

referred to the Road Safety Initiatives set out in Appendix C of the report, emphasised the partnership working that was taking place with Leicestershire Police and reassured that road traffic incidents involving cyclists were analysed by the County Council to see if there was any learning that could be gained from them. It was also noted that recent changes to the Highway Code could have a positive impact for cyclists.

- (viii) Members welcomed the report and stated that it provided very useful information. However, due to the report's length it was suggested that future iterations could focus on a smaller number of key issues in relation to road casualties. Members asked for more data on cyclists but also recognised that a balance had to be struck with regards to the content and length of the report.

RESOLVED:

That the update on road casualty reduction in Leicestershire be noted.

46. Highways and Transport Performance report to December 2021.

The Board considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on the key performance indicators that the Council was responsible for within its Strategic Plan covering Highways and Transport Services to December 2021- Quarter 3. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 12', is filed with these minutes.

It was noted that 'Overall satisfaction with the Rights of Way Network' had decreased and it was suggested that this could be due to more people using Rights of Way during the Covid-19 pandemic and noticing issues.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the key performance indicators be noted.

47. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 9 June 2022 at 2.00pm.

2.00 - 3.50 pm
03 March 2022

CHAIRMAN

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HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 9 JUNE 2022

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS SCHOOL TRANSPORT SERVICE –
PROVISION BRIEFING

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with the current performance information regarding the Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport expenditure for the academic year 2021/22, including the drivers of 'spend' in this area, actions taken to suppress costs and future demands for the SEN service.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. In February 2022 the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022/23 to 2025/26 was approved by the County Council.
3. Previously, in March 2018 the Cabinet approved the Home to School Transport policies, for both Mainstream and SEN students. The updated policies were published by the Council in September 2018 and were due to take effect from the start of the 2019/20 academic year.
4. Subsequently in September 2019, the Cabinet considered a report which detailed the implementation of the Council's Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy and SEN Transport Policy. In the meantime, the County Council was subject to a judicial review on the SEN policy for 16–18-year-olds. While the challenge was unsuccessful (with the Court of Appeal affirming the High Court's decision that the Council's approach on personalised budgets was lawful), it meant there was a delay in the full implementation of the Home to School Transport Policy, specifically the introduction of Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs), until the start of the 2021/22 academic year.
5. Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 (approved by the County Council in May 2022) notes that there are two tiers of support for children with special educational needs (SEND): 'SEN Support' and 'Education, Health and Care Plan' (EHCP). It noted that demand for EHCPs for children with SEND has also increased significantly, leading to rising demand for specialist SEND provision.

Background

Strategic context

6. There are three key elements that drive SEN transport expenditure. These are:
- Demand/Growth - the number of pupils eligible for SEN transport assistance.
 - Pupil need - the increased complexity of the needs of pupils travelling.
 - Market forces and competition - fuel costs, inflation, wages etc.
7. Further information on these three elements is provided below.

Demand/Growth

8. There has been a national growth in EHCPs and SEN support, with a 38% increase over the last five years (10% in last year alone)¹.

Number of pupils with an EHC plan or SEN support, all schools, 2015/16 and 2020/21						
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
EHC plans/Statements of SEN	236,806	242,184	253,679	271,165	294,758	325,618
SEN support	991,981	1,002,069	1,022,537	1,047,163	1,079,000	1,083,083
Headcount	8,559,540	8,669,080	8,735,098	8,819,289	8,890,345	8,911,887

Footnotes

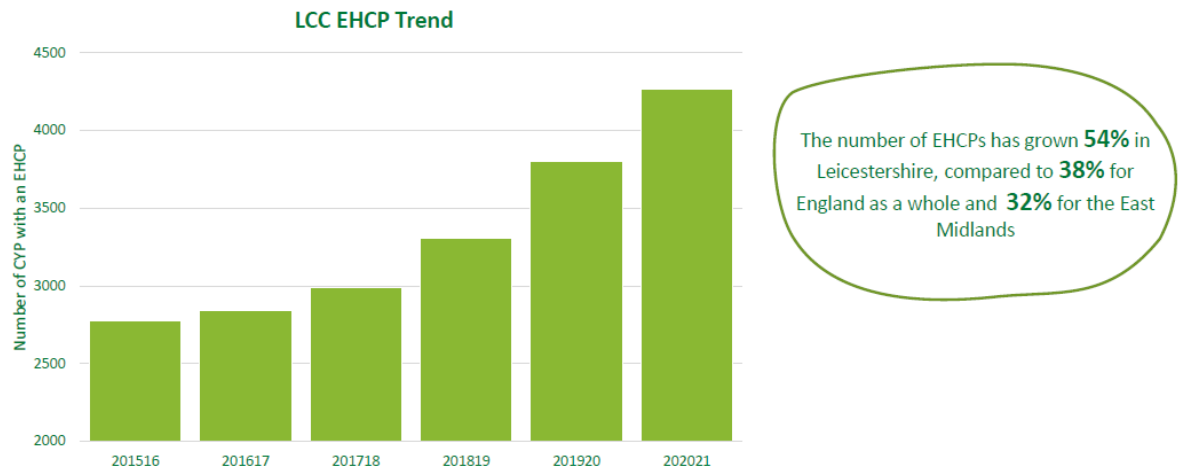
1. Totals include state-funded nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, non-maintained special schools, pupil referral units and independent schools

