

CABINET

Date – 17 June 2025

Home to School Transport & Post 16 Travel Policies 2025/26

Report by Director of Children Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED TO
 - a) ENDORSE the recommendations following analysis of the public consultation feedback in relation to the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy 2025/26 onwards for Reception to Year 11.
 - b) AGREE to the adoption of the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy Statement Academic Year 2026/27, which reflects the consultation analysis recommendations to not introduce a contribution charge for those eligible for support under this policy.

Executive Summary

2. Based on the consultation feedback, benchmarking analysis and the Council's desire to deliver effective and efficient services the following recommendations have been identified:
 - (a) Officer recommendation is for the Council to adopt the updated policies for Home to School Travel & Transport 2025/26 onwards for Reception to Year 11, and the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement Academic Year 2026/27 (see appendix). These policies reflect the original review of the existing policies and the feedback received through the consultation, including the implementation of review area 1 which aimed to improve language, format and user experience, whilst ensuring alignment with DfE guidelines. It also incorporated improved wording and information within the policy (review area 2 and 3) which focussed specifically on Direct Travel Payments and Alternative Education Provision travel.
 - (b) Officers have also recommended that the Council does not introduce contribution charges (review area 4) for young people in Post 16 education using travel provided by the Council based on the feedback received through the consultation and in recognition of the potential impact. The introduction of a contribution charge should also continue to be reviewed for future consideration and possible implementation in reflection of any existing issues and/or circumstances changing in the future.

3. The existing Home to School Transport Policies were last consulted upon in 2014 (Compulsory School Age) and 2018 (Post 16). DfE Guidance was last updated in 2019 for Post 16 Travel and in 2023 and 2024 for Compulsory School Age.
4. Local authorities should keep their school travel policy under regular review to ensure it continues to meet local needs and comply with statutory requirements. Due to the significant time that had passed since the previous consultations, a review of the policies was undertaken in 2024. The purpose of the review was to ensure alignment with the Council's statutory obligations and identify existing areas of discretionary provision.
5. The review, which included engagement from the OxPCF SEND Listening Event in October 2024, parents/families, officer feedback, and feedback from committees/sprint groups, identified that the current policies are hard to understand, and the locating of specific information is difficult. This creates frustration and contributes to difficulty establish consistent and understandable expectations of the service.
6. The primary focus of the update to the policies was to improve the accessibility of the Policy documents by improving its structure, flow, and language. The purpose was to improve effectiveness and usefulness of the documents for both officers, families, schools, and other key stakeholders.
7. During the review it was identified that the existing policies include a few areas of discretionary provision. This included:
 - (a) extended support for children and young people living in "split villages",
 - (b) the delivery of the spare seat scheme,
 - (c) and the provision of travel support for young people in Post 16 education free of charge
8. The consultation included a proposal to introduce a contribution charge for Post 16 travel. Split villages and the spare seat scheme were also included within the consultation, but only as an early engagement to seek understanding of the perception of the public about these two areas of extended provision, beyond the Council's statutory obligations.

Public Consultation

9. The public consultation ran between 23 January 2025 and 9 March 2025 (11:59pm) It included the proposed refreshed policies, the proposal to introduce contribution charges to Post 16 travel, and explored early engagement/feedback about existing discretionary provision.
10. The consultation focused on seeking views on the following areas:

Review area 1: Updates to the format and language used in our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement to improve customer understanding, awareness and overall experience.

Review area 2: Specific updates to the use and application of direct travel payments in our home to school transport policy to ensure the language is more user friendly and consistent with current government guidelines.

Review area 3: Specific updates to our home to school transport policy for travel arrangements to Alternative Education Provision settings to meet current government guidelines and to reflect Oxfordshire's current alternative provision arrangements.

Review area 4: Proposals to ask for a financial contribution for post 16 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) for travel to post 16 settings.

