

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 21 st June, 2016
Report Subject	Recommendations from the School Transport Task & Finish Group
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Member Engagement Manager
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A decision was made by the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 17th September, 2015 to establish a School Transport Task & Finish Group.

The Group has met on three separate occasions to consider the outcome of the diagnostic work carried out to identify savings within the Integrated Transport Unit (ITU).

This report sets out the recommendations of the Group, for consideration by Cabinet if approval is given for areas of discretionary transport provision to be considered for further policy development work in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That if approval is given for areas of discretionary transport provision to be considered for further policy change in the future, Cabinet agrees to support the recommendations of the School Transport Task & Finish Group.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE WORK OF THE TASK & FINISH GROUP
1.01	<p>The School Transport Task & Finish Group was established in September 2015. The Membership of the group is as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr Paul Cunningham• Cllr Peter Curtis• Cllr Andy Dunbobbin• Cllr Nancy Matthews• Cllr Carolyn Thomas• Mr David Hytch• Mrs Rebecca Stark• Mr Bernard Stuart
1.02	<p>Meetings of the Task & Finish Group were also attended by Ian Budd, Chief Officer (Education & Youth), Katie Wilby, Transportation & Logistics Manager and Gill Yates, Pupil Support Service Manager who provided specialist advice.</p>
1.03	<p>Following Cabinet approval in May 2015, it was agreed that an ITU should be established for the Authority to ensure an integrated approach to service delivery and operational management. Budget management and eligibility assessment for mainstream home to school transport has also transferred to the ITU within the Streetscene and Transportation portfolio. Policy setting for school transport has remained within the Education & Youth portfolio.</p>
1.04	<p>In May, 2015, Cabinet also approved the engagement of a suitably qualified business partner (JMP Consultants) to assist with the assessment and delivery of the financial benefit that will be derived from the ITU. This has resulted in a diagnostic review of all transport operations across the Authority in order to identify any savings opportunities and efficiencies within the current operating arrangements.</p>
1.05	<p>JMP consultants have identified the following areas of discretionary education transport policies as ones that could be considered for further policy development work and consideration by the Local Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Denominational School Transport<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Removal of free transport- Charge a nominal fee• Concessionary Spare Seats<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Increase the fee for spare seats- Withdraw concessionary spare seats• Post-16 Transport<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Removal of free transport- Charge a nominal fee• Remove Benefits Entitlement• Investigate aligning school times<ul style="list-style-type: none">- (cost-benefit analysis required)

1.07	At its meeting held on the 14 th March, 2016, the Task & Finish Group considered the breakdown of information for each policy change option as identified as part of the Integrated Transport Unit Diagnostic review.
1.08	<p>Following a detailed presentation, the Task & Finish Group recommended that in considering any policy changes, Cabinet should:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carefully consider the business cases and implementation plans for any change; • Undertake equality impact assessment in relation to any proposed policy change at an early point in the process; • Consider/mitigate the impact of any charges on families with more than one child; • Consider the impact of any changes on low income families; and • Promote independence for learners (travel training) and alternatives (where appropriate) to individualised transport provision.
1.09	<p>The Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28th April, 2016 considered the recommendations of the Task & Finish Group. The Committee resolved to support that the recommendations of the Group be presented to Cabinet with the addition of the following two recommendations:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Cabinet consider the impact any policy changes would have on the existing school network; and • That if Cabinet agree to take forward any of the proposed policy changes, the Committee be consulted on the changes with all necessary information.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The savings identified within the diagnostic review could only be made through policy change. The Cabinet has no current plans to authorise consultation and implementation of changes to entitlement policies.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Statutory consultations and notifications would need to be undertaken prior to adoption of any changes in policy entitlements. Statutory consultations on policy change options would have to be considered and authorised by the Council's Cabinet. The Council's Cabinet has no current plans to authorise consultation.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	An equalities impact assessment will be required for any approved policy changes.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Ceri Shotton Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator</p> <p>Telephone: 01352 702305</p> <p>E-mail: ceri.shotton@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Denominational School Transport – is transport where a child attends a specific school for denominational reasons.
7.02	Concessionary Spare Seats – where spare seats are available on a school bus, these can be sold to pupils who are not entitled to free transport.
7.03	Post-16 Transport – transport for post-16 students to a place of education or training.
7.04	Benefits Entitlement – free transport for people who are in receipt of benefits who reside in Flintshire.