Source: School Census, School level annual school census and General hospital school census

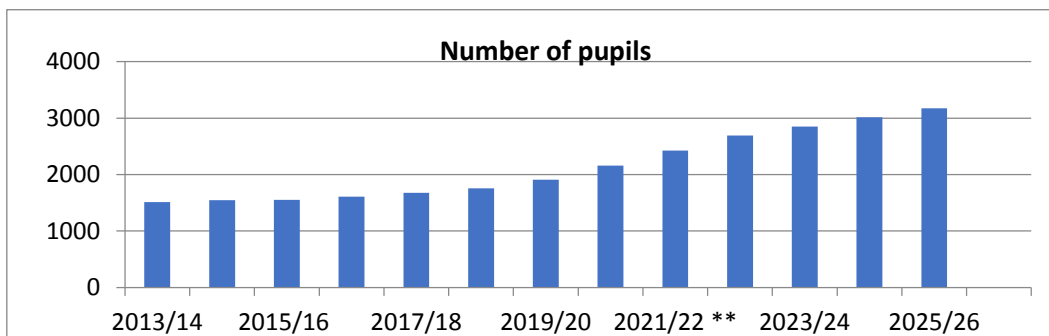
9. In Leicestershire there has been a growth in EHCP numbers of 54% over the past five years, which is significantly higher than the national average.
10. There has been a 25% increase in demand for SEN transport over the last two years, which is forecast to continue based on projection figures provided by the Children and Family Services.

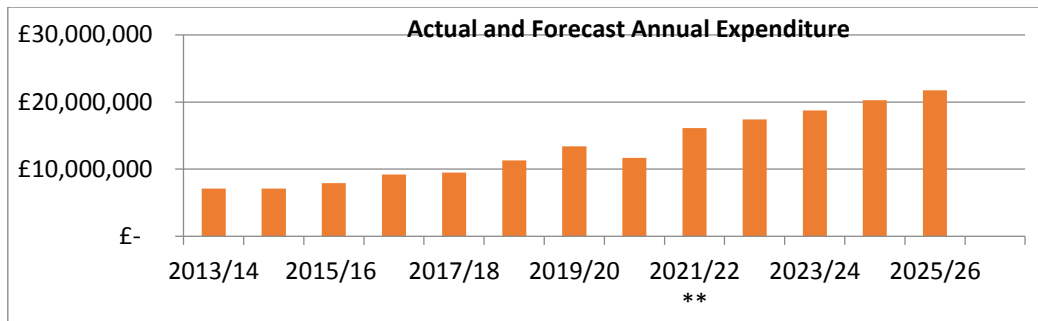
¹ Source Gov.uk - <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england>

EHCP numbers in Leicestershire have grown at a faster rate than the rest of the country



11. In 2013/14, the total number of pupils qualifying for transport assistance was 1,512, which has risen to 2,427 in 2021/22 and is predicted to rise to over 3,000 by 2025/26. The eligibility criteria have not changed significantly in this time.
12. Leicestershire’s cost per pupil in 2019/20 was 4% below the national average when compared to other local authorities.
13. Budget spend has increased in line with demand, with the exception of 2020/21 when Covid-19 resulted in a number of contract suspensions, which reduced contract payments.



