

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Review Title: Bath & North East Somerset Council Home to School Transport 2012/13 Review

A Review by the Early Years, Children and Youth (EYCY) Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel

1. Background

The basis of this review has developed from a letter which was received at the EYCY Panel meeting on the (23rd Jan 2012). This was sent from Councillor Nathan Hartley, Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Youth in which he asked the Panel to consider undertaking a review of Home to School Transport in order to attempt to make some financial reductions as part of the 2013/14 budget setting process. It was agreed at this meeting that further analysis of past decisions were initially required before a decision could be made on what needed to be reviewed.

After reviewing previous research and having informal discussions with the Chair of the Panel, Cabinet member and the Strategic Director it was agreed that there were many wider issues that now needed to be reviewed compared to the past reviews carried out on home to school transport, which included; *The Passenger Transport Review (March 2005)* & *The Transport to Secondary School Review (2008)* and that it is now more important than ever, particularly in today's economic climate to understand the Council's commitment to maintain transport services for young people whilst ensuring the most efficient deployment of public funds and the full range of statutory Home to School Transport (HTST) policy duties in this field are being met.

"The Government wants local authorities to share best practice and ensure they have processes and systems in place that provide value for money and contribute to the reduction of bureaucracy (Department for Education, September 2011)"¹

2. Purpose

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

3. Objectives of PDS Review

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

3.1 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
- 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

¹ Department for Education, Efficiency and Practice: Home to School Transport Review-2011

- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.

4. Scope of Policy Development and Scrutiny (PDS) Review

To achieve its objectives, the Panel will:

- 4.1 Investigate past and current work in this area within the council (2007-to date)
- 4.2 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
- 4.3 Undertake a number of different consultation activities with key stakeholders to identify the impact of HTST policies (sub sets) on parental choice and cost
- 4.4 Undertake financial/cost analysis of the possible options identified through the reviews findings, ensuring that all affordable solutions are identified and reviewed.

5. Out of Scope:

- This review will only be looking at the Councils statutory responsibilities for providing Home to School Transport and will not be looking at other areas such as reducing bus fares.
- Transport to private schools will not be examined during this review

6. Approach

The Panel will undertake the following activities to gather information:

6.1 Research

The steering group will need to consider what work we are currently doing in this area or already planning to do. This would then avoid any duplication of effort and sharing of information and findings, it will also set the scene for what further investigation needs to be undertaken.

Specifically:

- Brief on what statutory HTST policies & sub sets (as above) that the Council currently provides and why. (Identifying the minimum requirements and what we have modified to achieve this.)

- What work has been undertaken on this since 2007 to date and what can it already tell us.
- Data on the numbers of young people in Bath & North East Somerset that are currently provided with statutory school transport and the cost of this travel (to also include Academies and Special Schools).

6.2 Undertake some comparative analysis of other Local Authorities reviews into Home to School Transport, particularly examining our benchmarking and neighbouring Local Authorities. A findings brief on the outcomes of any work could then provide the steering group with some Best Practice examples for consideration during this review.

Recent Publications of HTST reviews include:

- Cheshire West and Chester Home to School Transport Review and post 16
- Southampton Home to School and post 16 transport Policy Review (2011/12)
- Gloucestershire Home to School Transport Review (2011)
- Department for Education (Efficiency and Practice – home to School Transport review) (September 2011)

6.3 Consultation:

The initial research findings (6. Approach) will help to determine what further consultation needs to be undertaken and why. There is a range of consultation methods that other Local Authorities have used to examine HTST, some of these are also possible options that the steering group may wish to consider when measuring the effectiveness of our current HTST policies and examining the value for money of our current services.

The possible methods include:

- Contributor session to establish the views of key stakeholders.
- All Schools would be contacted directly to inform them about the review
- Seeking the views of parents/carers, children and young people, schools, companies through an online e- consultation survey advertised out to all School Councils. Or a commissioned questionnaire/research.
- Focus groups/seminars
- Media releases launching the consultation
- A consultation document with key information and a Freepost return form, available in all schools and libraries
- An online equivalent for easy completion at home
- An online resource area with Frequently Asked Questions and links to existing policies
- Letters to parents most directly affected and messages to all other parents via schools
- Meetings with representative bodies (diocesan authorities, head teachers and governors of faith/selective schools)
- Open meetings for parents/carers, children and young people and communities, based in either schools most affected or in convenient school locations to ensure full coverage of the county
- Engagement with young people (including use of social networking sites).

- School visits by steering group member's during school travel time

7. Formulation of recommendations

- Financial options are analysed and examined in relation to overall Council spend on public transport services. This would focus on the examination of our current spend compared to what we feel that we actually need to spend
- All information gathered will be considered by the EYCY Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel, at an informal session, and conclusions and recommendations drawn up.

8. Outputs of this Review

- Notes and papers from public Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel meetings
- Notes and papers from any consultation findings/ results
- Report incorporating key findings, conclusions and recommendations
- Recommendations to be presented to the Cabinet (lead Cabinet Members are likely to be the Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Youth and the Cabinet Member for Transport).

9. Constraints

- The review must be managed within the budget and resources available to the Panel.
- As this review impacts on all schools, all public meetings will need to be held during term times.
- The review research and findings will need to have consideration to the requirements of the Equalities Act.
- The consultation will need to be timely, allowing enough time to make a decision before the end of the next financial year (2013-14 budget) and ready for publication in the (2013-14) school admission booklets published each August.
- The Steering Group will report back on the findings from this review to the Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel at the May 2013 meeting.

10. Relevant Stakeholders for the Review include:

- Parents/Carers/ Guardian
- Children and young people
- Diocese
- All schools
- School Governors

Draft Outline Project Plan

Date	Stage / Activity	Meeting Type
Terms of reference		
May 2012	PDS Private briefing to discuss Terms of reference	Private
May 2012	Public agreement of TOR at EYCY PDS	Public
July 2012	Research and briefing reports	Private
Consultation		

July 2012	Steering group meeting	Private
Oct 2012	Public Meeting/ Contributor Session	Public
Report Writing		
Feb 2013	Steering group meeting to discuss Recommendations	Private
March 2013	Panel Meeting	Public
May 2013	Final report and recommendations to Cabinet	Public
July 2013	Cabinet Response	Public

Project Team

Early Years, Children and Youth Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	(Chair) Cllr Sally Davis (Vice Chair) Cllr Dine Romero Cllr Ian Gilchrist Cllr Liz Hardman Cllr David Veale Representative Governor (Fosseway School) Ian Harvey Panel's Roman Catholic Diocese Co-opted Member, Mrs Tess Daly
Cabinet Members	Nathan Hartley (Early Years, Children and Youth)
Directors:	Ashley Ayre (Children Services)
Service Officers:	Kevin Amos
Policy Development & Scrutiny Officer:	Lauren Rushen
Panel Administrator, Democratic Services	Mark Durnford