

**ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –**  
**THURSDAY 1 MARCH 2018**

**MINUTE EXTRACT – MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**  
**HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport concerning proposals to revise the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Transport Policy and the Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

A statement was received from Dr Eynon CC and from Annie Bannister, a parent of a child affected by the proposals. A copy of these statements is filed with these minutes.

Mrs Seaton, Mrs Taylor and Mr Sheahan, the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Labour Spokesperson on the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee attended by invitation for this item

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:-

- i) The proposals related to discretionary transport provision for children with SEN or disabilities under the age of 5 years, for young people with SEN aged 16 to 18 and other young people aged 16+; the proposals would generate a saving of up to £800,000, against an initial savings target of £1million;
- ii) In response to the statement by Dr. Eynon CC tabled at the meeting, the Committee was informed that analysis of the consultation results had not been analysed by the Department but by the Business Intelligence Unit in the Chief Executive's Department. The analysis was consistent with industry norms and the results highlighted in the report were those that were deemed statistically significant for the relevant questions. It was acknowledged that the proposals were unpopular.
- iii) Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group had been consulted and had been particularly helpful in assisting the development of proposals to mitigate the impact on people;
- iv) Regarding Personal Transport Budgets (PTB), Members were informed that measures would be developed to help support families in moving to a new system. This would include, for example, working with schools to identify families who could share home to school transport, potentially arranged by the school and funded through each family's PTB. Mitigation measures would be put in place to help address potential drop-out rates;
- v) Exception arrangements would be put in place to address and support families for whom a PTB was unworkable. Exceptions would be

considered on a case by case basis by staff well experienced in dealing with PTBs as well as mainstream and SEN home to school transport. Criteria for an exception could not be set out as each case was individual. A two-stage appeals process would be in place; the first stage would be dealt with by staff who were well-versed in the area of work, although had not dealt with the case previously; and the second stage would be handled by an independent panel. The committee was informed that, should significant issues arise with the operation of the PTB, the system could be reviewed;

- vi) Mechanisms would be put in place to monitor use of PTBs to identify early on any issues being experienced by individual families. Payments would be made monthly in advance to help support families with budgeting;
- vii) Where a student was deemed likely of entering into care as a result of transport pressures which had led to poor attendance at school, a robust escalation process would be in place. This would be developed, in conjunction with schools and the SEN service, should the proposals be approved by the Cabinet at its meeting on 9 March 2018;
- viii) Members were informed that officers had worked closely with Children and Family Services to identify mitigation measures to minimise any potential effect on the social care budget, should children be unable to attend school due to financial pressures;
- ix) There were numerous hackney cabs available that were wheelchair accessible and availability was not considered an issue at this stage. The arrangements would be reviewed should issues arise;
- x) Where children had been provided with medical escorts, discussions would take place with parents and carers to understand the transport arrangements made when such children were not at school. The PTB would reflect the particular needs of the child;
- xi) 'Low income families' were defined as those who were in receipt of the maximum Working Families Tax Credit or eligible for free school meals;
- xii) Members also recognised that changes had been made to the proposals in response to the consultation findings; the consultation had been beneficial in understanding the impacts of those initial proposals.

The majority of members recognised that difficult decisions needed to be made in order to deliver services with reduced funding. A number of members commented that the proposals now presented would no doubt cause some difficulty for families but given the budgetary pressures on the Council and that these services were non-statutory, in the circumstances, they were the best that could be achieved and therefore supported the proposals.

Messrs Boulter, Hunt, Bill (and Mr Sheahan) were of the view that the proposals would impact adversely on some of the most vulnerable in society and as such asked that it be recorded that they were not in support of the proposals.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet be advised of the views now expressed by the Committee on the revised Special Educational Needs Transport Policy and the revised Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy.

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