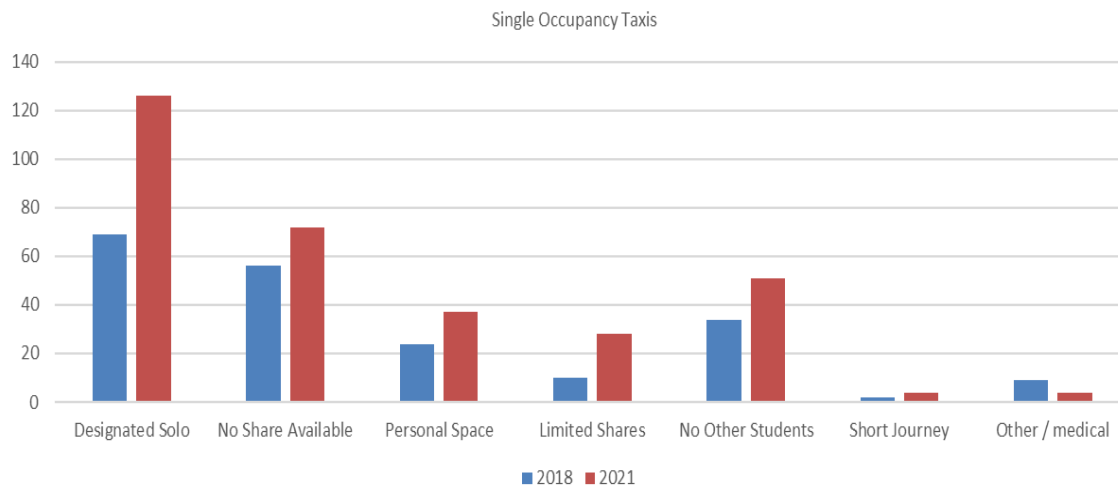


14. There is an evidenced growth over the recent years in the number of children gaining an EHCP by reason of an assessed Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) need, which includes children with diagnosed ADHD. For example, nationally this has increased from 39,189 to 45,191 between the 2019 and 2020 academic years (15% growth), which is mirrored in Leicestershire.

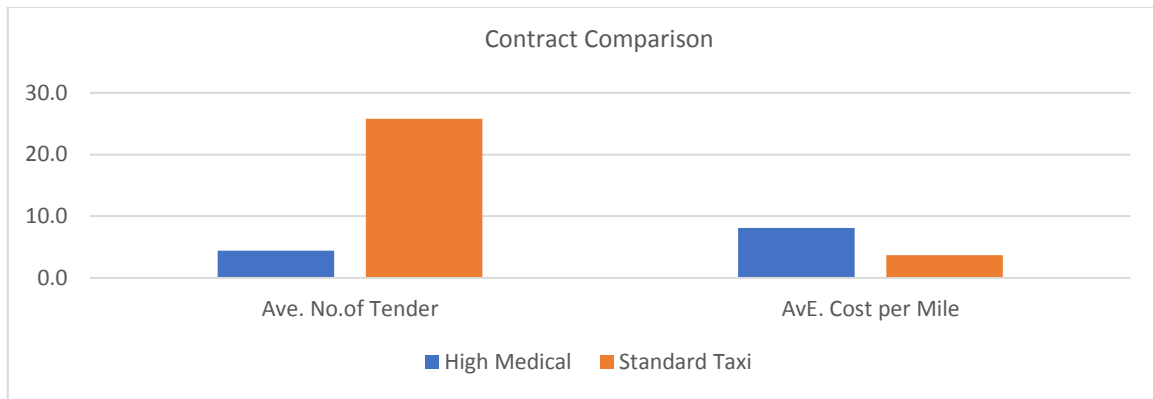
Pupil Need

15. An ongoing increase in pupils' needs has been observed for the past six years. Service user distance travelled (to nearest suitable provision) and transport requirement complexity has been growing in terms of pupil numbers and cost year on year. Every qualifying service user who receives traditional transport has their needs assessed to ensure that the transport provided is safe and suitable. In most cases a pupil will have needs that will have an impact on the cost of transport. These needs can include:
- a) Pupils that need to be transported solo due to their behaviours being a risk to other passengers.
 - b) Pupils that have no sharing option available due to logistics or contracts with available space.
 - c) Pupils that cannot sit near or next to other passengers and require additional space in the vehicle limiting the capacity available for other pupils.
 - d) Pupils that have restricted journey times due to their disability or medical needs.
 - e) Pupils that need to be transported by staff trained in a medical procedure(s). This includes procedures including administering rescue medication, oral suctioning, oxygen administration, EpiPen administration.
 - f) Pupils that require wheelchair accessible transport or other specialised vehicles.
 - g) Pupils attending Social, Emotional and Mental Health schools.
 - h) Pupils that are attending specialist out of county schools or schools that have no other or few other pupils attending.
16. The most cost-effective way of providing transport is to have as few contracted vehicles transporting as many pupils as possible at their maximum capacity.

