

Democratic Services

Riverside, Temple Street, Keynsham, Bristol BS31 1LA

Telephone: (01225) 477000 *main switchboard*

Direct Lines - Tel: 01225 394458

Web-site - <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk>

Date: 12th October 2012

E-mail: Democratic_Services@bathnes.gov.uk

To: All Members of the Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

Councillors: Sally Davis, Ian Gilchrist, Liz Hardman, Mathew Blankley, David Veale and Loraine Morgan-Brinkhurst MBE

Co-opted Voting Members: David Williams, Mrs T Daly and Sanjeev Chaddha

Co-opted Non-Voting Members: Chris Batten, Peter Mountstephen and Andrea Arlidge

Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children & Youth: Councillor Dine Romero

Chief Executive and other appropriate officers
Press and Public

Dear Member

Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel: Monday, 22nd October, 2012

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel**, to be held on **Monday, 22nd October, 2012 at 4.30 pm** in the **Brunswick Room - Guildhall, Bath**.

The agenda is set out overleaf.

Yours sincerely



Mark Durnford
for Chief Executive

If you need to access this agenda or any of the supporting reports in an alternative accessible format please contact Democratic Services or the relevant report author whose details are listed at the end of each report.

This Agenda and all accompanying reports are printed on recycled paper

NOTES:

- 1. Inspection of Papers:** Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or a list of the background papers relating to any item on this Agenda should contact Mark Durnford who is available by telephoning Bath 01225 394458 or by calling at the Guildhall, Bath (during normal office hours).
- 2. Public Speaking at Meetings:** The Council has a scheme to encourage the public to make their views known at meetings. They may make a statement relevant to what the meeting has power to do. They may also present a petition or a deputation on behalf of a group. Advance notice is required not less than two full working days before the meeting (this means that for meetings held on Wednesdays notice must be received in Democratic Services by 4.30pm the previous Friday)

The public may also ask a question to which a written answer will be given. Questions must be submitted in writing to Democratic Services at least two full working days in advance of the meeting (this means that for meetings held on Wednesdays, notice must be received in Democratic Services by 4.30pm the previous Friday). If an answer cannot be prepared in time for the meeting it will be sent out within five days afterwards. Further details of the scheme can be obtained by contacting Mark Durnford as above.

- 3. Details of Decisions taken at this meeting** can be found in the minutes which will be published as soon as possible after the meeting, and also circulated with the agenda for the next meeting. In the meantime details can be obtained by contacting Mark Durnford as above.

Appendices to reports are available for inspection as follows:-

Public Access points - Riverside - Keynsham, Guildhall - Bath, Hollies - Midsomer Norton, and Bath Central, Keynsham and Midsomer Norton public libraries.

For Councillors and Officers papers may be inspected via Political Group Research Assistants and Group Rooms/Members' Rooms.

- 4. Attendance Register:** Members should sign the Register which will be circulated at the meeting.
- 5. THE APPENDED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS ARE IDENTIFIED BY AGENDA ITEM NUMBER.**
- 6. Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

When the continuous alarm sounds, you must evacuate the building by one of the designated exits and proceed to the named assembly point. The designated exits are sign-posted.

Arrangements are in place for the safe evacuation of disabled people.

**Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel - Monday, 22nd
October, 2012**

at 4.30 pm in the Brunswick Room - Guildhall, Bath

A G E N D A

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

2. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair will draw attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out under Note 6.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting declarations of interest are received from Members in any of the agenda items under consideration at the meeting. Members are asked to indicate:

(a) The agenda item number in which they have an interest to declare.

(b) The nature of their interest.

(c) Whether their interest is **a disclosable pecuniary interest** or **an other interest**,
(as defined in Part 2, A and B of the Code of Conduct and Rules for Registration of Interests)

Any Member who needs to clarify any matters relating to the declaration of interests is recommended to seek advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer before the meeting to expedite dealing with the item during the meeting.

5. TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

6. ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

At the time of publication no notifications had been received.

7. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT REVIEW: CONTRIBUTOR SESSION
BACKGROUND BRIEFING DOCUMENT (Pages 7 - 28)

In May 2012, the Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel agreed to undertake a review of Home to School Transport in Bath & North East Somerset. The review is currently in its evidence gathering phase and as part of the review process Members are holding a public meeting to receive contributors' views. The purpose of this is to elicit the views of key stakeholders.

The terms of reference agreed in May also stated that the steering group would gather examples of other local authorities' Home to School Transport policies for comparative analysis and highlight what research had already been conducted through previous scrutiny reviews. The briefing document attached as appendix 1 outlines these findings and will form part of the wider evidence gathering process for the review.

The Committee Administrator for this meeting is Mark Durnford who can be contacted on 01225 394458.