As well as consulting on the proposed changes the consultation also explored views on the following discretionary elements of both policies where proposals for change had not yet been developed:

Review area 5: Discretionary travel at split village locations

Review area 6: Spare seat scheme

11. During the consultation, members of the public were able to seek clarification and further understanding of the proposals through four engagement events. The consultation received 81 registrations to attend the events.
12. Feedback from the public regarding the proposals was received through an online survey. 649 surveys were submitted during the consultation period.
13. Updates to the format and language (**Review Area 1**) of the policies to improve understanding, awareness and general experience receive significant support with 66% of respondents either significantly or somewhat approving of the proposed changes.
14. Significant support was also received for **Review Area's 2 and 3**, which related to specific updates to wording within the policy in relation to Direct Travel Payments (DTP's) and travel support for those in Alternative Education Provision. 63% were in support of the updated wording for Review Area 2, and 39% for Review Area 3, 42% neither agreed or disagreed with Review Area 3 proposals.
15. **Review Area 4** was the final proposed change, relating to the introduction of a contribution charge for young learners with an EHCP in Post 16 education where the Council provides support with travel. 60% of respondents disagreed with the proposals.
16. The primary reason for disagreeing with the proposal is the affordability and financial impact of the proposal. Those individuals and families affected are often associated with additional costs which other families may not experience.
17. Feedback also indicated that the financial impact would also have significant impact on a young person's ability to continue their education with respondents indicating the proposal would create a barrier to education.

18. In the consultation it was explored whether the Council should review the support provided to families living in 'split villages', which is discretionary support currently being offered, and if the Council was to make changes to this support what would the impact be. Feedback from the consultation indicated that 43% believed there would be a negative impact on the community if this support was reduced. If this support was withdrawn completely then 55% of responses indicated this would have a negative impact.
19. The consultation also explored the existing discretionary support available through the selling of spare seats. Feedback indicated that if the Council considered to reduce the service in the future, then 65% felt this would have a negative impact. If the Council was to explore increasing the contribution paid to access a spare seat, then 53% indicated this would have a negative impact.
20. Due to the feedback received in relation to Review Area 4 a number of mitigations were considered to explore to understand if the concerns/impact of the proposal could be reduced. This included:
 - (a) Phasing of the proposal for new Post 16 learners, protecting existing learners
 - (b) Enabling monthly payment option in addition to the original termly payment proposal
 - (c) Removing the higher rate contribution band of £1,015 per annum to create a single contribution requirement of £546 per annum irrespective of distance from home to education setting. Waiver to remain for low-income households.
 - (d) Reducing contribution to £350 per annum, irrespective of distance from home to education setting, with waiver removed for low-income households.
21. After a review of possible mitigation measures and consultation feedback it is recommended that the original proposal for Review Area 4 is withdrawn and support continuing to be made available to those meeting the agreed eligibility criteria without the need for a contribution charge.
22. Proposals from Review Area 1, 2 and 3 are recommended for implementation and publishing in the policies for the 2025/26 academic year.

Background

23. Oxfordshire County Council as a local authority, has a statutory duty to provide free travel for children and young people of compulsory school age (5-16 years of age) who meet those thresholds detailed in legislation. These thresholds are set out in sections 508A, 508B, 508C and 509D and Schedule 25B of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006).
24. Compulsory School age is set out in section 8 of the Education Act 1996 and the Education (Start of Compulsory School Age) Order 1998 as follows: a child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following their fifth

birthday, or on the fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day. The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which they reach age 16.

25. The Education Act 1996 duty applies to all local authorities in England in respect of arrangements for young people (over compulsory school age) aged 16-18 and those continuing learners up to age 25 with EHC plans who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday. There are also duties that apply to local authorities in England in respect of arrangements for adults aged 19 and over, who started their programme of learning after their 19th birthday. The legislation therefore gives local authorities the discretion to determine what transport and financial support are necessary to facilitate young people's attendance at their setting.
26. Where the Council is proposing changes to the Compulsory School Age Travel Policy and the Annual Post Transport Policy Statement, and those changes may affect eligibility for travel/transport then the Council should consult locally.

Service Delivery & Spend

27. In Oxfordshire the total number of statutory school aged pupils is circa 100,000. The number of pupils conveyed to school every day are set out in the tables below:

Table 1. Numbers of pupils using Home to School Transport

Category of Passenger	2022/23	2023/24
Mainstream	6605	6871 (+4%)
SEND	1,162	1,428 (+19%)
Spare Seat	1105	1314
Total	8,872	9,613

28. As demand for travel support and provision has grown spend in this area continues to grow annually.

Table 2. Annual Spend of Home to School Transport as per Supported Transport IBC

Category of Spend	2022/23 Actual £'000	2023/24 Actual £'000	2024/25 Outturn £'000	2025/26 Budget £'000
Mainstream	£7,665	£7,551	£9,468	£9,700
SEND	£20,485	£24,721	£30,228	£33,393
Total Spend	£28,151	£32,271	£39,695	NA
Total Budget	£26,381	£29,139	£39,899	£43,093

29. SEND and Mainstream transport spend reflects the growth in passenger numbers for each category of spend.

Cost Efficiencies and Savings

30. Management of demand is a key to ensure efficient and effective delivery of transport services, with significant increases in cost associated for each child or young person using the service.
31. A significant proportion of demand and cost pressures are not influenceable by the Council. Children and young people meeting the statutory eligibility criteria are entitled to free travel support, whilst economic fluctuations directly impact the cost of travel arrangements the Council makes on behalf of those entitled children and young people.
32. Provision of travel for children and young people, exceeding the Council's statutory obligations continues to be under review. Current cost pressure and potential benefits have been identified and captured within the directorates savings targets, any alteration to planned activity will require the identification of an alternative means to deliver unrealised savings.
33. Proposed changes to existing policies outlined in the recent public consultation were forecast to reduce service spend in the Children, Education and Families Directorate, by £207k per annum.

Integrated Transport Delivery Hub Programme

34. Demand management activity directly impacts the organisation and provision of transport services. Property & Assets directorate has responsibility for delivery of Home to School transport services.
35. The objective of the Integrated Transport Delivery Hub Programme is to address the ever-growing pressures being generated across ASC, CEF and Supported Transport and the proposed overall budgetary reduction of £5m over 3 years.
36. To effectively manage spend in this area the Council must ensure that it affectively assesses each application to identify the most appropriate form of travel, provision of public transport. Alternative/independent travel options continue to be the most cost-effective form of travel offered by the Council.
37. The Council must also ensure that any provision is effectively organised and co-ordinated to maximise the use of available resources and minimise unnecessary travel, such as dead mileage or under capacity vehicle/routes.
38. The Council must also ensure that it effectively procures and sources travel arrangements to secure value for money.
39. In total the programme has an agreed savings target of £5m to be delivered over a 3 year period. This will support the Council to sustainably deliver this service within the agreed budgetary financial constraints. Without this action the service will continue to be delivered, exceeding agreed budgets adding financial

pressure to the service whilst increasing risk to other support provided by the Council by other service areas.

Policy Review

40. The Council last consulted on its Home to School Transport Policy for Compulsory Aged Children in 2014, whilst it last consulted on its policy for Post 16 Travel in 2018.
41. A legal review of both existing policies relating to Home to School and Post 16 Travel was undertaken between April and July 2024 to identify improvements and to ensure alignment with the current statutory guidance and legislation.
42. Due to the significant time since the policies were last consulted upon it was agreed by the service that the refreshed policies should be consulted upon in order to seek views from the public and key stakeholders/users of the service. This should include feedback in relation to existing discretionary travel arrangements to explore whether they continue to be necessary and a sustainable use of Council resources.
43. The service review of the policy identified that the majority of the policy detailed the statutory obligations of the Council, the remainder contained a few discretionary elements, these include:
 - (a) Spare Seat Scheme
 - (b) Split Villages
 - (c) Travel operations arrangements such as Personal Transport Budgets, Independent Travel Training
44. The policy review also identified a requirement to update the description and detail in relation to travel support for those children and young people attending Alternative Education Provision (AEP).

Consultation of Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policies

45. Due to the time that has elapsed since the existing Home to School and Post 16 Transport policies were last consulted upon, it was necessary to consult to ensure they continued to remain appropriate and effective.
46. Feedback from key stakeholders outside of the consultation period previously indicated that the format, language and detail impacted individuals' ability to understand what support was available and the responsibility of the Council, families, Schools and transport providers.
47. It was decided that the Council would consult on the refreshed policies, and in recognition of the Council's financial situation it was agreed that discretionary elements of both policies should also be consulted upon to establish if they remain a necessity, whether alterations were required, and whether they continue to be appropriate for the Council to support.