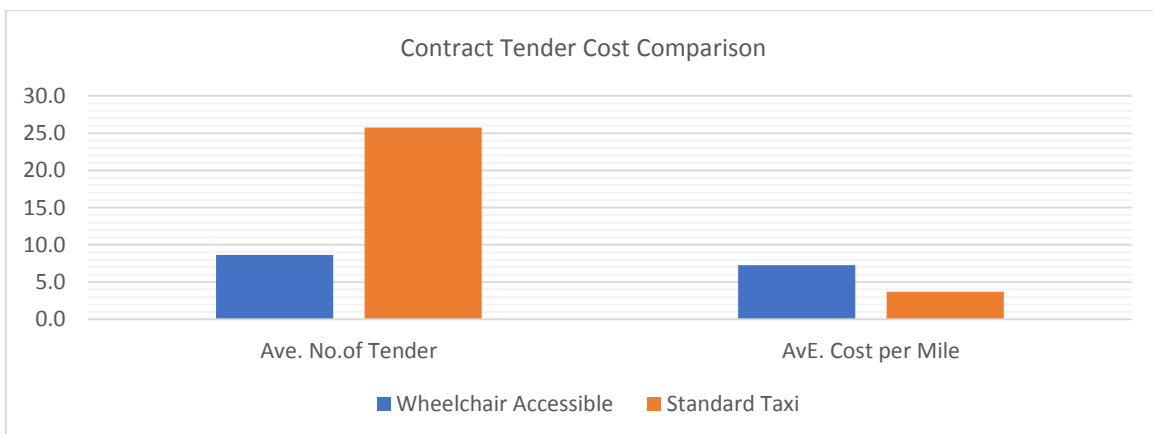
The more pupils that require solo transport, the higher the vehicle and staff costs required.



17. The figures show that from December 2018 to December 2021 there were:
- An additional 57 pupils designated as requiring solo transport (up by 83%).
 - An additional 16 pupils with no sharing option available (up by 29%).
 - An additional 18 pupils with limited sharing options (up by 180%).
 - An additional 17 pupils being the only student at the school (up by 50%).
 - An additional 13 pupils designated as requiring personal space (up by 54%).
18. As a consequence of the above:
- Overall, there was an increase of 124 single occupancy taxis (up by 43%).
 - Total number of pupils transported by taxi increased by 143 (up by 13%).
 - Therefore, not only is there an increase in the number of pupils eligible for transport, the needs of those pupils are also increasing requiring more contracted vehicles to accommodate these needs.
19. Pupils that have a medical need that requires transport staff to be specially trained will restrict the number of available transport providers tendering, so tendered contract prices are higher and include an element of cost for this level of staff provision.
20. The average cost per mile for tenders received for 'High Medical' contracts is 131% more expensive than those for a standard contract. There are currently 36 pupils designated 'High Medical' that presently receive transport in Leicestershire.



21. The same applies for pupils that require wheelchair accessible transport or other specialised vehicles, as these type of wheelchair friendly vehicles are limited and therefore prices increase as demand rises and these resources are no longer readily available as the taxi market appears to have contracted since Covid-19 pandemic.
22. The average cost per mile for tenders received for wheelchair accessible vehicles is usually twice that of a standard taxi. On average, wheelchair accessible tenders are 95% more expensive than those for a standard vehicle.

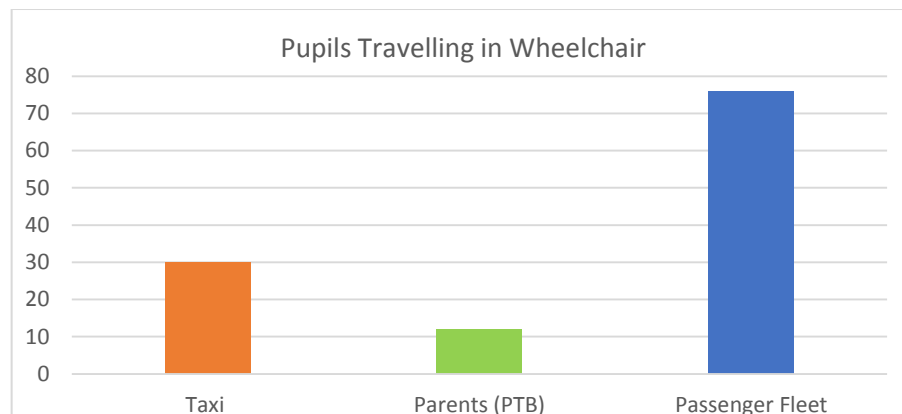


Market Forces and Competition

23. Over the past six months fuel prices have increased by 25%. The fuel element of the contract price is generally around 10% to 12%.
24. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the taxi market, with operators reporting a shortage of drivers and escorts and cost of living rises resulting in wage rises of around 10%.
25. This has resulted in a large number of operators giving notice on contracts tendered prior to and since the start of the school year (September 2021). In total, 248 contracts have been handed back as “no longer financially viable” by operators, all of which have had to be retendered, resulting in an increased workload on the service.

Positive action

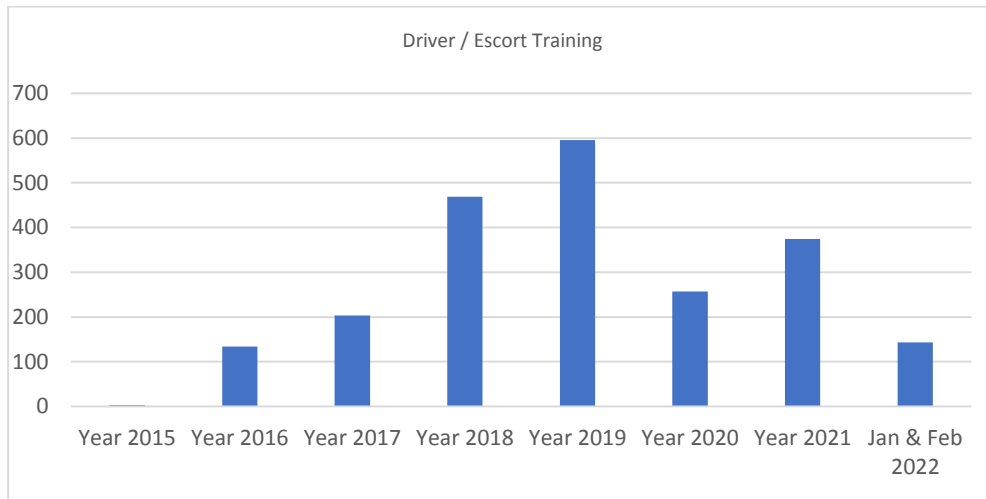
26. Leicestershire County Council has taken positive action to manage expenditure, including:
- Annual transport reviews and retendering;
 - Transport optimisation software;
 - Targeted utilisation of internal fleet services;
 - Increased training provision for internal and external operating staff; and
 - Post-16 PTB policy.
27. Further information on these positive actions is provided below.
28. Each year the transport provision for every child is reviewed. This is undertaken school by school, ensuring that the new transport arrangements for the forthcoming year are the most efficient provision, accounting for school leavers and new pupils. However, this annual review often leads to a change in the transport provider for a number of pupils, which can generate concern from parents and schools and increase complaints.
29. As part of the annual review, the cost of contracting wheelchair accessible and High Medical needs contracts from the external market are also reviewed. Those pupils that require this type of transport provision are allocated onto the internal fleet services where possible. In many instances several pupils with these needs can be accommodated traveling together on one fleet minibus, rather than having to travel on separate taxis at a high individual cost.



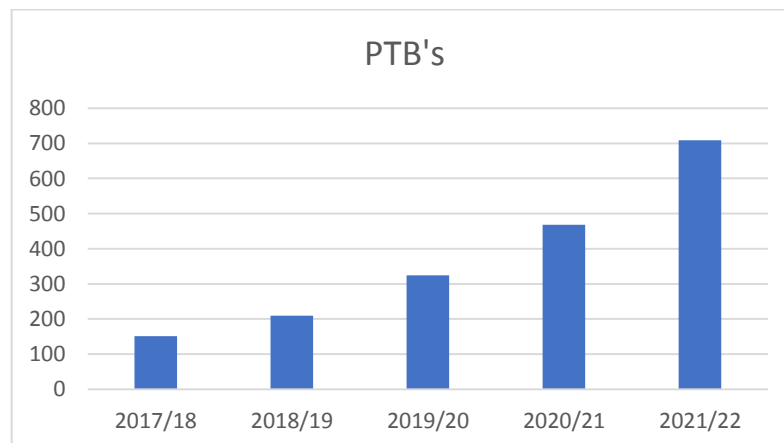
30. This also helps the taxi market from becoming saturated leading to higher prices when a pupil is unable to be accommodated on the internal fleet services. Whilst efficiency in numbers is beneficial, it is just as important to ensure that high-cost external taxi arrangements are avoided where possible.
31. Over the past six years, the Council's training programme for internal and external operations staff has been significantly increased and broadened to include training for more medical requirements. Courses now include medical administration training for oxygen administration, oral suctioning, applying

rescue medication, EpiPen, diabetes, vagal nerve stimulation along with paediatric first aid, epilepsy awareness, autism awareness, safeguarding and general service specific training. This has helped skill the market to promote competition for contracts that require specifically trained staff.

