

Review Title: Transport to Secondary School Review
Overview & Scrutiny Panel: Children and Young People Panel
Panel Chairman: Sally Davis
Overview & Scrutiny Project Officer: Donna Vercoe
Supporting Service Officer: Mark Durnford

Process for Tracking O&S Recommendations - Guidance note for Cabinet Members

The enclosed table lists all the recommendations arising from the above Overview & Scrutiny Review. Individual recommendations are referred to the relevant named Cabinet Members (or whole Cabinet in the case of a whole Cabinet referral) as listed in the '**Cabinet Member**' column of the table. In order to provide the O&S Panel with an Cabinet response on each recommendation, the named Cabinet member (or whole Cabinet) is asked to complete the last 3 columns of the table as follows:

Decision Response

The Cabinet has the following options:

- **Accept** the Panel's recommendation
- **Reject** the Panel's recommendation
- **Defer** a decision on the recommendation because a response cannot be given at this time. This could be because the recommendation needs to be considered in light of a future Cabinet decision, imminent legislation, relevant strategy development or budget considerations, etc.

Implementation Date

- For 'Accept' decision responses, give the date that the recommendation will be implemented.
- For 'Defer' decision responses, give the date that the recommendation will be reconsidered.
- For 'Reject' decisions this is not applicable so write n/a

Rationale

Use this space to explain the rationale for your decision response and implementation date. For accepted recommendations, please give details of how they will be implemented.

Review of Transport to Secondary School: Recommendations

Recommendation	Cabinet Member	Decision Response	Implementation Date	Rationale
<p>1</p> <p>Based on the evidence gathered for this review the Panel believe that the current organisational structure for dealing with school transport issues in B&NES, whereby transportation policy is in a separate department to the procurement of statutory school transport, impedes the achievement of efficient and optimised school transport. The best practice evidence we have heard is that socially necessary transport and educational services should be managed together in the same department, and we believe this approach should be adopted by B&NES.</p> <p>1.1 The Panel recommend an Integrated Transport Unit should be formed from elements of Children's Services and Transportation Planning with responsibility for overseeing the provision of safe and reliable school transport for all pupils in the Authority. Estimated Timescale (3 months).</p> <p><i>(No cost implications as we already have staff in two areas but need</i></p>	<p>Cllr Chris Watt & Cllr Charles Gerrish</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>An integrated transport group already exists and meets regularly.</p>	<p>1.1 The Council has a Corporate Transport Services Group (CTSG).</p> <p>Aim of the group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure the transport needs of the Council and its partners are met through the efficient use of available resources. <p>Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AD Environmental services (Chair) • AD Planning & Transport Development • Transportation Policy Manager (T&H) • Transport manager (ES) • Education Officer Transport (Children Services) • Transport rep (Adult services) <p>It is considered that automatic transport of all school pupils isn't appropriate as the Council also has an agenda to promote walking and cycling for exercise. This is embodied in school travel plans and the emerging Sustainable Modes of Transport to Schools (SMOTS) strategy.</p> <p>There are clear cost implications for implementation of transport for all pupils – the Council has not identified budget for this. (See section 5.1)</p> <p>The Council will always endeavour to work with parents, schools and communities to improve provision but this must be at no</p>

