

## CABINET

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Tuesday, 19 <sup>th</sup> June 2018
<b>Report Subject</b>	Home to School Transport - Policy Review
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Education
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Strategic

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May, 2015, Cabinet approved the engagement of a Business Partner on a gain share basis (JMP Consultants) to assist the Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) with a diagnostic review of all transport operations across the Authority in order to identify any savings opportunities and efficiencies within the current operating arrangements.

Following a thorough optimisation exercise of all transport routes, the ITU and JMP Consultants have identified a number of historical operational issues whereby transport is being provided over and above the existing Transport Policy and also highlighted a number of areas of discretionary transport provision contained within current Policy. The historical operational issues are currently being worked through by the ITU.

However, discretionary areas would require Policy development/change and would require appropriate consultation with key stakeholders.

The report outlines the discretionary areas of the Home to School Transport Policy and provides options for Cabinet to consider.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet considers the options available around discretionary transport provision.
2	That Cabinet approves a mandate for officers to consult on transport policy change in designated areas as appropriate.

## REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED CHANGES
1.01	Following Cabinet approval in May 2015, it was agreed that an Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) should be established within the Authority to ensure an integrated approach to service delivery and operational management, as well as offering benefits in terms of economies of scale, resilience and making better use of the specialist technical skills available to deliver operational and financial efficiencies in the future. The aim was to establish the ITU as the “one-stop shop” for the organisation for the delivery of all the Council’s transport needs.
1.02	Budget management and eligibility assessment for mainstream home to school transport transferred to the ITU within the Streetscene & Transportation portfolio; however, policy setting for school transport remained within the Education & Youth portfolio.
1.03	In May 2015, Cabinet approved the engagement of a suitably qualified Business Partner (on a gain share basis) to assist with the assessment and delivery of the financial benefit that would be derived from the new ITU. With the advice and guidance of the Corporate Procurement Unit, the engagement of the Business Partner was subsequently undertaken and JMP Consultants were duly appointed following a procurement exercise.
1.04	<p>The subsequent review has been undertaken in two phases:</p> <p><b>Phase 1</b> – A diagnostic review of all transport operations across the Authority in order to identify any savings opportunities and efficiencies within the current operating arrangements. (This work was completed in May 2016).</p> <p><b>Phase 2</b> – Support to deliver and implement the opportunities and efficiencies identified within Phase 1, on a gain-share basis.</p> <p>In particular, the diagnostic review was intended to make clear recommendations on the future of all transport services and on the best delivery model, in order to integrate services and derive the maximum benefit from the introduction of a fully integrated transport solution.</p>
1.05	One of the early outcome of the diagnostic review identified a number of areas of potential savings and efficiencies, in particular around policy changes and reviewing discretionary transport arrangements and operations.
1.06	<p>In the work commissioned through JMP, they estimated that significant cost savings could be delivered through policy development/change. This data was updated and presented at the all member workshops conducted on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017.</p> <p>As part of the preparations for managing the 2019-2020 budget and the</p>