32. Whilst the Covid-19 lockdown prevented a number of training courses, key training events took place when possible.

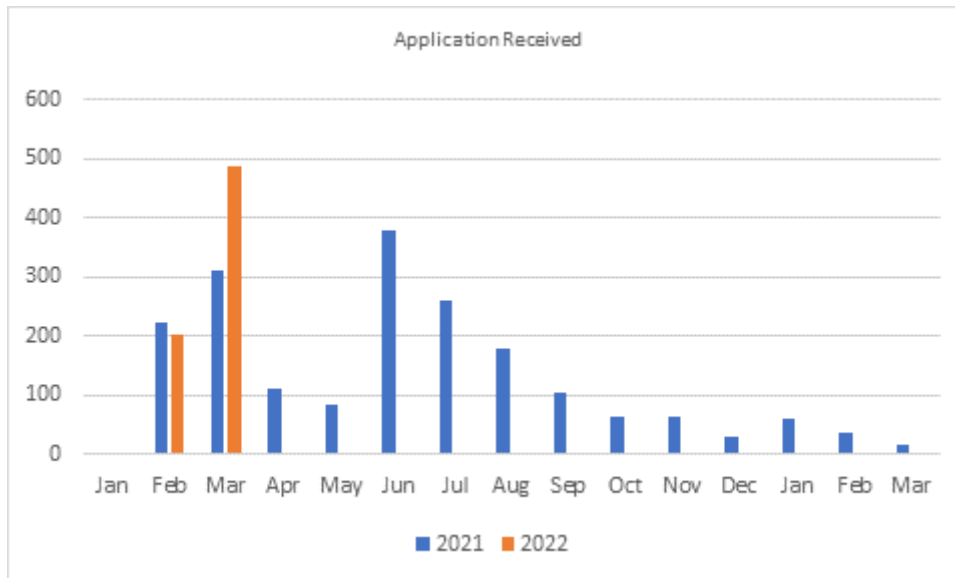


33. Whilst the introduction of the statutory PTB policy for 16-18-year-old students was challenging and resulted in over 200 appeals, the end result saw approximately 241 new PTB arrangements replacing traditional transport arrangements for 2021/22. A large number of these were for further education college SEN students, attending on average three days a week.



34. The net result was a reduction in transport expenditure of an estimated £650,000 in 2021/22 and a full year reduction was £900,000.
35. To ensure transport provision for a new academic year we require the application to be submitted by the 15 April 2022 for students aged 16-19 years and all other students/children, the closing date for applications is 1 July 2022 with agreed EHCP in the system by 31 March 2022. In 2021, the applications process and planning of transport was severely affected by a delay in securing

school placements and completing EHCPs. This effectively meant that around 800 applications were received late between June and August, preventing timely tender process for securing transport provision, which resulted in late transport provision for many children at the start of the academic year. There were also around 200 applications received after the start of the academic year. Early indications suggest that we may see a similar trend this year.



Financial context

36. The County Council continues to operate in an extremely challenging financial environment, the ongoing impact of Covid-19 only serving to exacerbate pre-pandemic issues arising from spending pressures that it faces, compounded by being the lowest Government funded shire authority in England.
37. The MTFs 2022-26 as approved in February sets out the Council's response to the financial position and sets out in detail £40.0m of savings and proposed reviews that will identify further savings to offset the £39.5m funding gap in 2025/26. This is a challenging task, especially given that savings of £230m have already been delivered over the last 12 years.
38. In addition, over the period of the MTFs, growth of £87.9m is required to meet demand and service pressures, with £35.5m required in 2022/23. In such circumstances, the County Council, as the Local Transport Authority for the area, is under significant challenge to maintain its services.
39. Covid-19 has had a significant impact on service delivery and costs since March 2020. Additional work has been required to reassess pupils needs in relation to Covid-19 risks, make alternative transport arrangements in some cases, introduce risk management measures on transport services, monitor cancellations and contract suspensions and increased communication with parents, schools, operators and other stakeholders.

40. Government funding was provided to cover additional transport provision up until July 2021. In addition, the Council reduced contract payments for school transport during lockdowns to 25%, and in-year suspensions to 90%, which resulted in an underspend in 2020/21 and contributed to reducing costs in 2021/22. However, SEN transport costs of £15.9m in 2021/22 are forecast to rise to over £20m in 2025/26 with housing, and economic growth around the County is likely to put further pressure on the County Council's SEN provision therefore work will continue to ensure efficient service delivery and cost minimisation where possible.

Resource Implications

41. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Conclusions

42. SEN transport has seen significant growth over the last few years. With this growth forecast to continue, and in light of the Council's overall financial situation, work within the Environment and Transport Department and in collaboration with Children and Family Services will continue in order to manage demand and drive efficiencies across this service area. Members are asked to note the content of this report.