<p>joined up thinking and working arrangements)</p>				<p>additional cost to the Council.</p> <p>The Council has an annual Home to School Transport Budget of £3.8 million. This is used to transport 2800 pupils, who qualify for transport under the Council’s policy, to school on a daily basis. Assistance is mainly given for pupils who qualify on Statutory distance, hazardous route, and Special educational needs grounds.</p> <p>All contracted transport provided is safe and reliable with all pupils having a seatbelt and all drivers the subject of a CRB check.</p>
<p>2.</p> <p>Based on the evidence gathered for this review the Panel believe that the Council should be aspiring to a standard school transport service which would prevent inconsistencies and benefit all children. The Council needs to think creatively to try to seek out possible funding opportunities in order to solve the current funding gap.</p> <p>The Panel recommend the follow actions are undertaken:-</p> <p>2.1 Use the key issues raised within this review to lobby the Government for general transport funding. (Cost of a letter)</p> <p>2.2 Examine the use of Kick start Funding. (Application deadline <u>July 2009</u>) kickstart@dft.gsi.gov.uk. (Customer Service Officers already</p>	<p>Cllr Charles Gerrish</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Accept</p>	<p>July 2009</p> <p>By July 2009</p>	<p>2.1 Statutory distances for free transport to school were introduced in 1944. At present, the distances are national limits below which the Council is not required to provide free transport for children who live less than 3 miles from their nearest school (see section 10.1). The Council has written to the Government asking them to review the distances that children are expected to walk or pay for their own transport—often referred to as ‘statutory walking distances’.</p> <p>2.2 Use of Kickstart funding has been investigated. Bids must be for services that will be financially sustainable beyond the 3-year funding period. It is not available for subsidising home-to-school transport.</p> <p>Only one expression of interest was received from operators for the latest round and that was from First, who proposed an enhancement to their Bath – Wells local bus service. However, after detailed analysis, they concluded it would not be sustainable after three years, so no bid was submitted.</p> <p>2.3 West of England Partnership is currently studying the possibility of submitting a bid for TIF monies, and funding for home to school transport is one of the complementary measures being investigated. Bath and NE Somerset will continue to be involved in this sub-regional activity but funding will not be available for several</p>

<p><i>aware of funding scheme)</i></p> <p>2.3 Investigate the possibility of the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) monies to provide a revenue stream for improving Secondary School transport. (Service officers to be asked the questions)</p> <p>2.4 A strategy currently used by other Local authorities to bridge the funding gap is by maximising the off-peak use of school buses for other educational purposes e.g. swimming and other school trips in order to make buses as cost-effective as possible. (There is no cost implication but is a suggestion of how operators can raise more money to keep dedicated school bus costs down)</p> <p>2.5 Integrated Commissioning of statutory and non statutory transport. (Cost: within Budget or by taking from fares we charge pupils)</p>		Accept	Ongoing	years.
		Accept	July 2009	<p>2.4 In house transport services utilise vehicles off peak for community transport and other activities.</p> <p>There are currently 216 Home to School transport routes. Of these 207 are operated by contractors providing a variety of types of service. A further 9 are run by the 'in house service'. Private contractors are already commonly engaged directly by the schools or via a service provided by the Passenger Transport section to fulfil needs for school trips and activities such as swimming. Contractors are also used to fulfil Adult Services transport needs which are usually in different parts of the day to HTST. This helps them to increase utilisation. These methods of operation facilitates contractors being cost effective in their provision to the Council. Utilisation of vehicles and drivers provided from within the Council is very high with a variety of additional services provided. These include school meals deliveries, community meals deliveries, community transport and supported public bus routes</p> <p>2.5 The Passenger Transport section arranges the transport of 2800 pupils daily. Current practice is to ensure routes are optimised for efficiency. This is vital to ensure expenditure is controlled. Following the revision of Transport each summer to meet the needs of the new academic year there is a review every autumn. Effective provision means utilising transport which is as cost efficient as possible (usually bigger is better) with as many seats as possible filled. Public transport is generally preferred. Currently 247 children are routed on public service buses, the rest on contracted transport. Most spaces are filled via the offer of spare seats to Privileged Fare Paying Passengers (PFP's) of which there are 223.</p> <p>Establishment of Transport rates is done via a tender process completed every five years (next due 2010). To maintain volume</p>
		Accept	Ongoing	

			<p>and thus value for money this is a joint process which leads to commissioning of both Children's and Adult Services Transport. The CTSG is looking at opportunities to bring this together with the commissioning of supported public service routes but it needs to be understood the nature of the tenders for these is quite different. The CTSG is also looking to best practice in other councils.</p> <p>The combination of the method of commissioning and the route allocation and review process ensures value for money is achieved. Extending contracted routes and providing larger vehicles to pick up fare paying passengers will have financial consequences. These vary according to need. Passenger Transport can attempt to combine fare paying and non fare paying pupils without additional costs as with the route C341B (Timsbury to Norton Hill / Somervale 15 seater converted to 20 seater). There are some circumstances where if demand is sufficient (e.g. to move for a mini bus to a coach) this would work and will be considered.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>The Panel recognise that the current transport system is not affordable for the majority of parents living within B&NES and particularly for those parents with more than one child at secondary school.</p> <p>3.1 The Panel recommend that a £10.00 per week fare (Monday - Friday, term time only), fare to be paid up front and administered by the school. This would reduce the current price set by First Bus at A £13.20p. Timescale for action (3 months) to agree a term paid ticket. (Cost: This is part of the operators</p>	<p>Cllr Charles Gerrish</p>	<p>Reject</p>	<p>3.1 The cost of providing subsidised passes for pupils is estimated to be an extra £750, 000 per annum.</p> <p>We currently have 8000 Bath and North East Somerset pupils in Secondary Schools who do not receive assistance with transport. Approximately 50% of these live less than 1.5 miles from school and it would be assumed that the majority of these children would not require a subsidised pass. The £10 ticket could therefore be taken up by 4000 pupils.</p> <p>The cost would be 4000 pupils x £3.20 x 39 weeks = £499,200. If in the future bus operators increase costs but the £10 ticket subsidy remains for every £1 increase on a weekly ticket the subsidy would increase by £150,000.</p> <p>3.2 Bath and North East Somerset currently have 1930 families with 2 children, 154 families with 3 children, 6 families with 4 and 2 with 5 attending secondary school. This gives a total of 2254 that</p>

<p>cost and a figure suggested to us by Green Bus that they would plan to use)</p> <p>3.2 The Panel recommend a subsidy for parents with 2 or 3 or more children aged between 11-16 yrs with half price weekly tickets for the second and third child. (Cost: this is offered by the Operators, (Green Bus) Not subsidized by the Council)</p>		Reject		<p>could possibly be subsidised. However you could deduct approx 50% who live less than 1.5 miles from school as they may not require a subsidised pass. There are also some pupils who live over 3 miles and receive free transport. This is a fairly crude calculation but in total we could anticipate this would require subsidy for approximately 1000 pupils.</p> <p>1000 x £6.60 x 39 weeks = £257,400</p> <p>Total cost of 3.1 and 3.2 is therefore approx £750,000</p>
<p>4.</p> <p>This review has raised the concern that not all parents on low income and living less than 3 miles but more than 2 miles are taking advantage of the new legislation to gain discounted travel which is currently being funded by Central Government.</p> <p>4.1 The entitlement needs to be re-publicised to all parents living within B&NES. This could start with a publication in the next Issue of Council News. (No cost implications)</p>	Cllr Chris Watt	Accept	July 09	<p>4.1The entitlement is included in the admissions booklet for parents, the school Transport Page of the Council website and will be re-publicised in Council Connect. In addition we will identify pupils from the ONE database who are not receiving transport but would qualify under this entitlement. If any are identified we will make direct contact with the parents to inform them of this entitlement.</p>
<p>5.</p> <p>The key issues surrounding improved Secondary School Transport within B&NES have been raised and discussed within previous reviews; (2005 Secondary Education Provision</p>	Cllr Chris Watt & Cllr Charles Gerrish			<p>5.1 The Council's funding priorities are considered as part of the Budget setting process each year.</p> <p>Given the context for the public finances going forward, and the additional pressures that the council faces, the task of driving efficiencies and prioritisation is already very challenging. Any new service developments will therefore need a very clear business</p>

<p>in B&NES review and the Joint O&S Panel, Passenger Transport Service Review 2007.) This review has returned to many of the same issues which were not resolved in previous reviews and raises the concern that the issue of improved secondary school transport is not considered as a priority within the Council.</p> <p>5.1. The Panel recommend that the current and ongoing issues of secondary school transport needs to be raised in the Councils priority of funding. (No cost implications)</p>		Reject		<p>case which sets out costs, benefits and potential sources of funding. As an integral part of the Medium Term Service Planning process, O & S panels are asked to make proposals, within the resources available. These proposals have clear cost implications and therefore cannot be brought forward without identifying where funds will be provided from.</p> <p>Spending priorities on supported bus services are considered against a range of factors including access to employment, health and education facilities. Supported bus services have a projected cost of £976,694 per annum targeted at meeting the Council priorities of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving transport and the public realm • Promoting the independence of older people • Addressing the causes and effects of Climate Change <p>The Council procured an increase in vehicle capacity on Service 20A/C which links Weston with Ralph Allen School from May 2009, through a competitive tender.</p> <p>Commercial operators also have an important role to play in providing transport to schools. Approximately 1200 children a day use commercial bus services to travel to and from school. For example First introduced an additional bus on Service 13 from November 2007, when overcrowding problems involving school children travelling to Ralph Allen School where first reported, on a commercial basis. First have reported no ongoing safety or overcrowding issues.</p>
<p>6.</p> <p>The Panel recognise that the recent 'Somerbus' Service will only partially address the problem of transport for pupils living in and around Paulton as it</p>	<p>Cllr Charles Gerrish</p>			<p>6.1 In setting the 2009/10 Budget the Council resolved (Resolution 2.17) to explore a self-funding scheme for additional transport from Paulton to Somervale School. A number of changes to transport from Paulton to Somervale School have been made since that decision:- April 2009 Somerbus service 782 added on a commercial basis at £1 a journey. The bus operator reports that there has been</p>

<p>will not serve the whole community.</p> <p>The Panel recommend the follow actions are undertaken to improve the current transport system for pupils living in Paulton:-</p> <p>6.1 Investigate the feasibility of low income entitlement families being used to subsidise the cost of running a local bus for the whole of the Paulton community. (Cost: within budget)</p> <p>6.2 Investigate the possibility of re-routing statutory transport to pick up paying pupils.</p> <p>e.g. Farmborough via Ham Lane, and High Littleton via Downsway. (Cost: Tony Parker is already planning to ask Green bus to undertake some consultancy work and we anticipate that this can be included from within the budget he has available for this)</p>		<p>Accept</p> <p>Accept</p>	<p>July 09</p> <p>July 09</p>	<p>a lower than expected take up in the service.</p> <p>May 2009 C341B home to school transport route Timsbury to Norton Hill / Somervale changed from 15 to 20 seater bus to pick up additional fare paying demand.</p> <p>The Council has 51 pupils from low income families who qualify for Home to School Transport (50 in secondary schools 1 in primary schools). The needs of 41 of these are catered for by purchasing bus passes on existing public service routes. The remainder are transported by existing contracted transport at no additional cost to the Council. There are 7 pupils qualifying in the Paulton area. 3 of these are provided for with bus passes, 4 are on existing transport at no additional cost to the Council. Given these figures it is unlikely that they would be of the order necessary to subsidise a local bus service either in Paulton or other areas.</p> <p>Paying pupils already have the opportunity to hold places on Home to School Transport. Privileged Fare Paying Passengers (PFP's) make application every year and this is considered as part of the cycle of annual route preparations for the new school year. There are currently 223 PFP's travelling on a variety of routes. The principle behind this are is that spaces can be purchased where there is excess capacity on transport and thus there is no additional cost to the Council. Normally routes are not diverted or vehicle sizes extended as this is often costly. However in some cases with certain types of transport it is possible to consider this to avoid turning down PFP applications. This has recently been done with the route C341B (Timsbury to Norton Hill / Somervale 15 seater converted to 20 seater bus). PFP applications will again be scrutinised this year to establish opportunities.</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1 Any future transport plans should take into account the school</p>	<p>Cllr Charles Gerrish</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>7.1 Future Transport plans will take into account any school reviews affecting the number and location of school places. For example</p>