Bath & North East Somerset Council	
MEETING:	Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	22 nd October 2012
TITLE:	Home to School Transport Review: Contributor session background briefing document
WARD:	ALL
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
<p>List of attachments to this report:</p> <p>Appendix One: Background briefing document: Comparing other local authorities and past B&NES Scrutiny Reviews</p> <p>Appendix Two: Service Officer briefing on B&NES Home to School Transport Policies</p>	

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 In May 2012, the Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel agreed to undertake a review of Home to School Transport in Bath & North East Somerset.
- 1.2 The review is currently in its evidence gathering phase and as part of the review process Members are holding a public meeting to receive contributors' views. The purpose of this is to elicit the views of key stakeholders.
- 1.3 The terms of reference agreed in May also stated that the steering group would gather examples of other local authorities' Home to School Transport policies for comparative analysis and highlight what research has already been conducted through previous scrutiny reviews. The briefing document attached as appendix 1 outlines these findings and will form part of the wider evidence gathering process for the review.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Early Years Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel is asked to agree that:

- 2.1 Note the information presented in the background briefing document

- 2.2 Hear from members of the public who have registered to speak at the contributor session
- 2.3 Based on all the information received during this review, Members will be asked to meet again to discuss the Panel's findings and recommendations on the issues. There will be incorporated into the Panel's final report which will be presented to the Cabinet for their response.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The costs associated with this review will be met from within the annual budget available to the Panel.

4 THE REPORT

The background briefing report outlines that the purpose of the Home to School Transport (HTST) review is to maintain transport services for young people whilst ensuring the most efficient deployment of public funds and meeting the full range of statutory duties in this field. The document also highlights the scope and objectives of the review, as set out in the terms of reference.

- 4.1 The report goes on to highlight recent examples HTST reviews at other local authorities including Bath & North East Somerset Council's neighbouring local authorities.
- 4.2 The background briefing report highlights the findings of two previous Scrutiny reviews that considered elements of school transport. The Passenger Transport Review conducted in the 2005 and the Secondary School Transport Review in 2008.
- 4.3 Final the report outlines the next steps involved in the HTST Review.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 A risk assessment related to the review was undertaken when the terms of reference were presented. A further risk assessment will be undertaken as the Panel develop their final report and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6 EQUALITIES

An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been completed but the Council's Equalities Team were consulted prior to the Panel's questionnaire being published and the Panel will also consider all equalities issues when formulating their final recommendations.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 *Parish Council; Town Council; Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel; Staff; Service Users; Local Residents; Youth Council; Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies;*
- 7.2 A questionnaire has been produced to consult with key stakeholders. Letters/e-mails sent to all Head Teachers, School Governors, parents/carers who currently

receive home to school transport support, home to school transport providers and all public bus companies operating in Bath & North East Somerset and all Town/Parish Councillors to promote the questionnaire.

7.3 A press release and other promotional materials were issued to promote the questionnaire and the public contributor session

7.4 This public contributor session is being held to hear from members of the public with an interest in home to school transport

7.5 Focus groups may also be held following the initial analysis of the background evidence, questionnaire and public meeting.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 *Young People*

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

Contact person	<i>Lauren Rushen- Policy Development and Scrutiny Officer (01225) 396410.</i> <i>Kevin Amos- Children's Services (01225) 395202</i> <i>Councillor Sally Davis- Chair of the Early Years, Children and Youth Panel.</i>
Background papers	<i>Terms of reference (presented at the Panel meeting on the 21st May 2012)</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

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Bath and North East Somerset Home to School Transport 2012/13

*A Review Conducted by the Early Years, Children and Youth Policy
Development and Scrutiny Panel*

Background Briefing Document (Prepared October 2012)

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Introduction:

This background briefing paper has been prepared to highlight the background research undertaken by the Home to School Transport steering group in advance of their contributor session on the 22nd October 2012. The briefing paper outlines what work has previously been undertaken by Bath & North East Somerset Council, work by neighbouring local authorities and other local authorities who have completed recent Home to School Transport (HTST) reviews.

The reviews featured in this briefing document are a mixture of service led review and scrutiny investigations.

Two previous Scrutiny investigations at Bath & North East Somerset Council have looked at home to school transport provision; the Passenger Transport Review (2005) and the Transport to Secondary School Review (2008). The summaries included highlight what research has previously been undertaken and what work is still on-going within the Council and as such why these areas are outside the scope of this Scrutiny investigation.

On 21st May 2012, the Early Years, Children and Youth Panel agreed to appoint a steering group and agree the terms of reference for this review. The steering group for the review consists of Councillor Sally Davis (Chair), Councillor Ian Gilchrist, Councillor Liz Hardman, Councillor David Veale, Tess Daly (Co-opted Member representing the Roman Catholic Diocese) and Ian Gilchrist (Parent Governor at Fosseway School)¹. The terms of reference outlined the following:

Purpose:

- 1.1 The purpose of this review is to maintain transport services for young people whilst ensuring the most efficient deployment of public funds and meeting the full range of statutory duties in this field.

