

AMENDED HOME TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRANSPORT POLICY

To: **Cabinet**

Date: **15 March 2011**

From: **Executive Director – Children and Young People’s Services**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **2011/017** *Key decision:* **Yes**

Purpose: **To:**

a) inform Cabinet of the proposed changes to the discretionary elements of the mainstream home to school/college transport policy and the associated savings to accrue from their implementation as part of the Integrated Planning Process (IPP)

b) seek approval from Cabinet to publish the amended Home to School/College Transport Policy

Recommendation: **That Cabinet agrees the publication of the amended Home to School Transport Policy**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Section 509(4) of the 1996 Education Act requires an Authority to take certain factors into account when deciding whether or not it is necessary to make arrangements for a pupil's/student's transport. These factors include:

- the pupil's age
- the nature of any routes the pupil/student could reasonably be expected to take
- the wishes of the parent of the pupil to be educated at a school or institution providing religious education in accordance with the parents' beliefs.

The Home to School Transport policy was last reviewed in December 2007.

- 1.2 The following discretionary areas of the Home to School Transport Policy have been in place since the mid-1990s:

- Temporary transport for pupils who have to move house unexpectedly
- Transport support for students who move house in years 10, 11, 12 and 13
- Denominational transport

- 1.3 This paper proposes changes to the Council's Home to School Transport Policy in line with the savings measures agreed as a part of the Integrated Planning Process. Cabinet will receive a further report setting out proposed policy changes in respect of special educational needs transport at their April meeting. Subject to Cabinet agreement, the Policy will be amended to reflect the changes proposed.

2. Denominational Transport

- 2.1 The Council's current denominational transport policy offers subsidised transport to a denominational school if that school:

- is the nearest denominational school to the child's address, and
- is more than the walking distances prescribed in the policy (2 miles for primary and 3 miles for secondary), and
- the place was offered on the basis of the child meeting the faith criterion for admission, and
- an existing transport route is available (in practice a contracted or service bus route).

The charge is waived if a pupil meets established low-income criteria, or has a sibling currently entitled to post-16 transport support, or another sibling contributing to the cost of transport to a denominational school (as described in the bullet points above).

- 2.2 Currently 102 children attending primary and secondary denominational schools in Peterborough benefit from this subsidy. Those who pay, contribute £390 per annum (£130 per term) to the cost of their travel. The cost to the Authority is £87,000 per annum.

- 2.3 A further 371 pupils travel to St Bede's Inter-Faith School in Cambridge. The subsidised transport arrangements for St Bede's pupils are slightly different. St

Bede's operates its own contracts to provide access to the school from a wide area of Cambridgeshire. The school charges pupils £70 per term. The Authority subsidises students who meet the criteria in 2.1 above by paying St Bede's £675 per annum per pupil (£225 per term) which is equivalent to the cost of a bus pass and levies a £70 termly charge per family. This equates to a total termly transport charge for the first child in the family of £420 per annum (£140 per term). The cost to the Authority is £210,000 per annum.

- 2.4 The Integrated Plan proposed that the funding for denominational transport support described in paragraphs 2.2. and 2.3 above, should cease with effect from September 2012. However, following consultation with St Bede's School and diocesan representatives it has been agreed to phase out the subsidy over time, starting in September 2011, thus allowing parents and the schools involved to better prepare for the change. This will be achieved by increasing the annual parental charge made by the LA as follows:

	<u>St Bede's</u>	<u>Other denominational schools</u>
2011/12	£354	£489
2012/13	£500	£590
2013/14	£647	£692
2014/15	Parents pay full cost	Parents pay full cost

By 2014/15 parents would be paying £794 per annum.

The above costs include an assumed 4.05 % annual increase in the cost of a bus pass. This reflects the actual cost increase between 2010/11 and 2011/12.

- 2.5 From September 2014, the only denominational transport supported by the Authority would be that which is statutorily required by the Education Act 2006. Namely, to provide free transport to the nearest secondary school preferred by reason of a parent's religion or belief between 2 and 15 miles from the child's home where the family meets the national low-income criteria,. Six pupils are currently supported in this way at an annual cost to the Authority of £4000.
- 2.6. Neighbouring Authorities, Peterborough City Council, Central Bedfordshire, Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire have all amended their home to school transport policies and withdrawn the denominational transport subsidy in the past academic year. Northamptonshire has not been providing denominational transport support since 2003. Hertfordshire has been phasing out denominational transport support for siblings and is proposing to remove all denominational subsidies with effect from September 2011.

3. Temporary transport

- 3.1 Under the current policy, temporary transport support is granted for up to 6 weeks/half a term, to a number of categories of pupils who have had to move house at short notice, always on the proviso that they had been attending their catchment school before the move took place.
- 3.2 The Integrated Plan proposed that, with effect from April 2011, temporary transport assistance should be limited to cases where either:
- domestic violence is the reason for the move and/or;
 - without temporary transport support the children would be at risk of being taken into care/accommodated by the Local Authority as a result of the move.

4. Students who move house in Years 10-13

- 4.1 Currently, where a student moves house in Year 10 (after end of October) or Year 11, or after the end of October of Year 12, or in Year 13, if there is an existing bus route back to the school, the Authority has provided a bus pass to enable the student to remain at the school/college to complete their two year examination courses without disruption.
- 4.2 Maintaining their child's place in the original school after a house move is a parental preference. All other parental preference placements bring with them parental responsibility to arrange and fund transport. The Integrated Plan proposed that, with effect from April 2011, parents should be responsible for arranging and funding all transport costs if they wish their Key Stage 4 or 5 child to continue to attend the same school to complete their public examination courses after the family has moved.

5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resources and Performance

The phased implementation of the change to denominational transport policy means that the full effect would not be realised until the financial year 2015/16. The additional cost, £53k, of phasing the withdrawal of the denominational transport subsidy will be found from the home to school transport budget. .

5.2 Statutory Requirements and Partnership Working

In accordance with its statutory duty, the LA will continue to provide free transport to secondary school pupils who meet the low-income criteria for denominational transport support under the Education Act 2006.

5.3 Access and Inclusion

The additional parental contribution to school transport which may be required by St Bede's in order to continue to run its bus contracts once the Authority's subsidy of £675 per child ceases, could have a significant impact on these families who express a preference for their child/ren to attend a denominational school on grounds of faith in the south of the County.

263 of the 371 pupils at St Bede's whose transport arrangements the LA currently subsidises, live on public service bus routes into Cambridge (this takes into account the planned reductions in subsidies on public bus routes). 63 of the pupils in the north of the County who receive subsidised transport support to attend denominational schools in Peterborough already travel on public bus routes or by rail. 39 travel on a contracted route and will have to make their own travel arrangements with effect from September 2012.

The LA will work with St Bede's to offer advice to limit the risk of congestion in the area around their school in Cambridge, such as park and stride schemes, or a shuttle service from the local park and ride sites. Many schools around the County successfully operate such schemes.

5.4 Engagement and Consultation

A question relating to denominational transport featured in the County Council's recent on-line, general budget consultation exercise. The phasing out of the denominational transport subsidy by increasing the level of parental contribution results from consultation with the Church of England and Roman Catholic Dioceses and St Bede's Inter-Faith School.

Source Documents	Location
Home to School Transport Policy (April 2009)	The policy can be accessed via the following CCC internet link http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/education/schools/getting/pre16schooltrans/policies.htm or paper copies available from Room B202 Castle Court, Cambridge
Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance – Dept for Education and Skills September 2007	Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance (ref 00373-2007BKT-EN) available to be downloaded from www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications