

Divisions Affected – All

CABINET 15 July 2025

Home to School Transport Policy Report of Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to —
 - a) Note the recommendations contained in the body of this report and to consider and determine its response to the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and
 - b) Agree that, once Cabinet has responded, relevant officers will continue to provide each meeting of the Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a brief written update on progress made against actions committed to in response to the recommendations for 12 months, or until they are completed (if earlier).

REQUIREMENT TO RESPOND

2. In accordance with section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, the Education and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee requires that, within two months of the consideration of this report, the Cabinet publish a response to this report and any recommendations.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

3. The Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the Home to School Transport & Post 16 Travel Policies 2025/26 at its meeting on 13 June 2025. The report set out proposals that Cabinet was recommended to approve at its meeting on 17 June 2025, following a public consultation during which the consultation documents were also put before the Committee.
4. The Committee would like to thank the Leader of the Council, Cllr Liz Leffman, the Director of Children's Services, Lisa Lyons, the Deputy Director of

Education and Inclusions, Kate Reynolds, and the Home to School Transport Manager, Stephen Good, for attending to present the report and to answer the Committee's questions.

5. The Committee submitted recommendations to Cabinet on 17 June 2025 with an oral introduction but, for consistency, clarity, and completion's sake, submits its written rationale here.

SUMMARY

6. In her opening remarks, the Leader of the Council highlighted that this was the first time the policy had been consulted on in ten years. Cllr Leffman reminded the Committee that, whilst the Council had consulted on a proposal to introduce a financial contribution from families for post-16 travel, it had been decided not to pursue this proposal.
7. The Committee established that the public consultation had sought to align the revised policy with the Department for Education's guidelines and to make it user-friendly for officers, parents, and schools. The policy refresh aimed to simply aspects without altering service eligibility of provision.
8. The Committee discussed the need for clarity of expectation and communication, flexibility, perceptions of unfairness, spare seats schemes and split villages, and the impact of the policy in rural areas. There was also a wider discussion about the costs of providing the service.
9. As Cabinet knows, the Committee moved two recommendations: the first calling for more flexibility going forward and the second being about ensuring regular review of the policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The Committee recognises that any policy necessarily has parameters and that 'grey areas' are unhelpful to those making decisions. However, there can be a danger that, in order to deliver objectivity and clarity, any sense of discretion or of flexibility can be eradicated. This can lead to outcomes which are, counter-intuitively, more expensive for the Council.
11. One example was given in Committee of two siblings who live at the same house and who attend the same school each day. The older sibling is a member of staff; the younger sibling is a pupil with an EHCP. Because of the current arrangements and requirements of the policy, they need to travel – from the same address to the same school but not for precisely the same timings – separately.
12. That inability to be flexible is a source of frustration both to officers and to those in receipt of transport. The Committee established that the Council was undertaking work around this and was considering how personal transport budgets might best and most smoothly be utilised.

13. Given the practical benefits to service users and their families and a potential commensurate financial benefit to the Council in reducing its costs, the Committee considers that the Council should commit to ensuring that this work is undertaken speedily so that results can be implemented as soon as is practicable.

Recommendation 1: That the Council should work at pace to organise personal transport budgets with appropriate flexibility to take account of individual circumstances.

14. The review of the Home to School Transport Policy is, as everyone concedes, well overdue. The existing policies were last consulted upon in 2014 for compulsory school age and in 2018 for post-16 transport. This pre-dates changes to the DfE Guidance which was updated in 2019 for post-16 travel and in 2023 and 2024 for compulsory school age travel.
15. The Committee recognises that there is a possibility of changes both to legislation and to guidance which could necessitate substantial revision of the current policies. However, ordinarily, the Committee considers that the policy should be reviewed each year. That would mean the Council could ensure that the policy continued to meet its needs and deliver the service it considers most appropriate.
16. The Committee was pleased to hear it confirmed that the intention was for the policy to be reviewed each year but considers it important for Cabinet to confirm this so that there is transparency and accountability about that.

Recommendation 2: That the Council should ensure regular review of the policy is to mean 'annual', subject to legislative changes.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION

17. The Committee does not currently anticipate considering Home to School Transport again during this municipal year.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

18. Under Part 6.2 (13) (a) of the Constitution Scrutiny has the following power: 'Once a Scrutiny Committee has completed its deliberations on any matter a formal report may be prepared on behalf of the Committee and when agreed by them the Proper Officer will normally refer it to the Cabinet for consideration.'
19. Under Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Procedure Rules, s 2 (3) iv) the Cabinet will consider any reports from Scrutiny Committees.

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Annex: Pro-forma Response Template

Background papers: None

Other Documents: None

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July 2025