Scope:

To achieve its objectives, the Panel will:

- 2.1 Investigate past and current work in this area within the council (2007-to date)
- 2.2 Investigate what other Local Authorities are doing in order to undertake some comparative analysis against our own HTST policies (operations/ methodologies) and identify any best practice methods to inform future recommendations for the review
- 2.3 Undertake a number of different consultation activities with key stakeholders to identify the impact of HTST policies (sub sets) on parental choice and costs
- 2.4 Undertake financial/cost analysis of the possible options identified through the reviews findings, ensuring that all affordable solutions are identified and reviewed.

Out of Scope:

- 3.1 This review will only be looking at the Councils statutory responsibilities for providing HTST and will not be looking at other areas such as reducing bus fares.

¹ Draft terms of reference for the review can be found here:
<http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=461&MId=3538&Ver=4>

3.2 Transport to private schools will not be examined during this review

Objectives:

The objectives of this Policy Development & Scrutiny Review are to:

4.1 To consider the impact of current HTST policy and its various sub-sets in relation to parental choices and cost of delivery. Policy sub-sets are:

- HTST on grounds of distance (2 miles for children below the age of 8 and three miles for children over the age of 8)
- HTST on grounds of hazardous route
- HTST on grounds of denomination
- HTST on grounds of a child or young person being 'looked after'
- HTST on grounds of having a statement of SEN (Special Educational Needs)
- To consider the effectiveness and efficiency of current policies and their operation and undertake some comparative studies of the policies and cost of other Local Authority's.
- To consider the deployment of HTST funding within the overall context of Council spending on public transport services. Identifying the most affordable solution to maximise the use of existing resources.
- To make recommendations to the Cabinet, identifying the relevant Cabinet Member(s), with any changes to policies and operations in light of the findings of the Panel.

Other Local Authorities Reviews:

Below are examples of recent revisions to HTST reviews from around England, these were conducted via service led reviews/consultations rather than scrutiny investigations and show the main areas of modification other local authorities have made.

Gloucestershire County Council:

Gloucestershire undertook a service led review of their Home to School Transport Policies in 2010². As a result of this the policies for Home to School Transport were revised as follows:

Children aged 4-16 years – Policy from September 2011:

- Removal of transport for catholic children to a catholic primary school/academy
- Change from providing transport to any catchment secondary school/academy to nearest catchment secondary school/academy

Children aged 4-16 years – Policy from September 2012 onwards:

- Removal of transport for catholic children to a catholic primary school/academy

² Gloucestershire Home to School Transport Policy: <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/applyforabuspass>

- Change from providing transport to any catchment secondary school/academy to nearest catchment secondary school/academy
- Removal of transport for catholic children to a catholic secondary school/academy
- Removal of transport for children to a grammar school/academy

Children aged 4-16 years with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities – Policy from September 2011 onwards:

- Revision of wording explaining that transport will not be provided where a child does not attend the nearest appropriate school which could meet their needs due to parental preference

Cheshire West and Cheshire County Council:

After a service led review ³in 2011, Cheshire West and Cheshire County Council made the following changes to Home to School Transport:

- To withdraw subsidised denominational transport for pupils with effect from September 2012. However, transport provision to families on qualifying benefits will continue so long as the distance travelled is between two and 15 miles.
- A fund will be established to protect young people from families who do not meet the national needs for hardship support when the changes come into force over the next two years. The precise details of this will be developed as part of an engagement process.

Coventry City Council:

In 2010/11, Coventry City Council undertook a service led review of SEN transport⁴. The service had identified that historically, there had been a history of overspend in this area and the review sought to change the way the council and its partners engage with parents about transport and to introduce personal transport budgets; allowing parents greater flexibility to transport their children and help children to gain more independence. Coventry City Council introduced three forms⁵ of SEN travel assistance as a result of the review:

“Independent Travel Training (ITT): Available for secondary aged young people who have been assessed by the school and the SEN team as being ready and able to be learning to travel to and from school independently.

³ Cheshire West and Cheshire County Council Review: http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education_and_learning/school_and_college_transport/school_transport_review.aspx

⁴ Coventry City Council case study: <http://www.impower.co.uk/en/coventry-city-council-“-sen-transport-336.html>

⁵ Home to school travel assistance service leaflets: http://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/1547/booklets_on_travel_assistance_for_children_with_special_educational_needs

Personal Transport Budgets (PTB): This is a sum of money calculated for each family to cover the cost of travel to and from school. This budget can be spent in anyway your family sees fit to enable their child to get to school.

Standard council-provided transport: For families who do not qualify for ITT or PTB, standard council provision is still provided (although this option is not recommended unless absolutely necessary due to the long travel times and the lack of independence that this type of travel entails.)”

Neighbouring Local Authority’s Home to School Transport Policies:

Bristol City Council and Wiltshire Council modified their HTST transport policies this year, South Gloucestershire have announced that there will be changes to their HTST policies from September 2013.

All of them had originally proposed to remove all subsidies for denominational transport; however, Wiltshire’s Cabinet modified this proposal to provide a one year subsidy to pupils who would be entering Year 11 in September 2012.

North Somerset continues to provide subsidised denominational transport.

North Somerset Council (from September 2011):

In additional to the statutory requirements, North Somerset Council also provides the following home to school transport provisions⁶:

Special Educational Needs: According to North Somerset’s Home to School Transport Policy (September 2011) the local authority will provide free transport for pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs which specifically identifies that transport must be provided, having regard to their particular disabilities and normal statutory walking distances.

Denominational Transport: For pupils of secondary school age attending their nearest voluntary aided denominational school between 2-25 miles, the conditions for providing free school transport are that the parent/carer has clearly indicated that they are applying to the school on the basis of their faith and that the family is in receipt of free school meals or are in receipt of the highest level of Working Tax Credit. Transport for secondary school age pupils may also be provided to parents in receipt of free school meals/highest level of Working Tax Credits who, due to their philosophical beliefs, require a school with no religious affiliation and their nearest school would otherwise be a faith school. The potential for free school transport is only available to the nearest appropriate school and not to schools as a result of parental preference other than those outlined above.

Wiltshire Council (from September 2012):

Wiltshire Council made changes to their denominational transport provision from September 2012

⁶ North Somerset Council’s HTST Policy: <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Transport/Travel/Home+to+school+transport/>

Existing Applicants: Only pupils/students who received denominational transport assistance during the 2011/12 academic year will continue to do so from September 2012. No new requests for transport assistance will be considered by the council, other than for those in receipt of Free School Meals or maximum Working Tax Credit. To ensure continuing assistance is provided for existing pupils the council will transfer an agreed amount of funding to each denominational school. The school will be responsible for making transport arrangements and charging parents where this is considered appropriate.

New Applicants: Applications for transport based on grounds of religion or belief, received on grounds of low income, will continue to be considered by the council, as required by the 2006 Education and Inspections Act. In addition to the council's policy of offering assistance for students attending Roman Catholic or Church of England aided schools, the law requires councils to consider applications for transport to schools of all faiths, religions and non-religions" (Wiltshire Council Home to School Travel Support Policy: Education Transport, March 2012).

Wiltshire's Children's Services Select Committee (Scrutiny Panel) held a 'rapid scrutiny exercise' to hear from parents, teachers, service officers and other members of the public prior to the Cabinet decision in September 2011. The Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods and Planning presented both the Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committee with a three options for possible funding for non-denominational transport⁷:

1: Withdraw all discretionary denominational transport assistance with effect from September 2012. Council Officers would seek to support the schools to range their own transport, to try and ensure that, as far as possible, transport continues to be available but funded by the users or from other sources rather than the Council.

2: Withdraw discretionary denominational assistance with effect from September 2012, but with transitional provisions to assist pupils entering the final year of their GCSE course in 2012...the Council would provide a fixed amount of funding direct to the schools, to assist them with the cost of providing transport for pupils who are part-way through their exam course when the new policy takes effect. The payment would be for one year only, and would be based on the number of pupils at the school already receiving transport...it is suggested that this would be set at £409 per pupil, which is the equivalent to the average overall cost per head of providing the existing transport in 2011/12, less the 2011/12 parental contribution. Transport would have to be arranged by the schools affected.

3: Withdraw discretionary denominational assistance with effect from September 2012, but with transitional provisions to assist all pupils who are already receiving transport...the Council would provide a fixed amount of funding direct to the schools, to assist them with the costs of providing transport for all pupils who are already attending the school, each year until they leave. The payment would be made once each year and would be for a fixed amount per pupil, for each child still attending the school who was receiving transport in the 2011/12 academic year. The overall amount paid by the Council would therefore decrease each year as successive year groups leave the school...it is suggested that the amount paid per pupil would be set at £409 per pupil...transport would have to be arranged by the schools affected.

⁷ Papers from Wiltshire Council Cabinet meeting 13th September 2011. Agenda Item 6 'Denominational Home-to-school transport:
<http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s22172/Denominational%20Home%20to%20School%20Transport.pdf>

The Scrutiny Select Committee recommended that the Cabinet adopt option 2 which was agreed on the 13th September 2011.

Children with Special Educational Needs: For children aged between 5-16 students have the same entitlement to free transport under legislation or policies agreed by Wiltshire Council as any other Wiltshire pupil i.e. they meet the statutory walking distances previously outlined or if they live within 'statutory walking distance' but because of their SEN they could not be reasonably expected to walk to school. These will be considered on a case by case basis and factors such as receipt of Higher Level Disability Living Allowance (DLA) can be used to assess the level of need. When considering cases relevant professional evidence will be required.