Consultation Detail

48. As per the DfE Guidelines, there is a requirement to consult for a minimum of 28 working days, which should be held during term time. In accordance with these guidelines consultation ran from the 23 January 2025 to 9 March 2025.
49. The consultation's objective was to obtain the views of the following aspects of Home to School & Post 16 Transport:
- **Review area 1:** Updates to the format and language used in our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement to improve customer understanding, awareness and overall experience.
 - **Review area 2:** Specific updates to the use and application of direct travel payments in our home to school transport policy to ensure the language is more user friendly and consistent with current government guidelines.
 - **Review area 3:** Specific updates to our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement for travel arrangements to Alternative Education Provision settings to meet current government guidelines and to reflect Oxfordshire's current Alternative Education Provision arrangements.
 - **Review area 4:** Proposals to ask for a financial contribution for post 16 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) for travel to post 16 settings.

As well as consulting on proposed changes mentioned above, the consultation also targeted responses to explore public views on the following discretionary elements of both policies. Proposals had not been developed for the consultation and review areas were included to inform future thinking with no changes planned or developed. These included:

- **Review area 5:** Discretionary travel at split village locations
 - **Review area 6:** Spare seat scheme
50. The consultation was accessible via Lets Talk using the following link <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hometoschool> . It provided the public with details of the consultation, the draft policies, details of the proposals, access to the consultation survey, and access links to book attendance at scheduled engagement events.
51. Consultation document, information & survey were available online, it also included options for the public to request printed versions, alternative formats and an Easy Read version.
52. Publicity of the consultation involved directed mailing to existing service users via post and email. The consultation was also promoted through Member Briefing, School News, Your Oxfordshire, and via promotion through social media. OxPCF provided support by promoting the consultation by directly messaging their members and through social media.
53. To support survey responses and improve understanding of the consultation, four engagement events took place, with events taking place during lunchtimes

and evenings. There were 81 registrations to attend these events although actual attendance was approximately 30.

54. Follow up communication was also undertaken directly to those who registered for the events to ensure both those attending and those that decided to not attend, had the necessary information to allow them to submit their views via the survey.
55. The consultation pack, survey, and draft policies can be found in the annex of this paper.

Consultation Analysis

56. A total of 649 surveys were submitted in response to the consultation. 173 of the surveys related to a family with a child/young person with SEND, 61 from individuals living in an existing 'split village', and 116 from those currently using a spare seat to access their education setting.
57. **Review Area 1:** Updates to the format and language used in our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement to improve customer understanding, awareness and overall experience. We propose to update both documents to: Improve understanding of our home to school transport policy and our post 16 transport policy statement amongst families/stakeholders. More clearly define requirements and explanations to minimise instances of misunderstanding/misinterpretation. Improving the overall customer experience of these policies. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed changes.

Response	Total Responses	%
Strongly Agree	236	37%
Agree Somewhat	188	29%
Neither Agree or Disagree	161	25%
Disagree Somewhat	5	1%
Strongly Disagree	17	3%
Not Sure	37	6%

Table 3

58. **Review Area 2:** We proposed to refresh the wording in the home to school transport policy to align with current provision and updated guidelines from the DfE. We also propose to update the wording to: Improve understanding of direct travel payments related to mileage rates amongst families/stakeholders. Including more clearly defined requirements and explanations of how decisions in relation to how direct travel payments are made, to minimise instances of misunderstanding/misinterpretation.

There will be no impact to anyone currently receiving direct transport payments as a result of implementation of the proposed changes to the policy. Those responding were requested to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed changes.

Response	Total Responses	%
Strongly Agree	196	31%
Agree Somewhat	205	32%
Neither Agree or Disagree	176	27%
Disagree Somewhat	5	1%
Strongly Disagree	14	2%
Not Sure	45	7%

Table 4

59. **Review Area 3:** Specific updates to our home to school transport policy were shared in relation to travel arrangements to Alternative Education Provision settings, reflecting current government guidelines and Oxfordshire's current Alternative Education Provision arrangements. Specifically to reflect that alternative provision is now not solely based a Meadowbrook College.