Background Papers

Report to the County Council - 18 May 2022 - Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2022-2026

<http://cexmodgov1.ad.leics.gov.uk:9075/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=6482&Ver=4> (item 8a)

Report to the County Council on 23 February 2022 - Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 -2025/26

<http://cexmodgov1.ad.leics.gov.uk:9075/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=6481&Ver=4> (item 47a)

Report to the Cabinet 13 September 2019 – Mainstream and Special Educational Needs Home to School Transport Policies – Outcome of Judicial Review

<http://cexmodgov1.ad.leics.gov.uk:9075/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5605&Ver=4> (item 310)

Report to the Cabinet 9 March 2018 – Mainstream and Special Educational Needs Home to School Transport Policy

<http://cexmodgov1.ad.leics.gov.uk:9075/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MID=5178> (item 112)

Report to the Cabinet 15 September 2017 – Special Educational Needs and Mainstream Home to School Transport Policies – Approval to Consult

<http://cexmodgov1.ad.leics.gov.uk:9075/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MID=4863> (item 28)

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

43. None.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

44. There are no equality or human rights implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

45. Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments will be carried out in relation to work undertaken on individual projects when appropriate.

Environmental Implications

46. No detailed environmental assessment has been undertaken on the SEN. However, the County Council assesses the environmental implications of relevant new policies and schemes at appropriate points during their development.

Officers to Contact

Ann Carruthers
Director, Environment and Transport
Tel: (0116) 305 7000
Email: Ann.Carruthers@leics.gov.uk

Pat Clarke
Assistant Director, Highways and Transport Operations
Tel: (0116) 305 4244
Email: Pat.Clarke@leics.gov.uk

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**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE – 9 JUNE 2022**

MEMBERS HIGHWAY FUND UPDATE

**REPORT OF THE
DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update members of the committee with the position of the Members Highway Fund (MHF) at the end of its first year (2021/22) and beginning of its second (2022/23).

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. On 22 June 2021, the Cabinet agreed an additional £5m highways funding to be spent in the financial year 2021/22. This included a Members' fund with a total value of £1.4m. This fund would allow each County Council Member a sum of £25,000 to spend on small-scale highways and environmental improvements within their division.

Background

3. Members have received regular individual updates on the progress of the funding during 2021/22 as well as update reports being provided for Scrutiny. All Member Briefings took place on the 13 July 2021, 9 December 2021, and 19 April 2022. Applications for the 2021/22 fund were closed at the end of February 2022.

Members Highway Fund Applications

4. The Department received 515 formal applications; all 55 Members have applied to the fund.
5. 184 applications were not taken forward for the following reasons:
 - Not permissible on the Highway/out of scope - 33%.
 - Business-as-usual – delivered through revenue funding - 22%.
 - Cost Prohibitive - 11%.

- Withdrawn by a Member - 23%.
 - Delivered via AMF (Additional Maintenance Fund) - 7%.
 - Other - 4%.
6. The applications that were taken forward mainly focused on schemes to support traffic calming measures, such as providing vehicle activated signs (VAS) and mobile vehicle activated signs (MVAS), or to introduce street furniture such as benches and bollards. The current status (as of the end of April 2022) is as follows:

Projects Completed	Grants made to Communities	Projects under construction	Projects in Design	Projects under Processing	Applications Not Progressed
10	13	12	217	79	184

7. As the first year of the MHF has closed, the Department has taken the opportunity to reflect on the successes, challenges and lessons learnt over the past 12 months. The biggest success was the Members' response, with all Members engaging with the process and 95% allocating over 90% of their funds to local projects. The biggest challenge was to create a process to deal with requests and deliver projects in an efficient way – this was achieved for the initial processing stage but has subsequently led to a “log jam” of projects for delivery.
8. Lessons learnt from this year include:
- The MHF is resource intensive and additional staff are needed to deliver the scheme.
 - The current volatile economic climate is making it difficult to accurately predict costs.
 - A more efficient process is required to process and manage applications, including the Member sign off process and agreements on the scope of the scheme, including locations by communities.
 - Greater investment is needed at the initial application stage to scope out projects.
 - Earlier closure of the fund is needed to enable a “sensible” delivery window.
 - Improved process is required to deliver projects that are not part of the Department's business as usual services.

2022/23 Fund

9. As a result of the learning from last year, an online application form has been developed for the 2022/23 year. This will be the only way that Members are able to submit requests to the fund. Members have received information on

how to use the form through an All-Member Briefing. Online training and one-to-one sessions will also be available if required.