If parents/carers choose to send their child to a school other than the nearest appropriate school (or maintain a school place after moving to a new home where there is a new nearest appropriate school), they must take full responsibility for their child's travel arrangements. (Paraphrased from *Wiltshire Council Home to School Travel Support Policy: Education Transport, March 2012*)

Bristol City Council (from September 2012):

Bristol City Council provides travel support (either by bus or rail pass, mileage reimbursement for parents/carers, cycling allowance, escorts for walking/public transport) for the following:

- Under 5's i.e. below statutory school age for full time pupils at the beginning and end of the school day.
- Pupils placed in temporary accommodation by Bristol City Council for a maximum of two terms
- Year 11 pupils who undergo an involuntary change of address who are undertaking recognised external examinations
- Support will be provided for children (pre 16) who live more than three miles away from their college and who are on a local authority funded college placement
- Other statutory requirements e.g. on the grounds of walking distances, hazardous routing, low income families,
- Home to school transport is also provided to pupils with a statement of SEN for Primary and Secondary age pupils.

Bristol City Council does not provide provision for the following:

Denominational Transport: In July 2011, the Cabinet removed the discretionary support for travel for all admissions to denominational schools with effect from September 2012. The decision did not affect the statutory entitlement of low income parents (those in receipt of Free School Meals or the highest level of Working Tax Credits) who expressed a preference based on religion or beliefs. The papers submitted to Cabinet before the decision⁸ outlined that the estimated cost of providing denominational transport in Bristol for 2010/11 was in excess for £440,000 and that numbers using the service had been fairly consistent over the past three years. Last year 477 pupils were entitled to denominational transport, of those 41 received Free School Meals so were entitled to statutory home to school transport provision, although it was also noted take up

⁸ 20th July 2011 Bristol City Council Cabinet 'Review of Denominational Transport Policy Arrangements in Bristol'
https://www.bristol.gov.uk/committee/2011/ua/ua000/0721_9.pdf

of Free School Meals was believed to be low and more should be done to encourage this entitlement.

In terms of financial savings, the average cost of providing denominational travel for the last three years for year 7 pupils has been approximately £56,000 per annum therefore the potential saving would be £56,000 less the cost of maintaining the minimum statutory entitlement. It was therefore estimated that with the phased withdrawal from September 2012, the first year saving would be £10,000 which would increase year on year.

South Gloucestershire Council (from September 2013):

Denominational Transport: South Gloucestershire Council's Children and Young People Committee agreed in June 2012⁹ to remove discretionary free transport to voluntary aided church schools with effect from September 2013 for children starting at primary school in Reception, entering Secondary School in Year 7 or entering Primary or Secondary school in a higher year group. The exception would be for low income families (defined on those qualifying for Free School Meals or being in receipt of the highest level of Working Tax Credits).

For those families currently receiving denominational transport, with effect from September 2013, there would be the introduction of a contributor charge of £120 per year (£360 per annum) for any continuing provision. The charge would be subject to annual review and remitted in the case of low income families.

Previous Research Undertaken by Bath & North East Somerset Council:

Two previous Scrutiny reviews have been undertaken which considered elements of Home to School Transport. The first was a joint review that looked at all forms of Council commissioned passenger transport in 2005/06. The second was a review that looked at transport to secondary school in 2008/09 by the Children and Young People Panel.

Passenger Transport Review (2005):¹⁰

This was a joint Scrutiny review undertaken between the Planning, Transport, Economy and Sustainability Panel, the Education, Youth, Leisure and Culture Panel and the Health and Social Services Panel.

The review looked at the way in which a range of passenger transport services options could have been prioritised and developed in the future including school transport, dial-a-ride, public bus transport, supported taxi services and, Council owned fleet of vehicles etc. The review undertook a range of communication and consultation options with the local community including:

- A seminar with invited local and national speakers

⁹ Minutes from June 2012 Children and Young People Committee:
<http://council.southglos.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=420&MId=6102&Ver=4>

¹⁰ Passenger Transport Review:
<http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=Passenger%20Transport%20Project%20%282004-2005%29&ID=437&RPID=5551908&sch=doc&cat=13202&path=13202>

- Market research study comprising of 300 on-street interviews with demographically selected interviewees
- Written submissions from members of the public
- Press releases
- Online feedback form
- Public contributor session

Although the review looked at a wide range of passenger transport options, the following points were highlighted about home to school transport:

The market research exercise found that bus usage was most prevalent in younger groups (under 25) and older groups (over 65). There was strong public support for the majority of home to school transport although there was also a lack of support for free transport for children who attend a denominational school outside their area. The public contributor session heard about the role that subsidised taxi services play in passenger transport in Bath which would include some home to school transport. The session also heard about issues with school bus services from representatives at Haysfield School and St Mark's School.