<p>issues raised within this review and consider the current restructuring of schools in Bath, which could have an effect on the transport movements from the North to the South of the river. (No cost implications)</p>				<p>the secondary school place review 'Investing in our Future'. One core principle of school place planning is to 'make the local school the natural and easy choice for parents' thus reducing travel to school.'</p>
<p>8.</p> <p>8.1 The Panel recommend that a pilot scheme is undertaken at Ralph Allen School based on the high response to our online survey and the current transport difficulties that they are facing. We recommend that 'The Green Bus' are approached to provide the Council with a feasibility study on Ralph Allen School to determine the needs and requirements of the school pupils and parents.</p> <p>8.2 The Panel also recommend that a pilot scheme (as above) is undertaken at Somervale School as this is the school that most pupils from the Paulton children travel to.</p> <p>Estimated timescale for pilot schemes: September 2009, at the start of the next academic year. For a whole year and then reviewed.</p> <p>The outcome of these pilot schemes could then be evaluated to determine</p>	<p>Cllr Chris Watt & Cllr Charles Gerrish</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Accept</p>	<p>September 09</p> <p>September 2009</p>	<p>8.1 A new contract for local bus service 20A/C in Bath started in May 2009, following withdrawal of the previous operation by First. An increase in capacity on the school time buses that run between Weston and Ralph Allen School was provided. Also, weekly and monthly child tickets are available at £10 and £35 respectively. The contract will be kept under review by the Public Transport Team during the early part of Term 1.</p> <p>By the start of Term 1, the Public Transport Team will initiate discussions with First and Ralph Allen School over provision of a higher quality specification for First's commercial bus service 13C, which runs on school days between Bathford, Batheaston and Ralph Allen School. At present, this runs as a conventional bus service with no additional features for pupils.</p> <p>If successful, discussions will be held with other bus operators and schools about services elsewhere in the district.</p> <p>Environmental Services will look at the current home-to-school transport service that takes entitled pupils from Batheaston to Ralph Allen School, with a view to accommodating privileged fare payers from the area away from the catchment area of First's 13C bus service, using data provided by the School. A larger vehicle could be procured if the higher costs can be offset by additional income from extra privileged fare payers. This may also ease the capacity problem on First's 13C.</p>

<p>its feasibility and benefits for the rest of B&NES Secondary schools.</p>				<p>This work will take place within existing budgets.</p> <p>8.2 As indicated in the Rationale for 6.1, additional transport for travel between Paulton and Somervale School has been provided by Somerbus since April 2009. This will be reviewed with the operator during Term 1.</p>
<p>9.</p> <p>The Panel recognise that safety is important to local children and parents and that further research should be undertaken into which local providers can provide a safe and reliable transport service for pupils travelling to secondary school within B&NES.</p> <p>9. 1 The Panel recommend that the Executive Member examines the advantages of using a bus service with seat belts and a seat for every child. (No cost implications)</p>	<p>Cllr Charles Gerrish</p>	<p>Reject</p>		<p>9.1 All HTST contracted vehicles have seat belts.</p> <p>The law does not require public service buses, where standing is permitted, to have seat belts. The DfT consider it would be confusing to provide seat belts where there is no requirement to use them and compliance difficult to enforce when passengers are frequently getting on and off the bus.</p>
<p>10.</p> <p>The review has highlighted that it is not feasible or safe for large numbers of young people in this area to walk or cycle 3 miles to school. The Panel agrees that 1.5 miles is the most that a young person should be required to walk.</p> <p>10. 1. The Panel recommends that</p>	<p>Cllr Chris Watt & Cllr Charles Gerrish</p>	<p>Reject</p>		<p>10.1 The distance a child may be expected to walk or cycle to school is a family choice and depends on many factors including age, route, topography, accompanying adult or walking bus etc. Safeguards are in place for children to have free transport on hazardous routes and Special Needs grounds. Legislation requires all Local Authorities to provide free transport for children aged 5 to 7 to their nearest school if the journey is more than 2 miles and for children aged 8 and over if their journey is more than 3 miles.</p> <p>There are significant cost implications of reducing the statutory distance over which children are entitled to free transport.</p>

any provision for school travel should consider the topography of B&NES before making any new proposals. <i>(No cost implications)</i>				
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