10. The benefits of the new application process include:
 - a) Faster and easier completion of the application form for Members, with a drop-down list to enable popular options to be selected.
 - b) An online account for Members to view, manage and process all their application requests.
 - c) The ability for both officers and Members to approve or decline applications without the need to complete additional paperwork.
 - d) Members will be able to see the progress of their requests in real time and will be notified when individual applications have been updated.
11. It is anticipated that the new process for submitting applications will produce a more streamlined and focused approach for the delivery of the fund. In addition, for the other more complex and bespoke schemes, there will also be an option for the Members to meet with officers prior to them submitting their application form.
12. Following a review of the type of requests received, it was agreed that a list of options for enhanced maintenance works (e.g., edging back, sign washing etc.) would be made available for Members. This will allow Members to authorise works up to a certain value, which they can either specify the location or request that officers schedule the works within their area based on risk and efficiency. In order to enable these works to be programmed to maximise output, requests for enhanced maintenance works will need to be submitted by the end of May 2022.
13. The deadline for all other applications this year will be the end of October 2022.
14. The list of options that Members will be able to pick from are:
 - a) Static single vehicle activated signs (VAS).
 - b) Mobile vehicle activated signs (MVAS).
 - c) One year's support for moving MVAS.
 - d) Inclusion on Structural Testing Programme for columns.
 - e) Allocation of budget to sign cleaning (applications to be received end of May).
 - f) Allocation of budget to lining refresh (applications to be received end of May).
 - g) Allocation of budget to public rights of way (applications to be received end of May).
 - h) Allocation of budget to vegetation works (applications to be received end of May).

- i) Allocation of budget to edging back works (applications to be received end of May).
- j) Other.

15. A Members Panel was set up to help oversee the development and administration of the MHF and has proved valuable in helping steer the scheme. The Panel will continue to meet in order to monitor the decisions of the fund and for the Members to retain an overview of the programme delivery.

Consultation

16. Individual applications to the MHF 2022/23 will continue to be subject to further consultation with local Members and the public, and reports will be presented to Members, as appropriate.

Resource Implications

17. A total of £166,000 has been spent on projects from the 2021/22 fund. The remaining £1,234,000 has a total of £1,047,000 planned expenditure against it. £162,000 has not yet been allocated to projects and £25,000 remains in contingency.

Scheme Year	Scheme Delivery - Spent	Grants Delivered – Spent	Schemes Planned	Remaining & Contingency	Total
2021/22	£77,500	£88,500	£1,047,000	£187,000	£1,400,000
2022/23	£0	£0	£0	£1,400,000	£1,400,000

18. From the £400,000 resourcing budget for 2021/22, £162,300 was spent. The underspend was due to the inability to recruit to roles to support the MHF. The unspent funding has remained in place and will be used to continue to deliver the scheme and to support the close down of the fund if needed.
19. Additional staffing resource has recently been secured to provide support for the programme delivery of the fund. The officers will support Members to complete application forms and process requests. The impact of the fund, however, is continuing to be felt across the Highways and Transport Service due to the inability to recruit to vacancies and the need to divert staff from other work on to MHF work. The result of this is mainly being felt within traffic management projects, such as the Community Speed Initiative and the level of engagement that can take place with communities and Members regarding developments in their localities.

Conclusions

20. Now that additional staffing resource has been provided, the Department is confident that there will be more effective and meaningful engagement with Members and service users (e.g., Parish Councils) and more streamlined delivery of the MHF in the coming year. Comments, observations and questions from members of the committee would be welcome at this early stage of the enhanced level of delivery and at any points during the coming year.

Background papers

Cabinet – 22 June 2021, Members Highway Fund –
Proposals <https://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MID=6444#A168166v>

Highways And Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 20 January 2022 –
Members' Highway Fund Update
<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1293&MID=6732#A170380>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

21. None.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

22. There are no equality or human rights implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report. It has not been necessary to undertake a detailed equality assessment on the MHF 2022/23.
23. Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRIAs) will be carried out in relation to individual applications to the MHF 2022/23 when appropriate.

Environmental Implications

24. No detailed environmental assessment has been undertaken on the MHF 2022/23. However, the County Council will assess the environmental implications of individual applications to the MHF 2022/23 when appropriate.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

25. Working with key partners, such as district councils, parish councils, and other local stakeholders will continue to be important in ensuring the MHF meets the aspirations of Members and communities and is delivered effectively.

Risk Assessment

26. The MHF 2022/23 has been risk assessed as part of a wider risk assessment of the Environment and Transport Department's business planning process.

27. The delivery of this programme is supported by the Department's business planning process and risk assessments will be undertaken for individual teams, schemes and initiatives, as appropriate.

Officer to Contact

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