At the time of the review in 2005, school transport accounted for almost half of the Council's expenditure on all passenger transport services; annually £2.7m (out of £6.2m total), or which:

- £1.4m is spent on statutory school travel arrangements (as outlined at the start of this briefing document)
- £1.3m is incurred due to local discretionary policies set out by the Local Education Authority (LEA)

A crude analysis of the £1.4m spent on these services, supplied to 1192 pupils shows that the service at the time was costing:

- £1175 per pupil per year
- =£30 per pupil per week (assumes a 39 week school year)
- =£6 per pupil per day
- =£3 per journey

The Joint Panel also considered the cost of the Council's discretionary transport services which at the time were a £344k spend on denominational transport, £388k on providing transport to those affected by hazardous routings and £589k on transport for pupils with special educational needs. In the final report, the joint panel considered a range of options relating to home to school transport including whether discretionary services should be means tested; why some families receive free benefits based on their personal choice of a religious schools whilst others expressing their parental choice for a number of reasons e.g. single sex, mixed sex or simply exam results are not eligible; offering children living within the statutory walking distance space on spare capacity on existing school bus transport and whether this could produce a saving/reduce car usage; an evaluation of school bus contracts and consideration to extend the scheme to Post 16s living within the authority to travel to college. The Panel made four recommendations relating to home to school transport which were as follows:

“Recommendation 4.9.1 Remove or radically reform the current discretionary policy of free transport for pupils attending denominational schools.

In its place, we would like to see a school transport policy that provides free transport to those in most need (use means testing to assess eligibility) and introduces charging (using the new Charing Powers, on a cost recovery basis) for anybody else who wishes to use a bus to get to school.

The aim of a new policy should be to target current expenditure more equitably, taking account of all aspects of school choice and travel needs, to provide low cost transport to a much wider group of users than current policies allow. The overall objective should be to provide more bus services, increase ridership and reduce 'school run' congestion.

Recommendation 4.9.2 Set up a partnership between the Council, schools and bus operators for dialogue with a view to establishing more useful and cost effective bus routes to all schools (including independent) whose travel needs may not be currently met.

Recommendation 4.9.3 Use any financial savings created by adoption of other listed recommendations to invest in capital projects that will reduce the need for transport over designated hazardous routes, e.g. create safe routes to school, cycle routes, e.g. across Lansdown Road and also in rural areas where transport costs are high.

Recommendation 4.9.4 In reforming school bus services, take account of the great possibilities for tackling congestion:

- School transport must be provided so as not to force more cars on roads.
- Create more bus lanes to be used by greater number of vehicles, e.g. school buses, Social Services vehicles, community transport, etc.
- Implement staggered starting times for schools.
- The potential of travel plans to reduce unnecessary bus/care use and promote more safe cycling and walking routes.
- Investigate the principles that underpin the 'yellow bus concept' and look at how these have been developed by other Local Authorities." (Passenger Transport Services Final Report: 17, 2005)."

In July 2006, the final report based on the consultation undertaken by Children's Services on home to school transport was presented to the Cabinet for their final decision. The issue attracted a high level of public speakers and the Cabinet considered a range of possible charging options¹¹ and resolved to:

"(1) To note the valuable work of the Education, Youth, Culture & Leisure Overview & Scrutiny Panel (EYCL OSP);

(2) To note the work of the panel on additional routes but given the current overspend on Home to School Transport to decide that no further work to be undertaken at this time;

(3) To request that officers start to develop plans to establish a sustainable school transport strategy in response to the current "Education and Inspections Bill";

¹¹ Minutes from 12th July 2006 B&NES Cabinet Meeting:
<http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?MID=554&RD=Minutes&DF=12%2f07%2f2006&A=0&R=0>

(4) To confirm that charging should be introduced for denominational transport from September 2007, on the basis that the provision of transport to denominational schools is not considered necessary in terms of s.509(1) of the Education Act 1996;

(5) To set the level of charge on a six term year at £45 a term (approximately £1.50 a day). For families with more than one child the second and third child would pay 50% of the cost up to a maximum of 3 children. To be reviewed annually in line with other Local Authority charging policies; and

(6) To agree that the charges for denominational transport will not be applied retrospectively and that an exemption will be made for low income families in receipt of free school meals, income support or Working Tax Credit. Pupils who are in attendance at a denominational school and receive free transport before September 2007 will not be charged while they remain at that school.”

Transport to Secondary School Review (2008):¹²

This review set out to investigate what school transport is currently being provided by non-statutory providers within Bath and North East Somerset and determine whether the transport system currently provided is meeting the needs of young people travelling to secondary school without our area. This review did not include non-statutory services for children with Special Educational Needs or denominational transport.

Several consultation exercises were undertaken by the Panel including two questionnaires; one for parents/carers and the other for children and young people, a public ‘contributor session’, identification of best practice and received briefings from service officers and transport providers. The main findings from the review were:

- *Cost of transport:* Over half of the parents that responded to the questionnaire said they felt that the cost of their child’s transport to school was too high. Furthermore parents also raised their concern of the high cost of paying for transport when they have more than one child using public transport.
- *Distance and journey time:* The distance and journey considered to be acceptable for children to travel was evaluated and discussed by the steering group and it was agreed that 1.5 miles = 30 minutes, is a reasonable distance to walk to school. The survey results also reflected this agreement as the majority of children were found to live between 1-6 miles from their school, and on average most children take between 15-30 minutes to get to and from school
- *Reliability:* The Bath Home to School Transport Campaign group and our survey results raised concerns regarding the reliability of local buses to get young people to school on time and safely. Traffic congestion was considered to be a common cause of unreliability of local buses. Some parents also choose to drop their child at the bus stop to make sure that they do not miss it, thus adding to traffic congestion. The steering group felt that the issue of reliability was related to capacity. Further investigation revealed that reliability of bus services in B&NES was no different to any other local bus operator. However on-

¹² Transport to Secondary School Review:

<http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=Transport%20to%20Secondary%20School%20Review%20%282008-2009%29&ID=465&RPID=5551910&sch=doc&cat=13202&path=13202>

going issues were brought to the Council's attention, particularly students attending Ralph Allen School due to the withdrawal of a particular bus route (20A/C).