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed changes.

Response	Total Responses	%
Strongly Agree	137	21%
Agree Somewhat	116	18%
Neither Agree or Disagree	266	42%
Disagree Somewhat	6	1%
Strongly Disagree	13	2%
Not Sure	101	16%

Table 5

60. **Review Area 4:** This proposal explored the introduction of financial contributions for post 16 pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) travelling to post 16 settings.

We proposed to introduce a contribution charge for young people in post 16 education that require provision of travel arrangements from the council, seeking feedback to understand what the impact might be on families, schools, and wider community.

The proposed charge for Post 16 travel was as follows:

- Less than 3 miles from home to school/college £546.00 per annum (£182.00 per term)
- 3 miles and over from home to school/college £1,015.92 per annum (£338.64 per term)

The proposed rates mirrored the cost of the council's spare seat scheme, including the existing waiver of a contribution due to low-family income. Those responding were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed changes.

Response	Total Responses	%
Strongly Agree	47	7%
Agree Somewhat	85	13%
Neither Agree or Disagree	95	15%
Disagree Somewhat	82	13%
Strongly Disagree	302	47%
Not Sure	32	5%

Table 6

61. A review of the responses disagreeing with the proposal indicated two key reasons for their response. This was that the proposal was not financially viable for families, and that the proposal would create a barrier to education.
62. **Review Area 5:** Discretionary travel is currently provided at split village locations. Through the consultation the Council explored whether this support should continue to be available for pupils living in 'split villages' and continue to enable them to access travel support to either the nearest suitable school or the designated/catchment school for the village/area.

This discretionary provision for split villages has been in place since the last consultation in 2014. In the consultation we explored if this support continues to be necessary, and if it were to be changed or withdrawn, what the impact might be on families, schools, the council, and wider community.

As part of this early exploration, we are also asked for views on whether the council should continue to provide discretionary transport support to two destinations in split villages locations (catchment school and nearest suitable school), whilst other locations in the county can only access this support to a single destination (their nearest suitable school).

No proposals for split villages have been developed. Should these come forward in the future, we will formally consult on them before any decisions are made.

Respondents were asked to indicate the potential impact on families, school and wider community if proposals were developed (in the future) to **reduce** this service?

Response	Total Responses	%
Significant Positive Impact	13	2%
Somewhat Positive Impact	15	2%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	133	21%
Somewhat Negative Impact	97	15%
Significant Negative Impact	181	28%
Not Sure	203	32%

Table 7

63. In the future, if proposals were developed to withdraw this service, what would the potential impact be on families, schools, and wider community?

Response	Total Responses	%
Significant Positive Impact	17	3%
Somewhat Positive Impact	4	1%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	87	14%
Somewhat Negative Impact	79	12%
Significant Negative Impact	276	43%
Not Sure	176	28%

Table 8

64. **Review Area 6:** Early exploration of whether the discretionary selling of spare capacity seats on existing home to school transport services (which the Council organises) should continue into the future.

The discretionary provision of the spare seat scheme has been in place for many years. In the consultation it was explored, at an early stage, if this support should continue to be made available in its current format and approach. This included whether the financial support underpinning the scheme should be either adjusted to make the scheme sustainable moving forward, or whether financial support should be withdrawn.

As part of this early exploration, the Council also wanted to understand what the impact might be on families, schools, and wider community if the spare seats scheme was to be changed or withdrawn. No proposals for changing the spare seats have been developed.

Respondents were asked, if proposals were developed to change the level of spare seat contribution (increase), what would the potential impact be on families, schools, and wider community?

Response	Total Responses	%
Significant Positive Impact	27	4%
Somewhat Positive Impact	31	5%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	84	13%
Somewhat Negative Impact	121	19%
Significant Negative Impact	215	34%
Not Sure	156	25%

Table 9

65. Respondents were also asked to provide feedback based on the Council developing proposals to reduce this service, what might the potential impact be on families, schools, and wider community?