	<p>ongoing challenges in funding to local government, all areas of income generation are being given careful consideration. The Council's School Transport Policy is an area that has been identified as one for review.</p> <p>Should Cabinet determine to move into consultation on charging for aspects of discretionary transport, the level of charging will need to be determined and could range from a nominal contribution up to full cost recovery. A range of charging proposals will, therefore, be included in the consultation document.</p>
1.07	<p>The Council's Home to School Transport Policy is made up of both statutory requirements from the Welsh Government and discretionary transport provision above these requirements. The discretionary elements of the policy include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welsh Medium provision;</li> <li>• Post 16;</li> <li>• Transport provision to denominational schools;</li> <li>• Benefits entitlement.</li> </ul>
1.08	<p>Any changes in transport policy would require consultation in line with the Transport Measure and would require Cabinet to consider the views of key stakeholders in their consideration and determination at a future Cabinet meeting. Additionally, an implementation period is required which would result in the earliest implemented of any proposed changes being September 2020 (see Appendix 1).</p>
1.09	<p><b>Welsh Medium (WM) Transport Provision</b></p> <p>Free home to school transport is provided for pupils of statutory school age to the nearest Welsh medium school.</p> <p>At November 2017, 720 pupils accessed free home to school transport to WM schools at a cost of £490k (or £680 per student per year)</p> <p>Pursuing efficiency savings in this particular transport Policy area potentially contravenes the following national and local policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Welsh Government's Welsh language strategy is to grow the number of Welsh speakers to 1 million by 2050.</li> <li>• The Council's Welsh Education's strategic Plan includes targets to increase the numbers of learners in WM Education.</li> <li>• Section 10 Learner Travel Measure places a duty on Local Authorities to promote access to Welsh Medium education and training.</li> <li>• Should consultation be agreed, feedback from the consultation will be reported to Cabinet at a future date. Cabinet will required to carefully consider the responses to consultation prior to determination.</li> </ul> <p>However, options available are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option 1: No Change</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option 2: Proposal to consult on applying a charge</li> <li>• Option 3: Proposal to consult to cease transport to Welsh medium schools unless the nearest school to the pupil's home address</li> </ul>
1.10	<p><b>Transport provision to denominational schools</b></p> <p>At November 2017, 720 pupils accessed free home to school transport to denominational schools at a cost of £435k (or £1035 per student per year).</p> <p>Options available are as follows: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option 1: No Change</li> <li>• Option 2: Proposal to consult on applying a charge</li> <li>• Option 3: Proposal to consult to cease transport to denominational schools unless the nearest school to the pupil's home address</li> </ul>
1.11	<p><b>Post 16 Transport Provision</b></p> <p>Currently free transport is provided for post 16 students living in Flintshire attending a first course of full time study at a school or college, subject to meeting the 3 mile distance criteria and providing the student is attending the nearest educational establishment offering the courses they wish to study. Free transport is only provided to specified sites.</p> <p>At November 2017 approximately 1500 students accessed free transport from home to college based providers of post 16 education at a cost of £760k p.a. (or £500 per student p.a.).</p> <p>At November 2017 an estimated 430 pupils accessed free home to school transport to school based sixth forms in Flintshire at a cost of £190K p.a. (or £450k per student p.a.).</p> <p>Options available are as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option 1: No change</li> <li>• Option 2: Proposal to consult on applying a charge</li> <li>• Option 3: Proposal to consult to cease transport to all Post 16 facilities</li> </ul>
1.12	<p><b>Benefits Entitlement</b></p> <p>Free home to school transport is currently provided where a child whose parents are in receipt of Income Support or Working Tax Credit, resides more than 2.5 miles from the nearest appropriate school, rather than the standard 3 mile limit. This only applies to a secondary pupils and Flintshire County Council is the only council in Wales to retain this entitlement. Options available are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Option 1: No Change</li> <li>• Option 2: Proposal to consult on removal of this discretionary provision.</li> </ul>
1.13	<p>Should consultation on areas of policy change be agreed, a general review of wording will be undertaken to ensure that the policy up to date and</p>

	current with any national changes.
1.14	<p>Cabinet will be aware that previously a Task &amp; Finish Group reviewed discretionary transport arrangements around policy development in line with JMP proposals and had recommended that Cabinet should:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carefully consider the business cases and implementation plans for any change;</li> <li>• Undertake equality impact assessment in relation to any proposed policy change at an early point in the process;</li> <li>• Consider/mitigate the impact of any charges on families with more than one child;</li> <li>• Consider the impact of any changes on low income families;</li> <li>• Promote independence for learners (travel training) and</li> <li>• Consider alternatives (where appropriate) to individualised transport provision.</li> </ul>

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	This will be dependent on the scale of consultation i.e. determination to consult all or most areas of policy change as highlighted in the report. There would be a requirement to commission additional temporary project support within Education and Youth to assist in this programme of work.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	Consultation in respect of policy change will be carried out in accordance with the guidance as set out in the Learner Travel Measure (Wales).
3.02	Should consultation be agreed, feedback from consultation will be reported to Cabinet at a future date. Cabinet will required to carefully consider the responses to consultation prior to determination.

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	Policy change consultation will be reported to the current Programme Boards within the portfolios to ensure that risks are highlighted and mitigated wherever possible.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 - Anticipated policy change consultation timeline

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	None.  <b>Contact Officer:</b> Claire Homard <b>Telephone:</b> 704601 <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk">claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk</a>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<b>ITU – Integrated Transport Unit</b> - Learner Travel Measure (Wales) 2008 –Welsh Government legislation in the provision of school transport by which local authorities need to abide.