- **Safety:** there were a number of issues regarding the safety of children travelling to school, this included:
 - *Providing a seat and seat belt for every child.* The compulsory use of seatbelts on school buses was discussed by the steering group and it was agreed that the Council was unable to enforce the use of seatbelts on private bus companies
 - *The safety of children waiting for transport in the evenings after attending school clubs*
 - *The need of children to carry a bus card rather than change which makes them vulnerable to theft.*
- **The Environment:** The Bath Home to School Campaign group reported that *“without adequate and affordable public transport, many parents feel that it is safer, more reliable and cheaper to use their cars and end up unwillingly adding to the serious problems of congestion and pollution in this area and increasing the amount of carbon emissions.”* The review looked at, and supported, the work being undertaken by the Sustainable Modes of Transport team which encouraged the use of alternative means of travel such as cycling and walking. [NB: In September 2012, Cabinet approved the Local Sustainable Transport Fund West Bid scheme ¹³ which included provision to work with local secondary schools to promote cycling and other low carbon methods of getting from home to school].
- **Paulton:** The review raised specific issues with Secondary School transport for those young people living in Paulton. Transport to Somerdale School was highlighted as being costly and unreliable. During the course of the review, Somerbus agreed with Somerdale School to provide a school bus service from Easter 2008. A 'Privileged Fare Paying Passengers (PFP's)' scheme (when seats on buses can be purchased where there is excess capacity on transport and thus there is no additional cost to the Council) is also in existence for pupils travelling from Timsbury to either Norton Hill or Somerdale school.
- **Travel Plans:** It was felt that any school travel plans should be owned by the school and are reviewed on an annual basis, it was estimated that 80% of young people in B&NES are currently covered by a School Travel Plan.

When the Cabinet Member for Children's Services responded to the Panel's stated that as a result of the issues highlighted by the review a revised 20A/C bus route, with a new contractor, had been introduced which should improve transport links to Ralph Allen School. Further discussions were also due to take place between the Council and First Bus to investigate improving the 13C bus route which could take pupils from Bathampton and Batheaston to Ralph Allen School or investigate the potential to introduce a PFP scheme for this area to ease congestion problems on the 13C.

Conclusion:

This briefing report was designed explore examples of what other local authorities HTST transport policies are. The background report focused on local authorities that have undertaken recent reviews of their HTST policies to see what changes have been made nationally and at

¹³ Cabinet Meeting 12th September 2012:

<http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=122&MID=3250>

neighbouring local authorities so that the EYCY Panel can undertake a comparative analysis of our own HTST transport policies.

This background report has highlighted that nationally, Coventry City Council has introduced Independent Travel Training and Personalised Budgets for families with children with Special Education Needs and other local authorities have opted to modify their denominational transport policies.

The briefing report also outlines what work has previously been undertaken by Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels, focusing on the Passenger Transport Review (2005) which undertook a wider investigation of public transport in B&NES and the Transport to Secondary School Review (2008) which looked at non-Council transport to B&NES Secondary Schools.

Next Steps:

This background report will be presented at the Home to School Transport contributor session on the 22nd October. The steering group have also undertaken a questionnaire with service users, Governors, Head Teachers and Transport providers.

The steering group will now be taking time to analyse the evidence gathered so far and potentially use these findings to undertake focus groups in November.

The steering group's final report, with recommendations to the Council's Cabinet, will be published in January 2013. The Cabinet will then have six weeks to respond to the report's recommendations by accepting, rejecting or deferring the recommendations.

If any changes are to be made to Bath & North East Somerset Council's Home to School Transport policies, these would be announced in Summer 2013 and come into force from September 2014.

Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel Transport Contributor Session 22nd October 2012.

Home to School Transport

Current Policy

1. Statutory Distances

A Local Authority has a duty to provide transport if the statutory distance to the nearest appropriate school is exceeded. Statutory walking distance” is two miles for children aged under eight, and three miles for children aged eight and over. The measurement of the “statutory walking distance” is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. It is measured by the shortest route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety.

Under the current statutory distance policy of the council we currently transport 957 children at an annual cost of £850,000.

2. Hazardous Route

Where children live within “statutory walking distance” of their nearest appropriate school a local authority has to make travel arrangements where the nature of the route is such that a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk (accompanied as necessary) in reasonable safety.