Response	Total Responses	%
Significant Positive Impact	12	2%
Somewhat Positive Impact	8	1%
Neither Positive or Negative Impact	65	10%
Somewhat Negative Impact	108	17%
Significant Negative Impact	305	48%
Not Sure	134	21%

Table 10

Local Authority Benchmarking

66. A review of Post 16 travel provided by other Local Authorities was also undertaken, to enable comparison of the Council's current approach and the proposal detailed within the consultation.
67. A review of 20 County Council's and 12 Unitary Council's in England was undertaken, reviewing their latest Post 16 Travel Policy Statements. A list of those Council's reviewed is detailed in the table below:

Cambridgeshire County Council	Derbyshire County Council	Devon County Council	East Sussex County Council
Essex County Council	Gloucestershire County Council	Hampshire County Council	Hertfordshire County Council
Kent County Council	Lancashire County Council	Leicestershire County Council	Lincolnshire County Council
Norfolk County Council	Nottinghamshire County Council	Staffordshire County Council	Suffolk County Council
Surrey County Council	Warwickshire County Council	West Sussex County Council	Worcestershire County Council

Table 11: List of County Council's Reviewed

Bath & North Somerset Council	Bedford Borough Council	Buckinghamshire Council	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cumberland Council	Durham County Council	North Somerset Council	Northumberland County Council
Shropshire Council	Somerset Council	West Berkshire Council	Wiltshire Council

Table 12: List of Unitary Council's Reviewed

68. 85% of County Council's reviewed require a contribution to be paid before any travel arrangements are finalised, as part of the assessment and eligibility process. From the sample of Unitary Council's reviewed, only 58% of those Council's required a contribution payment to be made.

69. A summary from the Council's reviewed is listed in the table 13 below, detailing the number of Councils that charge a contribution, the lowest/highest contribution charges identified, and the average charge from review.

Type of Council	No. Council's Review	No. Council's Requesting Contribution Charge (SEND)	Lowest Contribution Charge	Highest Contribution Charge	Average Contribution Charge
County	20	17	£438 Per Annum	£1,632 Per Annum	£787.43 Per Annum
Unitary	12	7	£464 Per Annum	£1,300 Per Annum	£902.57 Per Annum
Total	32	24	£438 Per Annum	£1,632 Per Annum	£821.01 Per Annum

Table 13

70. Hertfordshire County Council had the highest single rate fare. Derbyshire County Council had the lowest single rate fare. Central Bedfordshire Council, the highest Unitary single rate fare, Bedford Borough Council the lowest Unitary single rate fare.

Contribution Rate Type – Single Rate vs Mileage Banding

71. 22 out of the 24 Council's reviewed who request a contribution payment use a single rate that applies to all young people applying for support. Irrespective of the distance travelled, the mode or transport or individual circumstances, everyone pays the same contribution. Hampshire County Council and Warwickshire County Council use a mileage rate to calculate the contribution rate based on the distance between home and their education setting.

Discounted Contributions – Low Income Threshold

72. From the 24 Councils who require a contribution payment to be made, 14 enable a discounted rate to be paid if specific criteria are met. In the case of these 14 Council's, the young person or family would need to evidence they meet the agreed low income threshold set by the Council.
73. Across the 14 Council who offer a reduction of contribution, the contribution reduced on average by 44%, if agreed criteria is met.
74. The remaining 10 Councils who request a contribution payment but do not offer a reduction in contribution, expect the full value of the contribution to be paid before eligibility is finalised and travel arrangements are put in place.

Officer Recommendations

75. Based on the consultation feedback, benchmarking analysis and the Council's desire to deliver effective and efficient services the following recommendations have been identified:
- (a) It is recommended that the Council adopts the updated policies for Home to School Travel & Transport 2025/26 onwards for Reception to

Year 11, and the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement Academic Year 2026/27. This is based on the review of the existing policies and the consultation feedback of the proposed policies (see appendix), which supports the aims to achieve the improved understanding of Home to School Transport Services, including updated clarity in relation to Direct Travel Payments and Alternative Education Provision travel.

- (b) It is recommended that the Council does not introduce contribution charges for young people in Post 16 education using travel provided by the Council. The introduction of a contribution charge should also continue to be reviewed for future consideration and possible implementation in reflection of any existing issues and/or circumstances changing in the future.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

- 76. The consultation of the refreshed Home to School Transport and Post 16 Travel policies and the review of the Council's discretionary provision enables the service to continue to support the Council's existing priorities.
- 77. Undertaking the proposed activity will enable the service to ensure both policies create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential by supporting travel and access in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations and discretionary powers.