In conducting the risk assessment, local authorities should take a range of factors into consideration, including:

- the age of the child;
- whether any potential risks might be mitigated if the child were accompanied by an adult.
- the width of any roads travelled along and the existence of pavements;
- the volume and speed of traffic travelling along any roads; the existence or otherwise of street lighting; and
- the condition of the route at different times of the year, at the times of day that a child would be expected to travel to and from school.

Under the current hazardous route policy of the Council we currently transport 833 children at an annual cost of £830,000.

3. Denominational

Local authorities, in fulfilling their duties in relation to travel, are required to have regard to the wish of a parent to have their child educated at a particular school on the grounds of the parents’ religion or belief.

Assistance with denominational transport is currently provided to the nearest appropriate school if the statutory distances are met and the child is baptised in the relevant faith.

In September 2007 the Council introduced a charging policy for children qualifying for denominational transport. The current charge is £300 per annum [£50 per term]. For the 2nd and 3rd child a reduction of 50% is given. No further charge is made for additional children if a family has more than 3 children travelling. If a family is in receipt of free school meals or maximum working tax credit they are exempt from the charge.

The Council currently spends £310,000 on transport to denominational schools. The total annual income collected from parents is £65,000. The annual net cost is therefore £245,000. A total of 189 children pay the full charge and 55 children pay the 50% reduction. A further 62 children travel but are exempt from the charge.

4. Special Educational Needs [age 0-16].

Transport assistance is given if the pupil is attending their nearest Special School and the statutory distances are met. When the distances are not met the following criteria are considered.

- The nature of the child's disability.
- Family circumstances
- The pupil's social skills.
- The nature of the journey.

We currently transport 271 pupils at an annual cost of £1.45m.

5. Children in Care

To enable continuity of education when a child is placed in care consideration is given to assisting with transport so a child can remain at their existing school. This is normally provided when a child first comes in to care, is in short term care, is in Key Stage 4 or at a time of transition in years 2-3 or 6 -7.

We currently provide transport for 25 pupils at an annual cost of £70,000. The majority of transport will require an individual taxi due to the length of the journey and the fact we have no existing transport we can use.

6. Medical

Local Authorities must make travel arrangements for children with a mobility or temporary medical problem which means they could not reasonably be expected to walk to school e.g. where the child has a broken leg.

We currently transport a small number of children under this policy for short periods of time at an annual cost of £15,000 per annum.

7. Post 16 SEN Transport

Travel arrangements for post 16 students will be considered are attending the nearest appropriate further education provision and:

- Have had a statement of Special Educational Needs, or medical or physical difficulties, which means they are unable to walk the distance of 3 miles (accompanied as necessary) and
- Are studying a full time course

We currently transport 31 pupils at an annual cost of £95,000. 14 of these students are in receipt of Disability Living allowance. If a pupil is in receipt of the Disability Living Allowance with the inclusion of the mobility allowance they are charged £50 per term in-line with the fare paying passenger scheme.

8. Extended rights to free travel for low income families

Children from low income groups are those who are entitled to free school meals, or those whose families are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

From September 2007, children aged eight, but under age 11 from low income families must have travel arrangements made where they live more than two miles from their nearest qualifying school.

From September 2008 children who are 11 or over from low income families must have travel arrangements made to one of their three nearest schools where they live more than two miles, but not more than six miles from that school.

Where a parent has expressed a preference for a school on the parent's religion or belief, then a child aged 11 to 16 must also have travel arrangements made for them to the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief, where they live more than two miles, but not more than 15 miles from that school.

We currently transport 150 pupils at an annual cost of £90,000 under this policy.

9. Fare Paying Scheme

Where we have spare seats on vehicles carrying entitled passengers we can offer these seats to non-entitled children. The current charge is £300 per annum [£50 per term]. For the 2nd and 3rd child a reduction of 50% is given. No further charge is made for additional children if a family has more than 3 children travelling. If a family is in receipt of free school meals or maximum working tax credit they are exempt from the charge.

We currently transport 120 children collecting annual income of £30,000.

How are children transported?

The Council's Transport Services Team is responsible for contracted out Home to School Transport – This utilises 50 or so contractors and daily there are 221 school routes to 68 locations carrying over 2000 students. A lot of the work is orientated to purchasing at lowest cost and route planning as efficiently as possible. Where appropriate children can be given a public bus pass. Contracted transport involves coach, minibus and some taxi transport.

Transport Services also covers safeguarding, contractor reliability etc. There are 52 Guide Escorts who go on routes where the children have special educational needs.

Home to School transport needs are also partially met by the In House Passenger Fleet – this covers 30 vehicles and 26 Drivers. Most of the vehicles are specialist for wheel chairs and the like and most of the work done is for Special Educational Needs provision. To optimise efficiency best use is made out of any spare capacity – for this reason the drivers also cover Dial a Rides, Treatment Centres, School Meal deliveries etc. This fills in the time between the morning and afternoon runs. The drivers in this type of work need to be of high quality. In house passenger management also has a role looking after CRB's, contractor quality assurance and dealing with 'safe pick up' disputes.