Financial Implications

- 78. The proposals detailed within this paper maintain the existing financial pressure currently placed on the Home to School Transport budget, which is currently presenting a outturn for 2024/25 of £39.6m from a budget of £39.8m. The proposals do not create additional pressure based on current service demand, if demand is maintained. However, there is forecast demand growth based on increasing pupil numbers and therefore any existing pressure is expected to be maintained.
- 79. The original consultation proposal for the introduction of a contribution charge for Post 16 travel was forecast to create a reduction in budget pressure of £207k per annum.
- 80. Alternative improvements will need to be identified within the service to mitigate the impact of not realising the benefit of introducing contribution towards travel costs for Post 16 pupils.

Comments checked by: Emma Wren, Finance Business Partner – Education.
Date – 15/05/25

Legal Implications

81. The changes proposed during the Consultation and supported through the feedback have been adopted in the proposed policies recommended for adoption in this paper.
82. They continue to reflect the statutory obligations of the Council in relation to support provided for Home to School Travel and access to Post 16 travel. The improvements provided to the policies during this process provides greater clarity and understanding, whilst providing a robust framework for officers to work to when undertaking eligibility assessments and delivering the service.

Comments checked by: Leanne Schrouder, Locum SEN and Education Solicitor
Date – 15/05/25

Staff Implications

83. Based on the proposed recommendations, no staffing implications have been identified.

Comments checked by: Michelle Higgs, HRBP Schools and Education
Date – 14/5/25

Equality & Inclusion Implications

84. The changes being proposed continue to maintain access to education for children and young people in Oxfordshire. The Council's position of continuing to provide its statutory duties remain unaltered, this maintains the support available for protected groups within the framework of the Council's statutory duties, whilst the Council continues to maintain the power to exercise discretion and provide support where it deems necessary through the established application process. In addition to the statutory support available the proposals maintain the existing extended support for families living in designated 'split villages' and the additional support for children and young people not meeting the existing eligibility criteria with the continued option of purchasing of spare seats.
85. The proposals present a neutral impact, with adequate mitigations to continue to support those protected groups within the community to continue to access education within Oxfordshire.

Sustainability Implications

86. No sustainability implications have been identified relating to the proposed recommendations

Risk Management

87. Analysis of the consultation feedback have been considered in the recommendation outlined in this paper. It reflects the concerns raised by respondents that some proposals may impact access to education.
88. Recommendations also support the maintaining of existing support ensuring access to education continues to be supported through the Council's statutory obligations and discretionary powers. Therefore, no new risks have been identified.
89. The Council continues to maintain discretionary powers when deciding whether to provide support, this is managed through the established application and assessment process where families are able to request support even though they fail to meet the stated eligibility criteria, evidence of the family circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis based on the evidence provided.

Consultations

90. The consultation of proposals relating to Home to School Transport and Post 16 Travel was live between 23 January 2025 to 9 March 2025.
91. Direct communication was sent to 8000 existing users of the service to make them aware of the consultation, how to access details of the proposals, and how to provide feedback.
92. 4 engagement events were held during the consultation period, providing opportunity for the public to seek further information and clarity on the proposals before submitting their response. Sessions were held during the day and in the evening to accommodate pre-existing commitments and arrangements for those likely interested in the consultation.
93. Feedback in the form of submitted surveys were analysed and considered when finalising recommendations identified in this paper.

Lisa Lyons

Director of Children's Services

Annexes:

- Annex 1 Consultation Pack
- Annex 2 Consultation Survey
- Annex 3 Consultation Feedback Analysis
- Annex 4 Proposed Home to School Transport Policy
- Annex 5 Proposed Post 16 Transport Policy Statement

2026/27

Annex 6 Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers:

Nil

Other Documents:

[Existing Compulsory School Age Home to School Transport Policy 2024/25](#)

[Existing Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2024/25](#)

[Public Information relating to Split Villages \(inc. current list\)](#)

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June 2025